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THE POETICS OF TRAUMA IN JON MCGREGOR'S FICTION: IMPACTING COGNITION AND SELF-IDENTITY

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To the ONE

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ABBREVIATIONS OF JON MCGREGOR'S WORKS

INSRT	*If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*
SMWB	*So Many Ways to Begin*
ED	*Even the Dogs*
TISTHSLY	*This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You*
Reservoir	*Reservoir 13*
TRT	*The Reservoir Tapes*
Lean	*Lean Fall Stand*

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General Introduction

What do Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan and Graham Swift have in common? One possible answer is that they are "three of the most important writers to have emerged on the British literary scene since the 1970s" (Horton 1). These renowned contemporary British writers also share a common concern for the extreme form of individualism widespread in British society (Horton 1-2). Their concern is far from unfounded, as is corroborated by disparate surveys, notably the Eurobarometer survey of 2017, according to which Britain is the most individualistic country in the EU.[1] Rampant individualism in Great Britain, however, is not a recent social phenomenon. Rather, it finds its roots in the eighties, after the election of Margret Thatcher's conservative government that promoted a solipsistic model of citizenship chiefly characterised by self-reliance and responsibility only to oneself (Lea, *Contemporary* 176). The Thatcherite administration also promulgated individualistic policies of monetarism, deregulation, and privatisation, so that the government's role was reduced to mere law enforcement (Tew 57). By the end of its third term, Thatcher's government had privatized almost all the core elements of the economic infrastructure, including electricity, gas, telecommunications, council housing, and transport (Bradford 29-30). Although Thatcher was deposed as Prime Minister and party leader in 1990, her policies have become "the unceasing, perhaps irremovable, core element of the British social, economic and political fabric" up to the present day (Bradford 38). The repercussions of Thatcher's policies have been a disaster, exacerbating economic inequality in Great Britain. This is demonstrated by various surveys showing that the wealth of the middle and upper classes has doubled in recent years, whilst the poorest have become even poorer, barely able to survive on the limited resources available to them (Tew 117). Thus, since the introduction of Thatcherite policies in the 1980s, individualism and inequality have become stronger elements in British society. This social status-quo is one of the major foci of the writings of many renowned British writers born around the middle of the twentieth century, including, amongst others, Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan, Pat Barker, and Graham Swift. In reaction to the widespread individualism, these writers introduced into their narratives characters "who are forced by a crisis situation in their personal lives to face up to" a traumatic past beyond their individual means (Craps 637-8).[2] The inability of these characters to overcome their overwhelming past makes them emblematic of the inherent vulnerability of the

[1] See the diagram p. 20 of the TNS Political, and Social's "Special Eurobarometer 467: Report: Future of Europe: Social issues," according to which Britain and Ireland are the most individualistic nations in the EU, with 29% of their citizens preferring a society where more importance is given to individualism rather than to solidarity.

[2] These Thatcherite British novelists are not the first to introduce vulnerable characters into their narratives. Still, these novelists, in contrast to other authors, put a heavy emphasis on the inherent vulnerability of the human, as they create characters who are, *without fail*, subject to powers beyond their control.

human being. Thus, such vulnerable characters amount to an antithesis of the individualistic model of society whereby people are said to be inherently able to overcome all the hardships and trauma experienced in their everyday lives by means of their individual capacities.

Vulnerable characters permeate the fictional works of the new generation of British novelists who were born during the last quarter of the twentieth century, including Jon McGregor, Adam Foulds, and Sarah Hall. The present thesis will focus only on Jon McGregor's fiction. This is because this writer's fiction chiefly centres on the repercussions of traumatic experiences upon the human mind, which is the locus of this thesis. Using an approach informed by the works of several renowned psychologists, this thesis will explore the psychological impact of trauma as presented in Jon McGregor's fiction.

Although McGregor weaves the theme of trauma into all of his fictional works, his own life appears to be rather void of such deeply painful experience. McGregor was born in 1976 in Bermuda. When he was only six months old, his family moved to England where he spent his childhood in Norwich and Thetford. After finishing high school, he studied media technology and production at Bradford University. While he was still a student, he began his writing career, penning several short stories that were published by many magazines, most notably *Granta*. To date, he has written five novels—*If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (2002), *So Many Ways to Begin* (2006), *Even the Dogs* (2010), *Reservoir13* (2017)—and two collections of short stories: *This Isn't the Sort of Thing that Happens to Someone Like You* (2012) and *The Reservoir Tapes* (2017). The author also collaborated with British composer Richard J. Birkin. Together they contributed to the release of an album of six soundtracks entitled *Reservoir13 (Music for the Novel of Jon McGregor*) (2018).

McGregor came to literary prominence immediately after publishing his debut novel, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*. The novel was an immediate success, long listed for the Man Booker Prize, and short listed for British Book Awards Newcomer of the Year, the Commonwealth Writers Prize, and The Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award. In this novel, McGregor speaks of unremarkable things, including "the smells of shops and cafes and offices across" an unnamed city (*INSRT* 1). Doing so, he makes these otherwise unremarkable urban phenomena look remarkable. That is why his novel is perceived by several critics as a celebration of the magnificence of the mundane (Wiegand n.p.). This novel is also regarded by many critics as an unflinching criticism of the rampant individualism in British society (Lea, "Jon" 204). This is chiefly because its characters, despite being neighbours, do not know

one another's names. Instead, most of them are referred to only by "the number of the house in which they live or by physical traits (the man with the moustache, the women with henna-red hair)" (Lea, "Jon" 207). These characters dwell in an unnamed city in northern England which is not, however, the only backdrop of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, as this novel alternates between two narratives, each of which is set in a distinct city. The first narrative takes place three years before the second, and is recounted by an omniscient narrator, who draws the reader into the unremarkable lives of the dwellers of an unnamed urban street during what seems to be a typical day. At the end of this narrative, a traumatic event takes place, as the older twin of one of the inhabitants of this anonymous street is hit by his neighbour's car. This traumatic event reverberates throughout the second narrative which is related by "the girl with the short blonde hair and the small square glasses," a former inhabitant of the unnamed street who accidentally falls pregnant with twins after a one-night stand (*INSRT* 87).

This female narrator from *If Nobody Speaks* reappears in *So Many Ways to Begin* where her name is revealed to be Kate, the only child of David Carter and Eleanor Campbell. According to many reviewers, *So Many Ways to Begin* is a remarkable rendering of the unremarkable minutiae of everyday life (Merritt, "The Wind" n.p.). This is because this narrative, like McGregor's debut novel, is replete with trivial details, including a written list of household items, a local map, a tobacco tin, a Christmas card. Although *So Many Ways to Begin* was well-received by critics, it did not garner any literary prize, and was only shortlisted for the Encore Awards (Edwards 218-9). The linchpin character of this novel is David Carter, a curator at Coventry museum who is traumatised by accidentally discovering that he was adopted. This traumatic revelation resonates throughout the narrative which opens with an italicised prologue about the dreadful adolescence of Mary Friel, David's presumed birth mother. The rest of the narrative reads like a catalogue from a museum exhibition, since the headings of most of its chapters are the names of dated relics.[3] "Varying between the intrinsically valueless and historically loaded," these relics spark many a memory of David's boyhood, adolescence, and marital life, thus building up a picture of his tumultuous life story (Lea, "Jon" 215).

Much in the same vein, *Even the Dogs* portrays the tumultuous life stories of its characters. However, the characters of this novel, unlike those of McGregor's former works, are not

[3] It is worth noting that "the idea of assembling a life through the artefacts that defined it has been used before in fiction—in Timothy Findley's wartime novella, *You Went Away*, structured around a series of black-and-white photographs, and Umberto Eco's recent *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, in which the amnesiac narrator must reconstruct his life through cigarette cards and concert tickets" (Merritt, "The Wind" n.p.).

members of the middle class, but rather drug addicts and homeless people. *Even the Dogs* received critical acclaim similar to that of McGregor's debut novel. Eventually, in 2012, it won the prestigious International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. For most critics, McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is a profoundly humane narrative, as it gives voice to the drug addicts and vagrants, individuals that no one seems to see (Battersby n.p.). This novel chiefly revolves around Robert Radcliffe, a former soldier and an alcoholic whose decaying body is only discovered several days after his death in his derelict flat. This tragic death reverberates throughout the narrative that follows the journey of Robert's corpse from a puddle of bodily decay, through the autopsy slab, to the crematorium. The simplicity of this journey belies the ambiguity of its ubiquitous narrator who uses the first-person plural to recount the traumatic experiences either Robert or his fellow drug addicts and homeless friends have endured (Ganteau, "The Powers" 450-1).[4]

In like manner, most of the short stories in *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You* centre on the traumatic experiences of its characters. These short stories are distinct in size, as they range from "a single sentence, over a paragraph, to a full-fledged story" (D'hoker, "Living" 96). They also involve "discrete scenes, different voices, different perspectives" (D'hoker, "Living" 98). Unlike McGregor's former novels, these short stories are not set in urban environments. Conversely, they take place in the Fenlands, the rural areas that extend across Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire in the east of England. This is illustrated by the subtitle of each short story, since each subtitle is the name of a hamlet situated in the Fenlands. Thus, each subtitle clearly signals the backdrop of the short story that follows.[5] As regards the title of the collection of these short stories, *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You*, it is deeply ironic. This is because these short stories, as noted by many reviewers, wrap themselves around the disconcerting premise that 'this sort of thing,' namely a traumatic accident, can readily happen to anyone (O'Farrell n.p.). Thus, McGregor's short stories epitomise the inherent vulnerability of each human being whose life "can unravel at any moment: quite simple, almost ordinary things can undo his life in a second" (D'hoker, "Living" 99).

Like McGregor's short stories, *Reservoir13* illustrates the inherent vulnerability of human beings, as it revolves around the dwellers of an unnamed village in the Peak District whose

[4] McGregor is not the first writer to apply a first-person plural narrative. In fact, this has been used before in fiction, notably in Julio Cortázar's short story "Axolotl," and in Steven Millhauser's collection of short stories *The Knife Thrower and Other Stories* (Scrivenor 2-3).

[5] There are two short stories, namely "Close" and "We Wave and Call," which, albeit subtitled with locations in the Fenlands, respectively take place in Japan and Croatia.

lives are abruptly disrupted by the disappearance of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, on New Year's Eve. Similar to McGregor's former novels, *Reservoir13* was an immediate success, long-listed for the Man Booker Prize as soon as it was published. At first glance, this novel is a thriller, as it opens on the mysterious disappearance of the young Rebecca Shaw. In reality, *Reservoir13* is chiefly a pastoral novel, as it centres on the minutiae of life in the unnamed village. This is manifested by the novel's long paragraphs, some of which sprawl over several pages. In these monoliths of prose, the impersonal omniscient narrator shifts in deliberate non-sequiturs from "character to character, human to animal, ground to sky" (McGregor, "I Wanted" n.p.). His narrative extends over the entire novel which is divided into thirteen chronological chapters, each covering a year since Rebecca's disappearance. Thus, the novel ends thirteen years after the girl's disappearance which remains an unsolved mystery haunting many characters whether they are awake or asleep.

Some of the traumatised characters from *Reservoir13* reappear in McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes* which was originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 as a series of fifteen episodes set in the anonymous village of *Reservoir13* during a summer day leading up to and the day immediately following Rebecca's disappearance. *The Reservoir Tapes* was then published as a collection of fifteen short stories, each titled with the name of its main character. This is illustrated by the first short story, "Charlotte Shaw," which is the transcript of an interview with Charlotte about the disappearance of her daughter Rebecca. In this transcript, Charlotte's answers are omitted, so that only the fragmentary questions of the female interviewer remain. The subsequent stories take on the form of third-person narratives, most of which revolve around the traumatic experiences certain characters have faced in the anonymous village of *Reservoir13*.

Described as 'a chilling meditation on loss and time,' the *Reservoir 13* album is equally melancholic (Hadley n.p.). As has been specified, this album is the fruit of a collaboration between McGregor and British composer Richard J. Birkin, and it includes six soundtracks. Besides the fact that they vary in length from forty-five seconds to more than five minutes, these soundtracks are titled after certain phrases from the novel: "At Midnight," "The Year Turned," "A Search Party," "Dreams Were Had about Her, still," "Seen from a Distance, Moving away" and "All Was Calm, All Was Bright." Accompanying McGregor's public readings of some sections from *Reservoir* 13, the soundtracks make the audience even more engaged to the point of feeling themselves part of the fictional world of the novel. In one of his comments on these

musical pieces, the composer proclaims that they are based on a local Derbyshire folk song entitled "Tip O'Derwent" which, echoing the novel itself, is also about someone who goes missing.

In light of what has been briefly said about McGregor's fiction, it becomes clear how the author draws heavily upon traumatic experiences. Such eerie occurrences usually result in traumatic neuroses, including "reactive attachment disorder, disinhibited social disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and adjustment disorders" (American Psychiatric Association 265).[6] Traumatic neuroses were originally diagnosed in soldiers from World War I who, upon their return from the trenches, suffered from severe neuropsychological disorders that were assumed to be the symptoms of a brain lesion.[7] However, traumatic neuroses as presented in McGregor's fiction cannot be traced back to any brain lesion, since most of McGregor's characters do not suffer from any cerebral concussion. That is why the present thesis will not draw on the brain lesion theory. Rather, it will follow the pattern of the theories of several renowned psychoanalysts, including Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and Otto Rank. This is because these psychoanalysts postulate that traumatic neuroses cannot be reduced to cerebral injuries. They maintain this position on the basis that many traumatic incidents do not engender any physical damage. However, the present introduction will not rely on all the psychoanalysts mentioned in this thesis. For clarity's sake, it will only focus on Sigmund Freud, the renowned neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, who laid the groundwork for a completely new understanding of trauma and its impact on the human mind. For Freud, the aetiology of traumatic neuroses is first and foremost a *double consciousness*, a splintered psyche that does the worst damage to the affected person (Freud, *Studies* 2:12). Thus, Freud's conclusion is that many traumatic neuroses are of a psychological rather than physiological nature.

The locus of Freud's early research is not trauma, but rather hysteria, a psychopathology chiefly marked by intermittent psychotic breaks (Jung, *The Basic* X). According to Freud, the aetiology of hysteria is repression, the ego's major *anticathexis*, i.e. the ego's major unconscious defence against the influx of some extremely distressful impulses (Freud, *Moses* 23:95). Besides repression, the ego has several other unconscious defence mechanisms, including denial, rationalisation, and deflection. By 'the ego,' Freud means the psychic constellation by

[6] Traumatic neuroses cause several neuropsychological troubles, including paralysis, hysterical attack, epileptic convulsion, chronic vomiting, anorexia, and hallucination (Freud, *Studies* 2:15).

[7] The brain lesion theory is a cognitive conjecture of the early 20th century which is still gaining ground today. According to this theory, a traumatic accident causes "Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI, i.e. a cerebral lesion (Maas 728).

virtue of which any individual conceives of himself as a discrete entity, a being distinct from the other objects of the world (Jung, *The Basic* 246). This psychic constellation is always under the influence of two psychological phenomena, i.e. the id and the superego. The id stands for instinctual drives (or sexual drives) which are, according to Freud, essentially libidinal strivings of involuntary nature (Freud, "Inhibition" 20:56). Once triggered by external or internal stimuli, sexual drives grow from their initial state of quiescence into somatic innervations, seeking access to consciousness. However, sexual drives cannot always cross the threshold of consciousness, as they are at times repressed by the *superego*. Freud understands 'the superego' to mean the mental phenomenon that originates from the *castration complex*, a childhood fear of emasculation that finds expression in the image of the father (Freud, "Three" 7:129). Such an inherent fear develops in response to *"the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex,"* during which any child, aged between five and six, projects his freshly awakened sexual desires upon his mother (Freud, *The Ego* 19: 34). Eventually, the castration complex forces the ego to repress its incestuous longings, and as such marks the genesis of the superego which, thenceforth, acts as a self-conscience, reflecting the ego's cultural norms. Thus, the ego is not only under the influence of its sexual drives, but also follows the commands of its superego that usually has "more strength than the instinctual demands of the id" (Freud, *The Ego* 19:150). The superego accounts for the ego's repression of certain distressful memories into the unconscious. Repression ineluctably leads to *displacement*, another unconscious process whereby the sexual drives of a repressed memory find expression in another memory, which causes several neuroses, including hysteria and phobia (Freud, "Project" 1:350). This is clearly illustrated by the case of Emma, a young woman "under a compulsion not to go into shops *alone*" (Freud, "Project" 1:353). Emma is persuaded that her phobia is caused by an experience she had at the age of twelve, when two shop-assistants laughed at her while she was alone in their store. However, after several psychoanalytic sessions, Emma discovers that her phobia is caused by another experience she had before hitting puberty, when a shopkeeper grabbed at her genitals and laughed, while she was alone in his shop. This extremely distressful experience produced a bad conscience, and was therefore repressed (Freud, "Project" 1:35). Four years later, the shop-assistants' laughter *unconsciously* reminded Emma of "the grin with which the shopkeeper had accompanied his [sexual] assault" (Freud, "Project" 1:353). Subsequently, Emma relived the distress that she had originally experienced when she was sexually assaulted in the past. Nevertheless, this experience did not trigger the memory of the actual assault which, on account of the ego's persistent repression, remained below the threshold of consciousness (Freud, "Project" 1:353).

Drawing on Emma's case, as well as several other similar cases, Freud concludes that with almost all neuroses, repressed memories do not cross the threshold of consciousness "smoothly and unaltered; [rather] they must always put up with distortions which testify to the influence of repression (Freud, *Moses* 23: 95). In contrast to repressed memories, traumatic memories do not always undergo distortion. Rather, they are usually vividly present, deeply ingrained into the consciousness of the traumatised persons, whether they are awake or asleep (American Psychiatric Association 271).[8] This is epitomised by the traumatic nightmares of veterans, which are "usually exact replicas of actual combat events" (Luckhurst 149).[9]

Unable to account for traumatic neuroses in the terms of "the ego's anticathexis of erotic wishes (repression), Freud, by 1926, had become interested in resistances from beyond the ego, i.e. from the id" (Kalsched 79). Eventually, he concludes that, besides sexual drives which "preserve living substance and join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros, there was *an instinct of death*" (Freud, "Civilization" 21: 118-9, emphasis added). Thus, the origin of traumatic neuroses, according to Freud, is a death drive which, unlike sexual drives, is essentially *destructive or dissimilatory* (*Beyond* 35).

However, and in contradistinction to Freud, it will be assumed in this thesis that the origin of traumatic neuroses is not a death drive, but rather an abundant quantity of emotion. In order to justify this assumption, it is first necessary to define emotion. Emotion is the predominant element of any traumatic memory, as is emphasised by Freud when he states that traumatic memories are *intensely cathected*, i.e. highly charged with emotion ("Inhibition" 20: 137). It is noteworthy that a memory, traumatic or not, is an amalgam of distinct elements originally encoded in different parts of the brain.[10] This amalgam mainly involves the visual, auditory, olfactory, kinaesthetic and emotional elements which form, to a varying degree, each and every memory. These mnemonic components, with the exception of emotion, are encoded in the

[8] Unlike bad dreams, post-traumatic nightmares bring about "hyperarousal symptoms such as increased awakenings" (Nielsen 303).

[9] It is worth noting that a trauma does not have a commensurate impact upon distinct individuals; but rather varies on "the susceptibility of the person affected" (Freud, *Studies* 2: 6). Indeed, the same traumatic accident may have a detrimental impact upon one person, while leaving another unaffected.

[10] A memory is not a monadic structure engraved in a specific part of the brain. Rather, it is a constellation of distinct mnemonic elements, such as the visual, the olfactory and the emotional elements (Kolb 447-82). These elements, among several others, are encoded in distinct parts of the brain. The visual component of a memory, for instance, is coded in the visual cortex, at the back of the brain (Kolb 475). The smell component is codified in the olfactory cortex, above the nose (Kolb 471). As for emotions, they are encoded in the amygdala, deep inside the brain (Kolb 525).

cortex, the neural tissue which partly accounts for the human predisposition for higher cognitive functions, namely language and reason (Kolb 447-608). In contradistinction to these components, the emotional element of a memory is coded in the limbic system which is also called the *primitive brain*, as it is phylogenetically anterior to the cortex (Cory 102).[11]

Understanding this, it becomes evident that a memory is originally formed out of two phylogenetically distinct types of elements. The first and most evolved type involves, among other things, the visual, auditory, olfactory and kinaesthetic components of a memory which are formed in the cortex, the neural tissue that accounts for each and every neural activity of a conscious nature. These mnemonic components therefore take on unequivocal forms. They manifest themselves as quantities (neural energies) with definite qualities (conscious mental representations).[12] In contrast to the aforementioned elements, the emotional component of a memory is formed in the primitive limbic system and, as such, it takes on an equivocal form: It manifests itself as amorphous neural energy without any identifiable quality (conscious mental image). That is why emotion arguably cannot be classified into distinct types as love and hatred, and will accordingly be used throughout the thesis in the singular form.

It should be noted, though, that some may object to the foregoing conjecture. For them, an emotion is not an amorphous neural quantity without any identifiable quality. Rather, it has distinctive traits, notably fright in the case of traumatic neurosis.[13] It is therefore necessary to

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[11] During the late 1950s, the neurologist Paul MacLean propounded a revolutionary conjecture, postulating that the human brain is a triune, a set of three interconnected brains, each of which has its own special intelligence, its own subjectivity, its own sense of time and space and its own memory, motor and other functions" (MacLean 9). These three neural assemblies illustrate the evolution of the human being from a reptile to a higher mammal (MacLean 15-18). The most primitive among them is the "protoreptilian formation," also called the "Reptilian complex" (MacLean 15). This primitive brain performs rudimentary functions, most notably breathing and heart beating (MacLean 46). In contrast to the protoreptilian brain, "the limbic system or paleomammalian formation" generates, among other things, emotions (MacLean 16-7). It represents the neural tissue superimposed upon the reptilian brain.

Unlike the paleomammalian brain, the "neomammalian formation," the "neocortex," or simply the cortex, involves, *inter alia*, higher cognitive functions, including language and reason (MacLean 16). This neural assembly is specific to all vertebrates, without fail. Nevertheless, it is chiefly characteristic of higher mammals, especially the human (MacLean 16-7). This does not, however, mean that the neocortex, in higher mammals, controls the entire neural system. Rather, it is sometimes submerged by emotions emanating from the paleomammalian formation (MacLean 455-66). Subsequently, it loses its capacity to assimilate stimuli emanating from within and/or without the brain. This becomes even more evident in most psychopathologies, among which traumatic neuroses feature prominently.

[12] In neurobiology, conscious mental representations of the external world are referred to as "*perceptual images*" (Damasio 96, emphasis in original).

[13] For Freud, the distinctive characteristic of traumatic experiences is fright. Fright, here, is not synonymous with anxiety or fear. Indeed, anxiety, according to Freud, "describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. 'Fear' requires a definite object of which to be afraid. 'Fright', however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise" (Freud, *Beyond* 6).

draw a clear distinction between emotion and feeling. A feeling, whether negative or positive, emanates from the ego. Akin to thinking, it is a conscious act of judgment of something known or unknown (Jung, *The Basic* 183-240). In contrast to feelings, an emotion is essentially a nebulous neural energy, devoid of any conscious representation; and therefore, when abundant, lies beyond the grasp of the ego. Thus fright, the main characteristic of a traumatic neurosis, is not an emotion, but rather a feeling. This feeling arises out of the ego which, upon facing a traumatic memory highly charged with an amorphous emotional energy, responds with fright. Such a response is typical, as individuals experience a deep feeling of misoneism whenever they face anything that exceeds their grasp.

In a nutshell, emotion is an amorphous neural energy that vivifies, to a varying degree, disparate memories. This is corroborated by Carl Gustav Jung, the renowned Swiss psychiatrist and the founder of Analytical Psychology. According to Jung, any mental representation devoid of emotion is "a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the mental representation gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must flow from it" (Jung, *Man* 96). This is epitomised by traumatic memories which, being highly charged with emotion, assume an *uncanny* character. Freud understands 'the uncanny' to mean the inherent strangeness of a traumatic memory (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 224). This is because, due to its intense emotion, a traumatic memory cannot be captured in its entirety by the human consciousness. Instead, it endures as a *double*, understood by Otto Rank, the Austrian psychoanalyst and one of Freud's disciples, to mean a splintered psyche that acts by its own motive power (Rank, *The Double* 30). Accordingly, traumatic memory not only exceeds the ego's cognitive capacities, but also disrupts its *self-identity*.

But first, what is self-identity? As will be propounded in this thesis, self-identity is, to some extent, what Freud calls the *superego* (Freud, "Three" 7:129). It is mostly an unconscious mental phenomenon whereby a subject is conditioned by one or several objects. Thus, self-identity is not specific to each individual, but rather marks the end of individuality. By way of example, a son who identifies with his parents does not form an autonomous personality. Rather, he follows in the footsteps of his parents, adopting, almost unreflectively, their ways and manners.[14] In short, self-identity is chiefly an unconscious mental phenomenon whereby the ego lives vicariously through certain objects that condition its engagement with the world.

[14] Self-identity is the outcome of *identification*, namely the unconscious mental process whereby a subject is gradually estranged from himself in favour of an object, notably his mental representations of his parents (Jung, *The Basic* 254).

However, and as will be detailed in the second part of the thesis, self-identity also provides the ego with a sense of security. This, in turn, accounts for the ego's attachment to its self-identity, i.e. its superego. Still, self-identity is not always possible, especially for someone who is haunted by a traumatic memory. This is because such a memory cannot always be repressed by the ego's self-identity. Rather, it mainly endures as a *double*, a splintered psyche that intermittently overcomes the ego's self-identity, i.e. the ego's protective superstructure (Rank, *The Double* 30). Doing so, traumatic memory makes the ego experience a deep sense of insecurity. However frightening, this experience amounts to an awakening during which the ego, having been stripped of its self-identity, has its eyes opened to the singularity of the world.

The impact of a traumatic memory upon the traumatised individual brings to mind the experience of alterity as presented by Emmanuel Levinas, the renowned French philosopher who laid the groundwork for a new perception of the Other.[15] For Levinas, the Other is an *infinity*, an entity whose essence exceeds the ego's cognitive capacities and its will to persist in its identity (Levinas, *Totality* 103). Whenever the ego experiences the Other in her irreducible alterity, it becomes driven by *excendance*, the spontaneous and immediate compulsion that ineluctably involves an unconditional openness to the Other (Levinas, *Cultural* 49-73). 'Excendance' is "modelled upon 'trans-scendence,' adjoining 'ex-' or 'out' to the Latin *scandere,* 'to climb'" (Levinas, *Cultural* 115). Accordingly, excendance means climbing out, escaping. More specifically, it designates the human intermittent compulsion to transcend its self-identity. This compulsion impels the ego "to experience the world in its strange, unforeseeable singularity," and is therefore deeply ethical (Gibson 30). This ethical drive is reminiscent of the effect produced by traumatic memory, under whose influence the ego is forced to open to the irreducible otherness of the world. And since there is not a word in psychoanalysis that expresses the ethical effect of a traumatic memory, it will be termed 'excendance' in this thesis.

To put it succinctly, a traumatic memory, on account of its abundant emotion, becomes conducive to excendance, the ethical drive whereby the ego is impelled to overstep not only its cognitive capacities, but also its self-identity. Thus, such a memory makes trauma an ethical experience, as the ego is forced to open up to the irreducible otherness of the world, including each and every other. This is corroborated by many literary scholars, notably Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, and also Stef Craps, who have addressed the ethical dimension of

[15] By 'the Other,' with a capital 'O,' Levinas understands any object other than the ego. Such an object is not "a superior existence," a god, but rather a corporeal other, including other human beings (Derrida, "Violence" 106).

trauma. Throughout their works, these scholars have demonstrated how trauma is an overwhelming experience whereby the traumatised individual is impelled to waive her sovereignty and to embrace an ethical opening to the Other (Ganteau, "The Powers" 447).[16]

However, when faced with the overwhelming memories of their traumas, traumatised individuals do not manifest a clear-cut tendency towards openness to the irreducible otherness of their traumatic memories. Instead, they waver between *perversion* and *surrender* (Ghent 108). In the present context, 'surrender' is not tantamount to defeat or submission. Rather, it is a form of self-liberation (Ghent 134).[17] In surrender, trauma victims acknowledge their inability to assimilate their traumatic memories. They subsequently yield their protective superstructures; and, as such, open up to the irreducible alterity of their traumatic memories.

In contrast to surrender, perversion is the outcome of denial (Ghent 110). In perversion, the traumatised individuals do not open up to their traumatic memories. Instead, they fall back on their protective superstructures, turn in on themselves, and therefore relapse into *secondary narcissism* (Freud, *Introductory* 16: 424). By 'secondary narcissism,' Freud means the mental state in which the boundaries between the subjective and the objective are blurred ("Mourning" 14: 249). Such a mental state is, according to Freud, the outcome of a regression into *primary narcissism*, the early stage of the human mental development in which the young children and the primitives are still unable to differentiate between the self and the other (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 249). Secondary narcissism, according to Freud, is not pathological *per se*. Conversely, it is "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (Freud, "On Narcissism" 14: 73-4). However, such a mental state becomes pathological, when it persists.

When falling back into the pathological form of secondary narcissism, traumatised individuals do not accommodate their schemes to the demands of the external world anymore (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6).[18] Instead, they manifest an overwhelming tendency

[16] This is clearly demonstrated in Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau's *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form* and Stef Craps's *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift*.

[17] "In the West, surrender has meant 'defeat'. In the East, it has meant transcendence, liberation. In the West 'ego', as used in the vernacular, has meant one's strength, rationality, a very close relative, until recently, of one's self. In the East 'ego' has meant maya, (dream, the illusion of one's self)" (Ghent 111).

[18] A scheme is "a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning" (Piaget, *History* 4: 240). To put it differently, a scheme, such as the addition operation scheme, is an acquired mental process that the human being applies to solve many of his practical problems. Such a metal process is not immutable, but rather labile, adaptable to the demands of the external world.

towards *assimilation*, "the process of taking in new information and fitting it into a preconceived notion about the world" (Singer 15). Such a tendency is typical of egocentrism, understood by Jean Piaget to mean the unconscious mental state characterized by "the lack of clear boundaries between ego and alter ego as well as between ego and external world" (Kesselring 328). Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss psychologist who laid the groundwork for a new understanding of the human cognitive development and the impact that certain extremely frightening events, especially traumas, have upon children. In his study of the human cognitive development, Piaget does not apply an empiricist approach, as he does not conceive of the human "acquisition of knowledge as a passive and merely additive process" (Schmidt 165). Nor does Piaget apply a nativist approach, as he does not consider human knowledge as "biologically built-in or native to the human mind" (Sampson 4). Instead, Piaget develops a constructivist approach, according to which human knowledge is the outcome of an ongoing "interaction between organism and environment and adaptation processes (assimilation and accommodation)" (Schmidt 166). Piaget is usually associated with egocentrism, a concept he introduced in the 1920s. In his early writings, Piaget conceived of egocentrism as particular to the preoperatory stage wherein a preschool child (ages 2-7 years) is unable to recognize the multiperspective nature of the external world (Kesselring 329). However, by the mid-thirties, Piaget's conception of egocentrism had undergone significant changes. Rather than being unique to the preschool child, "egocentrism became a phenomenon that reoccurs several times, at the beginning of the sensorimotor stage [ages birth-2 years], at the beginning of the preoperational stage of development [ages 2-7 years], at the beginning of the concrete operations stage [ages 7-11 years] and, as discovered later on, at the beginning of the formal-operational stage [ages 11-15 years]" (Kesselring 332).

In a nutshell, a traumatic memory, on account of its abundant emotion, gains ineffable vividness, and thereby exceeds both the ego's cognitive capacities and its self-identity (its superego). Thus, such a memory makes trauma an ethical experience, as the ego is thenceforth impelled to conceive of the world as an *infinity*, a place where the otherness of each and every other is beyond assimilation (Levinas, *Totality* 103). However, the ego, in its inherent egoism, does not open to the irreducible alterity of the world.[19] Conversely, it usually falls back on secondary narcissism, and subsequently manifests a clear-cut proclivity for a cognitive behaviour that squares with the Piagetian egocentrism.

[19] For Levinas, egoism is the very essence of the ego. This is clearly illustrated when he states that, "The dwelling, inhabitation, belongs to the essence—to the egoism—of the I" (*Totality* 143).

Drawing on the above, this thesis will interrogate McGregor's fiction that, as aforementioned, chiefly hinges on the presentation of traumatic memories. Using an approach informed by diverse psychological theories and the ethics of alterity, this thesis aims to show how McGregor's narratives present traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon that overpowers both the ego's cognitive capacities and its self-identity, which accounts for the tendency of McGregor's traumatised characters towards egocentrism.

In order to demonstrate the previous statement, it will be shown in the first part of the thesis how McGregor's poetics, most notably his hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, presents emotion, the predominant element of traumatic memory. Because it is infused with intense emotion, and as indicated before, traumatic memory exceeds the ego's cognitive capacities. This is clearly illustrated by McGregor's fiction which is chiefly characterised by a jagged chronology. Thus, the author's fiction evidences that a traumatic memory cannot be temporalised by the ego. Instead, such a memory persists as a mental phenomenon that cannot be rendered into any coherent narrative. This is epitomised by McGregor's narratives which move in deliberate non-sequiturs. Accordingly, these fictional writings, as will be specified, reflect the inability of their characters to translate their traumatic memories into consistent narratives, which, in turn, reflects the incapacity of these characters to assimilate such memories.

More than just being unassimilable, and on account of their ample emotion, traumatic memories assume, as before indicated, an *uncanny character*, i.e. an overwhelming ambiguity. This is evinced by McGregor's fiction which, as will be demonstrated in the second part of the thesis, shows three uncanny aspects of traumatic memories, including their *paradoxical phenomenality*, i.e. their being an odd commingling of the known and the unknown (Royle 140). By dint of its uncanny nature, traumatic memory persists as a *double*, a ubiquitous reminder of the traumatised individual's dreadful experiences (Rank, *The Double* 30). Acting as a double, traumatic memory ineluctably causes the disruption of the ego's *self-identity*, which, as already advanced, is the mental set of the objects that condition the ego's engagement with the world. This is evidenced by McGregor's narratives which, as will be shown, involve, among other things, depersonalised narrators. Owing to this narrative element, along with several others, the author's fiction typifies how traumatic memory entails a critical disturbance of the ego's self-identity. Because it unhinges the ego's self-identity, and as previously illustrated, traumatic memory forces the ego to have its eyes open to the irreducible otherness of each and every other. This is underscored by McGregor's narratives whereby the author challenges many

stereotypes by tapping into the disruptive effect of traumatic memory upon the ego's self-identity, which reflects how this memory favours excendance—the ethical drive towards openness to the irreducible otherness of the Other (Levinas, *Cultural* 49-73).

However, McGregor' narratives are not only an epitome of openness to otherness. As will be addressed in the third part of the thesis, some elements of these narratives typify how traumatised characters lead a life dominated by a repeated, partial, even at times failed attempt to access otherness. One of the possible reasons why these characters' capacity to experience alterity is significantly diminished is because they fall back on a mode of thinking reminiscent of the Piagetian egocentrism. This statement is corroborated by several extracts from the author's writings which are peppered with some narrative ingredients, like onomatopoeia, anachronism and self-centred focalisers. As will be specified, these excerpts reveal how traumatised characters conceive of time and space, and use language in a way typical of egocentrism. On account of such a paradigm of thought, and will be exemplified, these characters mix up fiction with reality, while their capacity to experience alterity becomes considerably impaired.

Part I

Traumatic Memory : The Excess of Emotion and The Impossibility of Assimilation

Introduction

McGregor's fictional works chiefly revolve around traumatic memories. Using an approach informed by psychoanalysis, the ethics of alterity and narratology, it will be demonstrated in this first part how these fictional works present traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon that exceeds the ego's cognitive capacities. According to Jung, the ego constitutes "the *centrum* of the human field of consciousness and appears to possess a very high degree of continuity and identity" (*The Basic* 246, emphasis in the original). This centrum of the human consciousness, according to Piaget, is not static. Instead, it develops into an ever-larger unity through *assimilation*, the mental process whereby the ego takes in new information and fits this new information into its preconceived notions about the world (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6). This brings to mind Levinas's conception of the ego. According to Levinas, the ego is driven by an insatiable desire to assimilate or comprehend the world (*Otherwise* 73). By the word comprehension, Levinas understands "the fact of taking [*prendre*] and of comprehending [*comprendre*], that is, the fact of englobing, of appropriating" (Gibson 56). Drawing on this, Levinas postulates that the ego, in its indefatigable will to understand the world, seeks power and appropriation (Levinas, *Totality* 13-8). In its pursuit of power, the ego does not conceive of the other as an *infinity*, an entity whose essence exceeds cognition (Levinas, *Totality* 103). Rather, it reduces each and every other to the terms of its solipsistic perception.

Such a solipsistic conception of the world is not necessarily inevitable, especially for someone who has a traumatic memory. This is because, as already mentioned, traumatic memory, on account of its intense emotion, gains ineffable vividness, and therefore withstands the ego's solipsistic cognition of the world. This does not, however, mean that emotion is always an obstruction to cognition. Conversely, emotion, when moderate, is indispensable for cognitive development. This is evinced by recent researches in neuroscience, including those of Antonio Damasio, a Portuguese-American neuroscientist. Damasio has conducted considerable research on patients who are unable to make any decision, an inability usually associated with cognitive impairment (Damasio 34-51). Surprisingly enough, Damasio's patients turned out to be so cognitively intact that even the special tests were a breeze for them (Damasio 42). After several years of research, Damasio discovered that his patients' brains do not process emotion. This, amongst other things, has enabled him to associate decision making with emotion. Eventually, Damasio has concluded that emotion is primordial for cognitive development, including decision making (Damasio 52-82). However, and in contrast to Damasio, it will be

assumed in this thesis that emotion, when intense, amounts to an epistemological dead-end. It imbues certain memories with considerable intensity, and thereby keeps them in excess of the ego's cognitive capacities. This is typified by traumatic memory which, on account of its ample emotion, does not fit into "the great organization of the ego" (Freud, "Inhibition" 20: 153). Unable to assimilate such a memory, the ego cannot subsequently temporalise it, i.e. it cannot attribute to it a temporal category of "past present" (recollection), "actual present: 'now,'" or "future present" (imagination/expectation) (Derrida, *Specters*, xix). Instead, traumatic memory persists as a memory alien to time. This means that a traumatic memory not only remains immune to the attrition of time, but also impels the one it affects to repeatedly relive her traumatic past, each time as if it were for the first time. That is why such a memory persists as "a saying without a said," i.e. a mental representation that cannot be rendered into a coherent narrative (Levinas, *Otherwise* 151).

With this view in mind, it will be demonstrated in this first part of the thesis how McGregor's fiction, by virtue of certain of its thematic and formal properties, not only presents emotion, the prevailing element of any traumatic memory, but also shows how emotion imbues traumatic memories with a vividness in excess of the ego's cognitive capacities. In order to do that, it will be illustrated in the first chapter how emotion, the main element of traumatic memory, is presented by McGregor's poetics, especially by his hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. Highly charged with emotion, traumatic memory, as will be elucidated in the second chapter of the thesis, cannot be temporalised, but rather persists as an object alien to time. This is buttressed by McGregor's narratives which, marked by an uneven chronology, reflect the fact that a traumatic memory, unlike other memories, cannot be temporalised by the ego. Unable to temporalise such a memory, the ego cannot subsequently transmute it into a coherent narrative, hence McGregor's seemingly inconsistent narratives. Brimming with non-sequiturs, euphemisms and metalepses, these narratives, as will be shown in the third chapter, mirror the incapacity of a trauma victim to assimilate her traumatic memory that persists as a mental phenomenon that cannot be rendered into a coherent narrative.

Chapter 1
Presentation of Emotion

The purpose of this chapter is to show how certain aspects of McGregor's poetics present emotion which, when abundant, amounts to the main component of any traumatic memory. Many philosophers conceive of emotion as tantamount to feeling, as typified by Martha C. Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* and Adam Morton's *Emotion and Imagination*, for instance. Unlike these philosophers, it will be assumed in this thesis that emotion is not a feeling, including love and hatred. As detailed in the introduction, emotion is not formed in the cortex, the centre of consciousness. Rather, it originates from the limbic system (or the primitive brain), the neural assembly below the cortex (MacLean 16-7). Subsequently, emotion does not take on a conscious form. Although it crosses the threshold of consciousness, it cannot be rendered into any conscious image. Emotion switches from its initial state of quiescence into an impulse, whenever the ego encounters a situation that does not agree, in part or in whole, with its preconception of the world. Relatively new situations usually generate an emotion with moderate intensity, while radically new situations trigger intense emotion. Under the same emotion, individuals can experience contrastive feelings. Take, by way of example, two children who venture for the first time into a forest. Such a new experience does not fit into their preconceptions of the world, and therefore generates relatively intense emotion. Under that same emotion, one of the two children *feel* extremely happy and consequently decides to pursue his adventure, while the other child experiences a deep *feeling* of fear, and therefore decides to go back home. This example shows that emotion and feeling are not the same mental phenomenon. A feeling, whether negative or positive, is the ego's response to an emotional impulse that, depending on its intensity, imbues people's unusual experiences and memories with untiring vividness (or psychic value). That is why it has been noted in the introduction that fright, the main response to a traumatic experience, is not an emotion, but a feeling. This feeling is the ego's reaction to a traumatic memory. Being highly charged with emotional energy, such a memory gains ineffable liveliness, exceeds the ego's cognitive capacities, and therefore results in a feeling of fright.

Following this logic, it will be elucidated in this first chapter how four characteristic features of McGregor's poetics present emotion. The first is the author's hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. The second, paradoxical as it may seem, is the paucity of details in some of McGregor's narratives. The third aspect of this author's poetics that presents

emotion is his use of certain narrative elements that evoke water imagery. As regards the fourth and last aspect, it is the musicality of certain of the author's narratives.

1. Hyperbolic Narratives

The hallmark of McGregor's narratives is the wealth of their visual details. This is epitomised by McGregor's *Reservoir13* which is recounted by a disincarnate narrator. As will be illustrated in later sections, this narrator, like most of the narrators of McGregor's narratives, manifests itself as a camera-eye, i.e. an impersonal eye, "quite passive, recording and not thinking" (Casparis 51). That is why this narrator will be referred to by the impersonal pronoun 'it.' As earlier mentioned in the introduction, this impersonal narrator reveals a meticulous attention to the details of the local wildlife, as its narrative abounds with the names of trees, plants, fruits, bushes, mammals, birds, insects, fish, molluscs, amphibians, and invertebrates. This is most clearly evident in the scene where this bodiless narrator lists the many plants sprouting in the garden of Mr Wilson, an old widower and one of the inhabitants of the unnamed village:

> Gooseberries *and* strawberries *and* currants; sweetcorn *and* courgettes *and* beans; nasturtiums *and* marigolds, sweet william, sweet peas; spinach, lettuce, kale. Nettles, cow parsley, thistles, bindweed. Plenty of bloody bindweed.
> (*Reservoir* 97, emphasis added)

In this passage, the impersonal narrator does not refer to the locus of the novel, namely the traumatic impact of the disappearance of a young girl (Rebecca Shaw) on the dwellers of an unnamed village in the Peak District. Instead, it focuses on the mundane details of its rural environment, namely certain plants that usually go unnoticed. Doing so, it makes these otherwise unnoticeable natural details noticeable. The disincarnate narrator's vivid description of rural minutiae through hypotyposis is also illustrated in its use of polysyndeton. Indeed, by using several conjunctions in close succession, this narrator not only creates an impressively solemn note ('and'), but also slows up the reading pace, which forces the reader to pay attention to each natural detail listed in the above passage. Thus, by using polysyndeton, the incorporeal narrator transmutes the otherwise ordinary natural details into extraordinary phenomena.

This narrator also applies in the above passage solecistic punctuation, as it uses full stops and semicolons instead of commas. Such uncommon punctuation can be seen as a paralinguistic device that defamiliarizes the reading experience. Given its highly conventional nature, punctuation is usually overlooked by the reader. Whenever it is used in an unconventional manner, however, punctuation becomes an object of interpretation in its own right. Unconventional

punctuation is used, amongst other things, to express "altered states of consciousness such as dream, extreme emotion, and spatial disorientation" (Caracciolo 66). By way of example, the absence of punctuation can convey what Jung calls 'non-directed thinking' and what is usually called in literature 'stream of consciousness,' namely an associative (flow-like) thinking which "consists of trains of images suggested one by another, of a sort of spontaneous reverie" (Jung, *The Basic* 21). Conversely, the hyperbolic use of punctuation produces a paratactic rhythm, and usually hints at "distortions in characters' experiences, such as strong emotion" (Caracciolo 50). This is epitomised in the above passage by the bodiless narrator's hyperbolic and nonstandard use of full stops and semicolons. Semantically speaking, full stops and semicolons are used to divide distinct thoughts, while commas indicate the continuity of the same thought. However, the disincarnate narrator does not follow this semantic rule, as it uses full stops and semicolons while expressing the same thought. This, in turn, mirrors the narrator's inability to produce any uninterrupted thought, most probably as a result of its being overwhelmed by the remarkableness of its environment's minutiae.

Like *Reservoir13*, McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* is replete with evocations of the minutiae of everyday life. This is most clearly evident in the first narrative of this novel which is related by yet another impersonal narrator that will therefore be referred to by the impersonal pronoun 'it'. The fulcrum of this narrative is the collective trauma of the dwellers of an unnamed street whose lives are abruptly disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269). However, the bodiless narrator scarcely refers to this traumatic event. Instead, it mostly focuses on the trivial details of the unnamed street, the opening scene of the novel being a fair illustration of this feature:

> The ***c***ity, it ***s***ings. *And* the ***s***ong ***s***ings the loudest when you pick out each note . . . *and* manhole covers *clack-clacking* like ***c***ast-iron ***c***astanets. *and* factories with endless shifts, turning *and* pumping and steaming *and* sparking . . . *And* all the alarms, calling for help . . . going off, crying their needs to the night like an understaffed orphanage, babies *waawaa-ing* in darkened wards. ***S***ung ***s***irens, ***s***liding through the ***s***treets, ***s***treaking blue light from ***dis***tress to ***dis***tress.
>
> (*INSRT* 1-2, emphasis added)

In this passage, the omniscient narrator does not refer to Shahid's accident, but rather 'speaks of unremarkable things,' namely certain urban phenomena that usually go unnoticed. Doing so, it makes these otherwise trivial phenomena noticeable. Like the disincarnate narrator of *Reservoir13*, this narrator uses polysyndeton. Subsequently, it decelerates the reading pace, and as

such, compels the reader to take notice of each urban detail mentioned in the above passage. Thus, by using polysyndeton, the bodiless narrator makes the ordinary details of its urban environment look extraordinary.

Besides its use of polysyndeton, the bodiless narrator peppers its description of the unnamed street with sound patterns, including onomatopoeia ('clack-clacking', 'waawaa-ing') and alliteration, e.g. 'Sung sirens, sliding.' These sound patterns, in turn, unveil the inherent liveliness of the apparently lifeless urban phenomena in the above passage. Indeed, these urban phenomena, like any other worldly phenomenon, are deeply lively, infused with *vital force*. Hans Driesch, the prominent German biologist and philosopher, understands 'vital force' to mean the energy by means of which the otherwise inert matter, the essential constituent of each worldly organism, becomes lively (Bennett 64). Vital force, according to Driesch, is not only mechanical, governed by unchanging physical laws. Rather, it also develops in an unpredictable way, which accounts for the unforeseeable evolution of worldly organisms (Bennett 64-76). By revealing the vital force or the liveliness of the seemingly lifeless phenomena in the above passage, the disincarnate narrator awakens the reader to the fact that any worldly phenomenon, however trivial it may seem, is inherently lively, just like any human being. Thus, this narrator makes these phenomena worthy of the reader's attentiveness, and even respect.

In order to highlight the inherent liveliness of minutiae in the above passage, the impersonal narrator applies not only polysyndeton and sound pattern, but also anthropomorphism. Indeed, it likens its city to a human being and its noise to a song. It also equates alarms to people's calls for help and to babies' cries. By ascribing human attributes to the minutiae of its city, the disembodied narrator imbues with liveliness these seemingly lifeless phenomena, and therefore makes them look spectacularly singular. Crying and calling for help, these phenomena are reminiscent of the inherent vulnerability of the human condition, i.e. the human susceptibility to being physically and psychologically hurt. According to Pelluchon, the French philosopher, "the acknowledgment of one's inherent vulnerability is the key step in developing consideration for the other vulnerable beings" (Pelluchon 112, translation mine). Thus, by revealing the inherent vulnerability of certain urban phenomena in the above passage, the impersonal narrator makes the reader acknowledge her own vulnerability. In so doing, it impels the reader to develop consideration for each and every worldly being, which, no matter how insignificant it may appear, is inherently vulnerable, like any human being.

The disincarnate narrator from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* not only awakens the reader to his own vulnerability, but also produces a narrative seen by many critics as a staunch criticism of the widespread individualism in British society (Lea, "Jon" 204). This is chiefly because this novel's characters, despite being neighbours, do not know one another's names. Instead, each one of them is referred to either by her/his house number ('the young girl from number nineteen,' 'the young man from number twelve') or by physical traits ('the man with the moustache,' 'the man with the scarred hands'). Among these characters, "the boy with the sore eyes" from number eighteen features prominently (*INSRT* 55). This linchpin character is obsessed with the trifling matters of his urban environment, as evinced by his painstaking collection, which involves, amongst other things, used syringes, broken glass, a page from a TV guide, an empty cigarette packet, a series of supermarket till receipts, and photographs of each one of his neighbours. This collection amounts to a ritualistic shaping of reality whereby the young man tries "to control the world and reduce it from one incomprehensible mess to a structure which can be documented and understood" (Lea, "Jon" 209). This is underscored by the scene where this young man has a phone conversation with Michael, his twin brother:

> [The young man from number eighteen] says he was talking about that a lot, before he went away, about there being *too much*, that's what all these things are about, his projects, he was trying to absorb some of it.
> [His twin brother]says *too much* of what, [The young man from number eighteen] says *too much* of everything, *too much* stuff, *too many* places, *too much* information, *too many* people, *too much* of things for there to be *too much* of, there is *too much* to know and I don't know where to begin but I want to try.
> (*INSRT* 216, emphasis added)

This passage reflects the young man's willingness to assimilate the trifling details of his urban environment. It also shows this character's awareness of the extraordinary abundance of these details, as corroborated by his anaphoric expressions 'too many' and 'too much.' In their excessive evocation, the trifling details of the young man's urban environment impact him in a way that cannot be expressed in conventional terms. This is illustrated by the above passage which involves not only solecistic punctuation (commas instead of semicolons and the deletion of quotation marks), but also hanging paragraphs, i.e. paragraphs whose first lines protrude from the main body of the text. These unordinary paralinguistic features can be seen as a metaphor for the extraordinary impression that the urban minutiae have left on the young man's mind. In their incommensurable impressiveness, these minutiae chasten the young man's overconfidence in his ability to assimilate the world. Thus, they become conducive to humility

which is the first and indispensable step towards developing consideration for other beings of the world (Pelluchon 32).

Following suit with the young man from number eighteen in *If Nobody Speaks*, David, the linchpin character of McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*, shows a conscientious attention to the minutiae of his urban environment, especially relics. As mentioned in the introduction, this character is traumatised by accidentally discovering that he was adopted. This traumatic revelation resonates throughout the narrative whereby David displays an overwhelming fascination with any surviving memorial of something past. This is exemplified by the scene where David, when he was still a child, sneaks into the room at his Auntie Julia's top landing:

> He pushed open the door, and stared. He'd never seen so many things in one room before. There were piles of books and magazines, dresses on hangers and dresses spread out across chairs, hats balanced on top of each other, photo albums. Bunches of flowers hanging to dry, posters for West End productions, jewellery boxes spilling over with tangled necklaces and earrings. Later, once he'd been taken to the British Museum, he would think of comparing this room to the *collection halls of the Egyptian Pharaohs*.
>
> (*SMWB* 32, emphasis added)

In this passage, David depicts a myriad of trifling matters, namely discarded objects crammed into his Auntie Julia's top landing. By doing so, he makes these otherwise inconsiderable objects look considerable. In their extraordinary abundance, the discarded objects in the above passage become shrouded in mystery. This is epitomised by David when he equates these old objects to the Egyptian Pharaohs' objects which are usually associated with mystery.

The association of the mundane with mystery is also revealed by the very narrative structure of McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*. Indeed, this novel is structured around certain dated items that David has archived in order to use them in the reconstruction of his biological past. Each of these items, including 'Handwritten list of household items, c.1947,' 'Local map, Whitechapel district, London, annotated, c.1950,' and 'Tobacco tin, cigarettes, Christmas card, c.1914,' is the fulcrum of one of the novel's chapters. Depicted vividly through hypotyposis, these items seem "to have more reality, more depth and authenticity than David's sense of self. They seem almost to threaten to destabilize the fragile narrative he is using to construct his identity" (Edwards 227). Thus, these relics epitomize the *vibrancy* of what is usually perceived as inanimate objects. By vibrancy, Jane Bennett, the American political theorist and philosopher, means the vitality inherent not only in human beings, but also in nonhuman bodies, forces and forms (Bennett 122). By showing the vibrancy of relics, the narrator of McGregor's *So*

Many Ways to Begin makes the reader develop consideration which involves the apperception of liveliness in each worldly phenomenon (Pelluchon 75).

Like David, "the choral narrator" of McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, reveals a meticulous attention to its urban environment (Ganteau, *The Ethics* 136). As mentioned in the general introduction, this choral narrator's narrative hinges on a traumatic event, namely the discovery of the decaying body of Robert Radcliffe on his living-room floor. However, the choral narrator focuses not only on this traumatic event, but also on minor details of the unnamed city where the entire novel takes place. This is epitomised by the opening of the novel where the 'We' depicts the unnamed street where Robert lived:

> The street looks quiet, from here. *Steam billows and sighs from a central-heating flue*. A television flickers in a room next door. Someone hammers at a fencing post on the far side of the playing fields behind the flats.
>
> An overflow pipe with a fat lip of melting ice drips on to the walkway from three floors up, the water pooling and freezing in the shade of a low brick wall.
>
> (*ED* 1, emphasis added)

In this passage, the impersonal narrator equates the sound of a stream released from 'a central-heating flue' to 'sighs.' In so doing, this narrator infuses the otherwise lifeless stream with life, and as such, makes that stream worthy of consideration.

Furthermore, the impersonal narrator uses in the above passage paratactic clauses and a disruptive typography. According to Gérard Genette, the French narratologist, typography is a *paratext*, a paralinguistic element that surrounds and extends a text, "precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form of a book" (Genette, *Paratexts* 1, emphasis in the original). Among the paratextual elements of a text, typography features prominently.[20] It involves, among other things, line spacing (leading), letter spacing (tracking), typefaces and line length. Given its highly conventional nature, typography is typically 'transparent' in the reading experience, i.e. usually overlooked by the reader. Whenever it is used in an unconventional manner, however, typography becomes an object of perception and interpretation *per se*. For this reason, Genette conceives of typography, along with other paratextual elements, as a "threshold," namely "the fringe of the printed text which

[20] Paratextual elements, as *per* Genette, involve typography, illustrations, footnotes, an author's name, a title, and a preface (Genette, *Paratexts* 2).

controls one's whole reading of the text" (*Paratexts* 2). This is epitomised by the above passage where the unconventional leading, the double space after each paragraph, slows up the reading pace.[21] Subsequently, this unconventional leading compels the reader to take notice of the otherwise unnoticeable details of the choral narrator's city. Thus, the double space in the above passage transmutes the usually unnoticeable urban details into noticeable phenomena. The double spacing between each paragraph can also be a metaphor for the choral narrator's intermittent loss of consciousness. This is most probably because its consciousness is overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of urban details that prove too overpowering to process at once, which shows the remarkableness of what are usually conceived of as unremarkable phenomena. This once again evokes consideration which involves "the ability to admire and to notice the rare and the extraordinary in each worldly phenomenon, including in natural and ordinary things" (Pelluchon 75, translation mine).

Thus far, it has been shown how McGregor's narratives, by virtue of the author's hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, transform these otherwise known and therefore banal matters into extraordinary and therefore thoroughly unknown phenomena. And since, as has already been demonstrated, anything unknown conjures emotion, the minutiae of everyday life generate, by virtue of McGregor's poetics, intense emotion. Under such emotion, readers may develop a feeling of admiration for the minutiae of the world. This feeling is the key step towards developing an ethics of consideration that involves, amongst other things, the capacity to perceive the extraordinariness of ordinary matters (Pelluchon 75).

In what follows, it will be evinced that the author's thorough depiction of minuscule details of daily life simulates traumatic memory. This is because that memory, like McGregor's narratives, is "distinguished by its detail and its accuracy" (Yuille 175). It impels the traumatised individual to remember not only central, but also peripheral details of their trauma (Conway 110). This is exemplified by the narrative of "the girl from number twenty-two," one of the protagonists of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* (*INSRT* 193). As mentioned in the introduction, this girl is the narrator of the second narrative strand of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, a narrative strand that takes place three years after the first. The name of this female narrator, like most of the characters of this novel, is kept unknown. Only in McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* is her name revealed to be Kate, the only child of David Carter and Eleanor Campbell.

[21] The use of typography as a literary device is not a recent literary phenomenon, but rather finds its roots in the eighteenth-century writings of Laurence Sterne (Sadokierski 29-32).

Kate becomes accidentally pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. She thereupon becomes not only obsessed with her swelling stomach, but she also becomes haunted by vivid memories of the day she had a traumatic experience when she witnessed the car accident of one of her former neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269). This is epitomised by the scene where she recalls the many furnishings her friend Simon crammed into the boot of his father's car the day Shahid had his car accident:

> Against duvets and pillows, a stereo, a television, books and magazines and folders full of notes.
> Against plates, saucepans, cutlery, a shoebox full of half-finished condiments, a food processor with the attachments missing.
> A box of CDs, a box of videos, a box full of photographs and postcards and letters.
>
> (*INSRT* 35-6)

In this passage, the items Kate lists are not set in one sentence. Rather, they are split over distinct paragraphs, each of which is a single noun phrase. Superimposed upon one another without any conjunction in between, these noun phrases can be a metaphor for the plethora of furnishings pressed forcibly upon one another in Simon's father's car boot. Another possible interpretation of these interrupted noun phrases is that they mime Kate's inability to enumerate the numerous items in one fell swoop, with the end of each noun phrase marking the pause Kate needs to take a breath. In any case, the above passage reflects the remarkable vividness of Kate's traumatic memory, because of which this character still remembers three years later not only central but also peripheral details of the day of her traumatic accident.

Like Kate, her father, David Carter, shows an uncommon ability to remember his traumatic experience, in McGregor's second novel. As mentioned in the introduction, David only discovers that he was adopted at the age of twenty-two when his aunt Julia, because of her mental deterioration, unwittingly told him the truth about his parentage. And since then, he has become haunted by that scene, as exemplified by the following passage:

> Julia with her cigarette held up beside her face, his mother *nudging* into the room. The window open and a woman *zimmer-framing* her slow way across the garden. The sound of television laughter *coming* from the main room, and an unanswered telephone *ringing* somewhere. The cymbelline *shaking* of the teacup as his mother gasped and put down the tray.
>
> (*SMWB* 89, emphasis added)

David's narration of this passage takes place more than thirty years after the scene he depicts. Nevertheless, David still recalls with vividness not only the central event, namely Julia's

inadvertent admission that he was adopted. Rather, he also remembers several secondary details, including an 'opened window,' and a 'telephone ringing.' This is typical, as any traumatised individual remembers vividly even the trivial details of her trauma.

Alongside the secondary details it involves, the above passage brims with verbs in the present participle form, e.g. 'nudging' and 'coming.' Semantically speaking, a verb in this form indicates the continuity of an action in the past, the present, or the future, depending on the tense of the finite clause in which it is embedded.[22] However, David uses non-finite clauses with verbs in the present participle. This implies that he has been experiencing the scene he depicts as a continuous presence, i.e. a scene that he has been remembering all his life in all its details. This is symptomatic of any traumatic memory that persists over time. And it does so because it is highly charged with emotion. This is evidenced by recent researches in psychology, according to which highly emotional events, including traumas, are associated with the persistence of memory for both central and peripheral details (Conway 93).

In *Even the Dogs*, like in *So Many Ways to Begin*, traumatic memory is presented as a vivid reminder of a frightening past that the traumatised individual remembers in all its details. In this novel, the 'We,' the choral narrator, is obsessed with the traumas of some deceased characters, most of whom are homeless people and drug addicts.[23] This is evinced by its narrative that mostly involves the traumatic and dehumanizing life experiences of these precarious characters, among whom Ant features prominently. Ant is a former British soldier who lost one of his legs in Afghanistan when a homemade bomb blew up his Land Rover. The choral narrator relates this accident in the stream-of-consciousness passage that runs over seven pages at the end of the novel's third section (*ED* 114-20). This passage reflects the choral narrator's remarkable ability to depict Ant's war accident in all its details. In fact, the 'we' not only focuses on the main event, namely Ant's accident. Rather, it also describes secondary details, namely the drug trafficking taking place in the nearby poppy fields. Thus, the 'We,' makes its narrative of Ant's accident a metaphor for traumatic memory which, due to its intense emotion, impels the traumatised person to remember not only the main but also secondary details of their traumas.

[22] A finite clause involves verb forms that show tense, person, and number. Conversely, a non-finite clause involves verb forms, including –ing forms, that do not show tense, person, or number.

[23] As formerly noted, the 'We,' according to many scholars, most notably Jean Michel Ganteau, is made up of the ghosts of the departed fellow homeless and drug addicts (Ganteau, "The Powers" 451). That is why it will be referred to by the impersonal pronoun.

Drawing on the above excerpts from McGregor's narratives, it becomes clear that the author mainly focuses on the peripheral details of his characters' traumas. Doing so, he transmutes his narratives into a metaphor for traumatic memory which, by dint of its ample emotion, keeps vivid not only the main but also the peripheral details of people' traumas. The author's hyperbolic depiction of the secondary details of his characters' traumas transforms these otherwise banal details into utterly new phenomena. And since the new conjures emotion, these details conjure, by virtue of McGregor's poetics, intense emotion. Under the sway of such emotion, readers may, among other things, develop a feeling of admiration for the minuscule details of the world. This feeling is a pivotal step towards developing an ethic of consideration whereby a human being becomes thoughtful and therefore responsible towards all living beings, including the most minuscule and the apparently frivolous (Pelluchon 220).

2. Paucity of Details

As demonstrated in the previous subpart, emotion is presented by McGregor's abundant depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. In the present subpart, it will be illustrated how emotion, paradoxical as it may seem, is also presented by the paucity of details in some of McGregor's narratives. Among these narratives, the fifth chapter of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* features prominently. This chapter alternates between two narrative strands, the first of which is the official account of the coroner's inquest into Robert Radcliffe's death. As previously stated in the introduction, Robert Radcliffe is a former British soldier and an alcoholic whose decaying body is only discovered several days after his death in his derelict flat. The coroner's official account of Robert's death involves, in the choral narrator's iterative statement, "too many gaps," the following excerpt being a fair illustration of this feature (*ED* 68, 87, 93):

> CORONER: [. . .] is to ensure that the deceased person is granted a full and open hearing of the facts in a public manner. You may note the absence of journalists . . . nevertheless, this is a public court, and what we say here today will be a matter of public record. [Could I just ask, Ms Radcliffe: do you have any objection to me calling you Laura? (Inaudible response.) Thank you.].
> (*ED* 165)

This excerpt, like the rest of the coroner's account, is punctuated with ellipses, non-sequiturs, and parenthetical notes recording inaudible responses or expletives. Incomplete and incoherent, it echoes the inability of the coroner to pinpoint the exact cause of Robert's death that remains unknown until the end of the novel. And since the unknown, as previously illustrated, triggers emotion, Robert's mysterious death therefore conjures emotion. Under such emotion, readers

may experience a profound feeling of dissatisfaction, as they cannot know the exact cause of Robert's death.

Like the above excerpt, the second narrative strand of the fifth chapter from McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is primarily marked by its lack of details. In this narrative strand, the 'We,' the choral narrator of the novel, raises a plethora of questions about Laura, Robert Radcliffe's only child, as typified by the following excerpt:

> All these questions. Why did she ever go back and see her dad that first time. What took her back. What was so wrong with living at home. And she liked her nan. She was close to her nan *was she*. And what took *you* back to *your* father's the second time. Did *you* think you could do something. Did *you* think you could save him. Or were *you* just desperate by then.
>
> (*ED* 175, emphasis added)

This excerpt is, amongst other things, marked by the choral narrator's unwonted use of question tags. In English, question tags are most commonly used to check information that the speaker believes they already know in order to confirm them. In the above passage, however, the 'We,' the choral narrator, does not apply the appropriate grammatical rule specific to question tags, as it uses 'was she' rather than 'wasn't she.'[24] Such solecistic use of question tags can imply that the choral narrator believes its statement to be beyond affirmation, i.e. it can neither be affirmed nor denied. This interpretation is validated by the novel that ends without providing the slightest clue as to whether or not Laura was close to her grandmother.

Alongside its unconventional question tags, the foregoing passage involves an abrupt shift from the choral narrator's free direct speech to direct speech, where Laura is referred to in the second person. This direct speech may be that of the choral narrator. If so, it inevitably produces a *narrative metalepsis*, on account of which the reader cannot identify the 'We' as an extradiegetic or an intradiegetic narrator.[25] The effect that narrative metalepsis has on the reader is reminiscent of the effect produced by traumatic memory on traumatised individuals who cannot determine whether their traumatic memories are part of them or are external others. That is why any traumatised individual usually experiences her traumatic memory as "an internal-

[24] The 'We,' the choral narrator of the novel, is most probably made up of the ghosts of Robert Radcliffe's fellow drug addicts and homeless friends. That is why this spectral narrator will be referred to by the impersonal pronoun 'it' (Ganteau, "The Powers" 451).

[25] Genette understands narrative metalepsis to mean a "deliberate transgression of the threshold of embedding [that takes place when] an author (or his reader) introduces himself into the fictive action of the narrative or when a character in that fiction intrudes into the extradiegetic existence of the author or reader" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 88).

external," i.e. an internal phenomenon that acts by its own motive power like an external other (Derrida, *Specters* 235).

In contrast to what has been said, the direct speech in the foregoing passage may not be that of the choral narrator, but rather the choral narrator's quoting of the coroner's discourse. If that is the case, then there are three main things missing in the choral narrator's reported speech, namely the name of the original speaker (the coroner), an introductory verb, and quotation marks. The omission of these three speech markers, in the above passage as elsewhere in the novel, minimizes "the distance between the reader and the voices in the text. With the mediating instances missing, these voices are internalized—they become the reader's own, inner voice" (Hertel 96). This, in turn, impels the reader to become part of the characters' fictive world. Subsequently, readers unwillingly experience these characters' traumas as though they were their own. This falls in line with the Levinasian conception of an ethical experience where an ethical subject suffers, despite herself, "for the other, a suffering for the suffering of the other" (Levinas, *Otherwise* xiv).

Besides the abrupt shift from free direct to direct speech, the above passage is characterised by solecistic punctuation, as the choral narrator uses full stops instead of question marks at the end of its paratactic series of questions. Such unusual punctuation arguably suggests that there are no answers to these questions. This interpretation is confirmed by the rest of the narrative that ends without providing any answer to the questions of the above passage. These unanswered questions are not an exception, as the author deliberately punctuates all of his writings with omitted details. In their characteristic reticence, these narratives become, amongst other things, a metaphor for the traumatised individuals' elliptical testimonies that usually hide more than they reveal (Caruth, *Trauma* 137).

Like the above excerpt, McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* raises many questions, and leaves them unanswered. As earlier mentioned, this novel centres on David Carter, a curator at Coventry museum, who discovers that he was adopted only as "a grown man when the dementia of his aunt Julia caused her to let slip the truth of his parentage" (Lea, "Jon" 216). Upon such a traumatic discovery, David experiences a severe identity crisis, until the day he accidentally finds the hospital admission card his birth mother used the day she gave birth to him, with the name of 'Mary Friel' scribbled on it. He thereupon grows obsessed with tracking the Mary Friel he believes to be his birth mother. However, and only at the end of the novel, does David discover that 'Mary Friel' is a fake name his biological mother used so that nobody could find her.

Thus, the novel ends as it started, leaving the true identity of David's birth mother an unanswered mystery. Unable to know this protagonist's true biological past, readers ineluctably become overwhelmed by emotion, since the unknown always evokes emotion. Under the thrall of such emotion, they may experience a deep feeling of frustration. In order to overcome their frustration, readers may readily fall back on their imaginations, conjuring 'So Many Ways to Begin,' i.e. so many possible scenarios about David's lineage.

Similar to the aforementioned novel, McGregor's *Reservoir13* revolves around a mystery, namely the enigmatic disappearance of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, from an unnamed village in the Peak District. Kept unsolved until the end of the novel, the girl's disappearance haunts both the impersonal narrator and the inhabitants of the unnamed villages, as epitomised by the following passage:

> *She could have* arranged to meet somebody, and been driven safely away . . . *She could have* been hurt by her parents in some terrible mistake. *She could have* gone away because she'd chosen to. People still wanted to know.
> (*Reservoir* 260-1, emphasis added)

In this passage, the impersonal narrator imagines several scenarios of what might have happened to Rebecca. It also uses anaphora, repeating the same group of words ('she could have') at the beginning of its successive statements.[26] Anaphora is usually used to establish a marked rhythm, which, in turn, produces strong emotion (Rivkin 150). Under the sway of strong emotion, readers can readily follow suit with the impersonal narrator by falling back on *confabulation*, i.e. they can spontaneously come up with their own imagined scenarios about what may have happened to Rebecca. Neurotics, especially traumatised individuals, also commonly fall back on confabulation when they fill in the gaps of their distressing memories with fabricated details (Janet, *L'évolution* 275-93).

The author could have delivered his readers from confabulation when he published his last book, *The Reservoir Tapes*, as this book was expected to give a definitive answer as to what really happened to the young Rebecca Show. As earlier noted in the introduction, this book was originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4 as a series of fifteen episodes set in the anonymous village of *Reservoir13* during a summer day leading up to and the day immediately following Rebecca's disappearance. *The Reservoir Tapes* was then published as a collection of fifteen short

[26] As already mentioned, this narrator, like most of the narrators of McGregor's narratives, manifests itself as a camera-eye, i.e. an impersonal eye, "quite passive, recording and not thinking" (Casparis 51). That is why this narrator is referred to by the impersonal pronoun 'it.'

stories, each titled with the name of its main character. To the readers' consternation, these short stories generate more possible scenarios about what could have happened to Rebecca. This is because they present, among other things, potential malefactors who could have been behind Rebecca's disappearance, including Clive, the loner who invites the young Deepak into his kitchen where he keeps a gun; Woods, the ex-convict and the smuggler of illegal goods; Jackson, the farmer who takes his son, Gordon, to a prostitute, then tries to abuse her after she relieves his son of his virginity.

Even the landscape of the unnamed village, the backdrop of *Reservoir13*, could be behind Rebecca's disappearance, as implied by the fourth short story told from the perspective of Graham, a conservationist at the national park. In this story, Graham recounts an accident that takes place the summer before Rebecca's disappearance in the moors, the very place where Rebecca disappeared. A group of "Girl Guides" (or scouts) are led on to the moors on a butterfly safari (*TRT* 39). One girl becomes separated from the others, and abruptly steps into "a deep crevasse, hidden by the tussocks of bog-grass" (*TRT* 44). Reflecting on this accident, Graham says that "the girl would have still been there now," if she had not had an emergency whistle that she used to call for help (*TRT* 45).

When the final chapter of these short stories closes, the reader becomes aware that *The Reservoir Tapes*, like most of McGregor's writings, is "a millefeuille confection of layers of ambiguity and occlusion that conceal even as they promise to reveal" (Crown n.p.). Characterised by its lack of details, *Reservoir Tapes* cannot be rendered into a *totality*, in Levinas's conception of the term, i.e. a representation whereby the being of something or someone is reduced to its phenomena (Levinas, *Totality* 191). Rather, it persists as an *infinity*, understood by Levinas to mean anything or anyone whose presence is, to a certain extent, an absence, hiding more than revealing (Levinas, *Totality* 55). Thus, this collection of short stories, by virtue of the author's poetics which is marked by its reticence, cannot be assimilated in its totality. This is reminiscent of traumatic memory that cannot be fully assimilated, as evinced by Cathy Caruth, the professor at Cornell University, when she states that "What was ultimately missing in trauma, not in the courage of the witness, but in the human cognitive capacity to perceive and to assimilate the totality of what was really happening at the time" (Caruth, *Trauma* 69). In this regard, it can be postulated that, in its paucity of details, McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes* resists assimilation, and subsequently has, to a certain extent, a traumatic effect upon its readers.

Much in the same vein, McGregor's collection of short stories, *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You*, hides more than it reveals. This collection involves thirty short stories, most of which are under 1,000 words. The shortest story is "Fleeing Complexity," and it goes: "The fire spread quicker than the little bastard was expecting" (*TISTHSLY* 75). This story is more complex than its length suggests. It worries the reader into wondering about many unknown details, including the true identity of the boy who set the fire and his motives. This short story is not an exception, as most of McGregor's short stories are shrouded in mystery. This is clearly evident from the very first short story, "That Colour" (*TISTHSLY* 3-4). This two-page short story, like other short stories in the same collection, begins *in medias res*, as it opens with the direct speech of an unnamed woman. In a nutshell, "That Colour" is about a woman who shows sheer fascination with the colour of tree leaves in autumn, a colour she calls "flame-red" (*TISTHSLY* 4). This woman's fascination with the 'flame-red' colour is kept a mystery, as the short story ends without explaining why the woman is enchanted with 'That Colour.' Beginning *in medias res* and ending without clear resolution, the short story remains wrapped in mystery. Unable to know what truly happens at the beginning and at the end of 'That Colour,' readers may have their eyes opened to the fact that there are certain things that lie beyond grasp.

To put it succinctly, McGregor's poetics, as epitomised by the above passages, is distinguished by its reticence. The hyperbolic scarcity of details in this author's narratives mimic, among other things, the traumatised individuals' elliptical testimonies that reflect the inability of these individuals to assimilate their frightening past experiences in their totality. Hinging on unanswered mysteries, these narratives, as previously demonstrated, become the wellspring of intense emotion. Under such emotion, readers experience a deep feeling of frustration. In order to overcome this feeling, they may fall back on confabulation, which, as formerly stated, is among the main symptoms of traumatic neuroses. Readers may also open themselves to McGregor's elliptical narratives, and welcome their unanswerable mysteries. If they do so, they transmute their reading of McGregor's fiction into an ethical experience, in Levinas's conception of the word, i.e. an unconditional welcoming of the absolutely unknown other (Levinas, *Totality* 14).

3. Water Imagery

As illustrated in the two former subparts, emotion is presented by McGregor's abundant depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, but also, paradoxical as it may seem, by the paucity

of details in some of his narratives. In the present subpart, it will be demonstrated how emotion is also presented by McGregor's use of certain narrative elements that evoke water images.

McGregor's narratives are, amongst other things, characterised by their *imaginative unity*, in Gaston Bachelard's acceptance of the term (*Water* 45). Gaston Bachelard is a renowned French philosopher and innovative thinker who wrote on the philosophy of science, and later on poetry, psychoanalysis, dreams and imagination. For Bachelard, imagination does not reproduce "immediate images," i.e. normal acts of perception of images based on reality (Bachelard, *Air* 2). Rather "it *deforms* what we perceive; it is, above all, the faculty that frees us from immediate images and *changes* them" into other images (Bachelard, *Air* 1). Imagination, according to Bachelard, operates in two different modes: "one that gives life to formal cause and one that gives life to material cause—or, more succinctly, a *formal imagination* and a *material imagination*" (Bachelard, *Water* 1, emphasis in the original). The following concrete example will help clarify what Bachelard means by formal imagination. People commonly contemplate the clouds. And when they do so, they intuitively recognise in the clouds certain familiar forms, like the shape of an animal or the outline of a face. This mode of imagination is what Bachelard calls formal imagination. In a word, formal imagination feeds on immediate images in order to produce other images. For Bachelard, images produced by formal imagination are not deeply impressive. This is because these images do not gratify all of the human senses, but only engage the sense of sight. Besides, formal imagination, according to Bachelard, lacks creative potential, as it only feeds on "forms, mere perishable forms and vain images" (Bachelard, *Water* 1). Unlike formal imagination, material imagination, as *per* Bachelard, has an ineffable creative potential, as it produces highly impressive images that appeal to all of the human senses. His conception of material imagination draws heavily on the pre-Socratic tradition, according to which fire, earth, water, and air are nature's core elements (Bachelard, *Water* 12). Inspired by this archaic tradition, Bachelard postulates that there are four types of material imagination, each of which is characterised by the element to which imagination adheres: fire, earth, water, or air (Bachelard, *Water* 4). By way of example, an imagination adhering to water ineluctably produces images evocative of water symbols and aspects, including fluidity and pliability (Bachelard, *Water* 13).[27]

[27] According to Bachelard, the attachment of an individual's imagination to one of the four elements is fully determined by that individual's childhood experiences (Bachelard, *Water* 7-8). For instance, someone who spends his childhood next to a water source, like a river, ineluctably develops a material imagination that produces imagery characterised by water aspects and symbols, including freshness. Thus, rather than being an innate aspect of the personality, the adhesion of a person's imagination to one of the four elements is, according to Bachelard, an acquired mode of imagination.

Drawing on Bachelard's theory of imagination, it will be shown in this subpart how McGregor's narratives are characterised by their *imaginative unity*, their adherence to a substance that constitutes their privileged means of expression (Bachelard, *Water* 45). This substance is water, as is illustrated by the italicized prologue in McGregor's *So Many Way to Begin*. This prologue is most probably the email David received from Sarah, the woman he believed to be his biological sister. In this email, Sarah tells David about the adolescence of Mary Friel, Sarah's mother and the woman David mistakenly thought to be his birth mother. However, Sarah's email does not tell everything about Mary's adolescence. Rather, it involves "an elliptic account of how Mary becomes pregnant after her employer has taken a passing interest in her, how she hides her pregnancy, abandons the child after a short stay in hospital and goes back to her family in Ireland" (Ganteau, "Espousing" 60). Sarah's email is chiefly characterised by its fluidity, as is illustrated by the following passage:

> *They came in the morning, early, walking with the others along tracks and lanes and roads, across fields, down the long low hills which led to the slow pull of the river, down to the open gateways in the city walls, the hours and days of walking showing in the slow shift of their bodies, their breath steaming above them in the cold morning air as the night fell away at their backs.*
> (*SMWB* 1, emphasis and boldface added)

This excerpt has four main features that account for its fluidity. The first feature involves the /s/ and /z/ sounds that permeate the passage. In their abundance, these two phonemes produce a hissing sound reminiscent of that of flowing water, hence the characteristic fluidity of this passage. The fluidity of the above passage is also the outcome of its punctuation. This is because this passage does not involve any full stops, but only commas. Given the absence of any full stop, the reading of such a passage becomes as fluid as a running source of water. Water imagery is also evoked by the many commas of the above passage. Phonetically speaking, a comma is always followed by a rising intonation. Thus, the consecutive use of commas in the previous passage entails a consecutive rise in intonation that evokes, among other things, the successive surging movement of sea waves. The fourth and last feature of the above passage that accounts for its fluidity is its verbal forms. This passage is mostly made of clauses without any verbal form showing tense, as most of its verbs are present participles. Such a verbal form, when unaccompanied by any other verb showing tense, usually implies an ongoing continuity without beginning or end, which is the typical characteristic of flowing water. The timeless ongoingness produced by the repetitive use of the present participle is also redolent of any traumatic memory. This stems from the fact that such a memory is experienced by any

traumatised individual, including Mary Friel, the original narrator of the previous passage, as an omnipresent phenomenon, haunting them wherever they go (LaCapra 143).

Like the last passage, McGregor's *Reservoir13* is primarily marked by its fluidity. As mentioned in the introduction, the trigger of this novel is the disappearance of the thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, on New Year's Eve. However, the impersonal narrator scarcely refers to that traumatic event. Instead, the narrative mainly focuses on the local landscape of the unnamed village, the backdrop of the novel. This is typified by the following excerpt:

> Mr Wilson strode past with Nelson as though he'd never claimed to be having trouble with his hip. But recently the problem had been all too apparent, and was getting worse. Nelson's barking shifted up a pitch, and the door shook as he clattered against it, and then Mr Wilson opened up with a smile. By the pack-horse bridge a heron paced through the mud at the river's edge, head bobbing, feet lifted awkwardly high. It stopped, and settled, and watched the water.
>
> (*Reservoir* 125)

In this excerpt, the disincarnate narrator focuses on Mr. Wilson, an old widower and one of the inhabitants of the unnamed village who is about to undergo hip replacement surgery. The narrator also focuses on Nelson, Mr. Wilson's dog, and then shifts to the description of a heron, without the signposting of paragraph breaks. The uninterrupted narrative of this passage is not an exception. This is because the impersonal narrator's entire narrative moves seamlessly back and forth between the description of local wildlife and the depiction of the characters' daily lives. The uninterrupted fluctuation of this narrative between nature and culture is reminiscent of a wave's ebbs and flows, hence the liquidity of this narrative.

Like the impersonal narrator's narrative, the choral narrator's chronicle in McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is primarily marked by its fluidity, the following passage from this novel's second chapter being a clear illustration of that feature:

> They carry his body through the city at dusk and take him away to the morgue.
>
> *And* we see Danny, stumbling away from the garages at the back of the flats, tumbling down the hill like he'*s* about to fall, rubbing at his cheeks with the backs of his hands, wiping at the tears which haven't yet fallen from a face still twisted with fear.
>
> (*ED* 17, emphasis added)

In this passage, the choral narrator depicts successively two scenes in two distinct paragraphs separated by a double space. The first paragraph involves the choral narrator's simultaneous

narration of the scene where Robert's corpse is carried away in an ambulance to the morgue. As for the second paragraph, it involves the choral narrator's subsequent narration of the scene where Danny, one of Robert's fellow drug addicts and homeless friends, discovers Robert's rotting corpse. Although these two scenes take place several days apart, they are presented as though they were simultaneous or consecutive. This can be the outcome of the choral narrator's use of 'And' at the beginning of the second paragraph. Such a conjunction is usually used to link two simultaneous or successive events. However, the choral narrator uses it to relate two events distinct in time. Doing so, it presents these events as contemporaneous. This is emphasised by the choral narrator's use of the present tense in its description of the two scenes, which, once again, makes these scenes appear concurrent.

Thus, it becomes evident that the choral narrator's narrative in the previous passage, like in many other passages of the same novel, brings together the present (what it is actually witnessing) and the past (what it remembers). This brings to mind Bachelard's conception of water as "the universal glue," i.e. the substance that binds together discrete elements (Bachelard, *Water* 107). Thus, it can be assumed that the confluence of past and present in the choral narrator's narrative evokes water that merges together distinct elements, hence the liquidity of the foregoing passage.

The confluence of past and present in McGregor's *Even the Dogs* can also be seen as symptomatic of trauma. This stems from the fact that, any traumatised being, as will be detailed in the second chapter, does not usually succeed in bridging her trauma and her life before and after. Rather, she usually switches "from one to another without synchronizing because [she] is reporting not a *sequence* but a *simultaneity*" (Caruth, *Trauma* 177, emphasis in the original).

Similar to the previous passage, another fragment of the same novel evinces the liquidity of the choral narrator's narrative. In this passage, the 'We' describes, while sitting in an ambulance that carries Robert's corpse to the morgue, the city where Robert and his fellow drug addicts and homeless friends spend the last days of their lives:

> The van drives quickly now, the men in the front run dry of conversation and impatient to be done, to be home, to be off the streets on a wind-cold empty day like this, and through the darkened windows we watch the city pass us by; long dark streets splashed with light, empty parks and flooded playing fields, boarded-up shops and fenced-off factory ruins.
>
> (*ED* 31, emphasis added)

In this passage, the choral narrator is sitting at the back of an ambulance hurtling at full speed. Subsequently, it cannot take its time to depict what it sees outside the ambulance, hence the lack of full stops in the above passage. Alongside its lack of full stops, the above passage brims with the /r/ and the /l/ sound. In English, these two consonant sounds are considered liquids, namely phonemes in which the tongue produces a partial closure in the mouth, resulting in a vowel-like consonant. According to Bachelard, a liquid consonant sound is characterised by its liquidity, since it creates a sound effect reminiscent of the murmur of running water (*Water* 191). Thus, by using many words with liquid consonant sounds, the impersonal narrator imbues the above passage with liquidity.

Liquidity is also the main aspect of the impersonal narrator's narrative in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*. This is typified by the opening scene where this narrator depicts the unnamed city, the backdrop of the novel, under pouring rain:

> And after these first kissed hints there is the full embrace, the wetness of the sky pouring suddenly down upon this street, these houses, this city, falling with a strange quietness at first, gently gathering momentum until suddenly there is a noise like gravel slung at windows and the rain is falling hard, heavy, bouncing off the tarmac with such force that at ground level it's hard to tell if the rain is coming up or down, pounding the pavement and skidding across the hot dry surfaces of the street, gushing down rooftops into gutters and cracked drains, washing against windows and worn-out windowframes, hammering insistently against anything left open to the sky.
>
> (*INSRT* 209, emphasis added)

This passage is infused with the /s/ sound, and thereby echoes the sound of the downpour it depicts. The passage also lacks full stops, which accounts for its *liquidity*, in Bachelard's understanding of the term, i.e. a flowing quality that represents the elementary characteristic of water (*Water* 93). By virtue of its liquid prose style, the foregoing passage transmutes the otherwise unremarkable city it delineates into a remarkable place, which favours consideration, the act of "perceiving something or someone with the same care that one usually shows when pondering over the position and height of the stars" (Pelluchon 31, translation mine).

In a nutshell, McGregor's style, as typified by the previous passages, is chiefly marked by its fluidity. By virtue of his fluid style, the author breathes life into otherwise lifeless phenomena, the two unnamed cities he depicts in the last two passages being a fair illustration. Imbued with life, these two cities, like many other non-living phenomena in McGregor's narratives, evoke emotion, the nebulous neural energy by virtue of which conscious representations of the world, most notably traumatic memories, gain liveliness (Jung, *Man* 96). Under such

emotion, readers experience, among other things, a strong feeling of reverence and admiration for all worldly phenomena, including non-living things, which is essential for the development of an ethic of consideration.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated how McGregor's style is, among other things, characterised by its adherence to certain aspects of water, including fluidity, and thereby appeals to emotion. In what follows, it will be illustrated how the fear displayed by certain characters of McGregor's novels when meditating upon ample water is the outcome of their unconscious fear of the ample emotion generated by their traumatic memories. Take, by way of example, the scene of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* where "the girl from number twenty-two" meditates about a heavy rain drenching her city (*INSRT* 193):

> By the middle of the afternoon it had rained so much that the drains were overflowing, clogged up with leaves and newspapers.
> The water built up until it was sliding across the road in great sheets, rippled by the wind and parted like a football crowd by passing cars.
> I was shocked by the sheer volume of water that came pouring out of the darkness of the sky.
> Watching the weight of it crashing into the ground made me feel like a very young child, unable to understand what was really happening.
>
> (*INSRT* 52)

In this passage, the girl from number twenty-two does not list the items she depicts in one paragraph. Rather, she spreads them over distinct one-sentence paragraphs. By doing so, this narrator singles out each item that subsequently becomes worthy of attention and consideration.

The female narrator of the above passage, as previously mentioned in the introduction, accidentally falls pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. Upon discovering her pregnancy, this young woman becomes obsessed with her swelling stomach, an obsession that finds expression in the very typography of each paragraph of the above passage. Characterised by its first line that protrudes from the main body of the text, each paragraph of the previous passage can be seen as a metaphor for the pregnant narrator's protruding stomach.

As regards the sheer quantity of rainwater depicted in the above passage, it can be interpreted in three different ways. It can be seen as a metaphor for the abundant amniotic liquid that will flow from the female narrator's body upon parturition. The abundant quantity of water in the previous passage can also emulate the girl's milk-saturated breasts. The association of water with milk is corroborated by Bachelard when he states that "all liquid is a kind of water;

then all water is a kind of milk," since milk is the first water known to the mouth (*Water* 117). As regards the third possible interpretation of the sheer quantity of rainwater described in the foregoing passage, it is that substantial rainwater emulates the substantial quantity of emotion that overcomes the girl whenever she remembers her accidental pregnancy with twins. In fact, abundant water engulfs the land surface. And so does abundant emotion to consciousness which, when overwhelmed by the intense emotion of certain memories, most notably traumatic memories, loses its capacity of assimilating stimuli from within or without the brain, hence the girl's sense of fright: 'I was shocked.'

Like the girl from number twenty-two in the above passage, many characters of McGregor's collection of short stories, *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You*, display a sheer fear of abundant water. Among these characters, George, the protagonist of "In Winter the Sky," features prominently (*TISTHSLY* 5-35). George is a farmer living with his wife, Joanna, and his paralysed father in the Fenlands, the coastal plain in Eastern England. This character's life is plagued by the knowledge of how he killed a pedestrian whilst driving his father's car and then buried his body in the Fens. Haunted by his memory of this traumatic accident, George keeps "watch on the land and the sky" for fear that any flood waters disturb the soil and bring the remains to the surface (*TISTHSLY* 22). George's fear of abundant waters can be seen as the conscious expression of his unconscious fear of abundant emotion that brings in its wake his traumatic memory of the accident.

In like manner, and in the same collection of short stories, the unnamed protagonist of "If It Keeps on Raining" is haunted by a traumatic experience he had when he witnessed the death of two children during a football stadium disaster (*TISTHSLY* 57-74). He thereupon develops an obsession with an impending cataclysmic flood reminiscent of that of the biblical story of Noah. In preparation for a flood of such epic proportion, he starts the construction of a tree-house and a raft. The character's conscious obsession with such epic water surge is arguably the outcome of his unconscious fear of his traumatic memory that brings in its wake overwhelming emotion beyond his cognitive capacity for assimilation.

To put it succinctly, water, as epitomised by McGregor's narratives, symbolises both life and death. As a symbol of life, water imbues McGregor's style with liquidity, and as such, injects vivacity into McGregor's narratives that subsequently evoke emotion. Under such emotion, readers can develop, among other things, a deep feeling of fascination with all worldly

phenomena, including non-living phenomena, which is primordial for the development of an ethic of consideration.

As a symbol of death, water elicits images of destruction and dissolution. This is typified by many traumatised characters of McGregor's fiction who are obsessed with the destructive effect of water which, when abundant, dissolves everything. "The first to be dissolved is a landscape; lines and forms melt away. But little by little the whole world is brought together again in its water. A single matter has taken over everything. Everything is dissolved" (Bachelard, *Water* 91-2). The destructive and dissolving effect of considerable water as presented in McGregor's fiction can be seen, among other things, as a metaphor for the intense emotion generated by the traumatic memories of McGregor's characters. This is because the abundant emotion of such memories overwhelms the human, and is therefore, in Freud's words, "destructive or dissimilatory" (*Beyond* 35). Thus, the ambivalence of water as a symbol of life and death in McGregor's fiction echoes the ambivalence of emotion itself as being both a potentially destructive force and the offspring of a creative literary process.

4. Sound Patterns and Musicality

As evinced in the three former subparts, emotion is presented by McGregor's abundant depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, but also, paradoxical as it may seem, by the paucity of details in some of his narratives, and finally by his use of certain narrative elements that evoke water imagery. In the present subpart, it will be illustrated how emotion is also presented by certain parts of McGregor's narratives that rife with sound patterns, especially alliteration.

Generally speaking, sounds are either of a verbal or musical nature (Tsur 12-19). Those of verbal nature feed into the left hemisphere of the brain, and are therefore processed as speech sounds that appeal to the "surface mind" i.e. consciousness (Tsur 55). As for the sounds of musical nature, they feed into the right hemisphere, and are therefore processed as "nonspeech sounds" that appeal to the "depth mind" i.e. emotion (Tsur 23, 55).

However, there are sounds of both verbal and musical nature, as is the case of the sounds produced by narrative passages that are peppered with sound patterns. These sounds feed simultaneously into the left and right hemisphere; and are therefore processed as both speech and non-speech sounds. Thus, they appeal both to the heart (emotion) and mind (consciousness) of their readers, hence their mysterious effect (Tsur 123). This is epitomised by the opening scene

of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* where the disembodied narrator depicts the song sung by an unnamed city of northern England, the backdrop of the first narrative strand of this novel:

> The **c**ity, it **s**ings. And the **s**ong **s**ings . . . each **s**treet and **es**tate, each every way you turn has alarms going off . . . **s**ung **s**irens, **s**liding through the **s**treet**s**, **s**treaking blue light. And all these things **s**ing con**s**tant, **s**o li**s**ten. Li**s**ten, and there is more to hear. The **s**crawl and **s**cratch of two hackle-raised cats. and the non-**s**top wonder of the **s**ong of the **c**ity you can hear if you li**s**ten the **s**ong sacred.
> (*INSORT* 1-3, emphasis added)

As earlier demonstrated, the impersonal narrator personifies its city, as it depicts it as a human being singing a song.[28] It also makes use of several sound patterns, and, as such, transmutes its city's cacophonous noises into a song with consonant sounds. Among these sound patterns, the narrator's alliterative use of the /s/ sound features prominently. Phonetically speaking, this phoneme is voiceless, i.e. does not involve vocal cords vibration. That is why it is barely heard. Thus, the hyperbolic use of this phoneme in the previous passage reverberates with the very meaning of that passage, namely that the phenomena of the narrator's city, albeit vibrant, often fall on deaf ears.

The alliterative use of the /s/ sound does not merely echo the meaning of the passage. It also has a potential of its own, as it produces a musicality that ineluctably conjures intense emotion (Tsur 31). Under the thrall of such an emotion, readers become engrossed by the urban phenomena depicted in the former passage. This falls in line with the experience of alterity as conceived by Levinas, an experience where a subject is engrossed, despite herself, by the other's otherness (Levinas, *Totality* 292). In this regard, it can fairly be assumed that the musicality of the former passage has an ethical potentiality. It generates ample emotion under whose influence readers are forced to be responsive to the minutiae of the narrator's city. Subsequently, readers may experience contrastive feelings. They may experience a deep feeling of displeasure, since they are driven, despite themselves, to open to the phenomena of the narrator's city. They may also experience a strong feeling of enthusiasm when they yield themselves to the mesmerising musicality of the above passage. In doing so, they transmute their reading of the passage into an ethical experience, in Levinas's understanding of the word, i.e. an experience where the subject arises in total submission to and for the other (Levinas, *Otherwise* xii).

[28] For the reasons previously discussed, the disembodied narrator of this novel will be referred to in the impersonal pronoun 'it.'

Like the former passage, many other extracts from the same narrative brim with sound patterns. This is clearly evident in the passage where "the man with the carefully trimmed moustache" from number twenty, traumatised by the sheer amount of rubbish in his backyard, decides to leave a long message on the local council's voice mail in order to ask for the removal of that trash (*INSRT* 65):

> Right he says, hello, and he says his name. I have spoken to you before he says, you remember perhaps, about this removal situation in my backyard. My backyard is full of rubbish he says, full, and none of this is mine. He begins to list the items in his backyard, individually, the broken chairs *and* unstuffed mattresses *and* the milkcrates and binbags *and* magazines *and* the pizzaboxes *and* chipwrappings *and* small heaps of builders' rubble.
>
> (*INSRT* 85, emphasis added)

In this passage, the iterative use of the coordinating conjunction 'and' at regular intervals produces a musicality characterised by a monotonous rhythm reminiscent of the rhythmic clicking of a metronome. Subsequently, the passage plunges its readers into a nihilistic repetitive emptiness, redolent of the traumatised individuals' compulsion to relive their traumas through nightmares and flashbacks. Thus, the dull musicality produced by the man from number twenty's narrative impels readers to experience that man's trauma. Subsequently, it transmutes the reading of the passage into an ethical experience, an experience where an individual is impelled to suffer from the other's sufferings "to the point of obsession, substitution for the other, turning the self inside out, hostage to and for the other, for the other's needs, for the other's life, to be sure, but also for the other's responsibility" (Levinas, *Otherwise* xii).

Much in the same vein, McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is, among other things, distinguished by the musicality of its poetic prose. This is clearly evident in the passage where the choral narrator depicts the derelict flat where Mike, a schizophrenic and a heroin addict, lives:

> ***S***tairs all ***s***lipping with i***c***e and pi***ss*** and the handrail***s*** ripped out from the wall***s*** and the sickne***ss*** coming on bad. Voice***s*** coming out of darkened doorway*s*, ***m***utters and ***m***urmurs and ***m***oans.
>
> (*ED* 50, emphasis added)

In this passage, the 'We,' the choral narrator, depicts Mike's miserable living conditions. Mike is not an exception, as all the characters of the novel, mostly homeless and drug addicts, live in conditions that 'Even the Dogs' would not tolerate. However, nobody of their society cares for them. This is underscored by the alliterative use of the /s/ sound, as this phoneme, marked by its voicelessness, arguably suggests that these vulnerable characters go unheard in their

extremely individualistic society. This interpretation is corroborated by the choral narrator's use of the voiceless /m/ sound. The alliterative use of this phoneme produces a low intermittent sound people usually make when they are in pain. Thus, it reverberates with the very meaning of the passage, namely that the precarious characters of the novel suffer in silence, as they are consigned to the margins of society.

So far, it has been shown how the alliterative use of the /s/ and /m/ sounds parallels the meaning of the former passage. This emphasises the preponderant belief in literary studies that sound patterns "must *seem* an echo to the sense" (Tsur 5, emphasis in original). They simply enhance the meaning of the narrative passage in which they are applied, and are therefore of a secondary nature. However, such an assumption, as previously noted, is incorrect. This is because sound patterns, including the alliterative use of /s/ and /m/ in the former passage, also have "an emotional potential of their own," i.e. they produce a musicality that generates ample emotion (Tsur 31). Under the dominant influence of such emotion, readers are impelled to develop, among other things, "Negative Capability" (Tsur 114). John Keats, the renowned English poet, understands this to mean the capability of "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Tsur 114).[29] Keats's *Negative Capability* squares with Levinas's ethical experience, since it involves an unconditional welcoming of the unknown, which is, as *per* Levinas, the mainstay of an experience of alterity. Drawing on this, one can postulate that the musicality produced by the alliterative use of the /s/ and /m/ sounds in the preceding passage generates emotion, under whose sway readers are impelled to open to the protagonists' miserable life conditions that 'Even the Dogs' would not stand, hence the ethical impact of the musicality of the above passage.

Like the previous passage, McGregor's *So Many Way to Begin*'s italicized prologue involves many sound patterns. As formerly noted, this prologue is the email David, the protagonist of this novel, receives from Laura, the woman he mistakenly thought to be his biological sister. In this email, Laura recounts the journey many Irish, including her mother, took to England during the Second World War in order to work for the wealthy English families. Laura's email is replete with sounds patterns, as exemplified by the following excerpt:

> *. . . the boys pressing **i**n from behind; st**i**ll foggy from sleep, st**i**ll ach**i**ng from the long walk the day before . . . From the top of the h**i**ll, where others were only now beg**i**nning that last long downward traipse, the c**i**ty looked quiet and*

[29] John Keats (1795–1821) is an English poet, and a renowned figure of the Romantic Movement. He is mostly known for his poem 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' that was first published in 1820.

> *still, wrapped in a pale May morning mist, weighted with the same brooding promise that cities have always held when glimpsed from a distance like this, the same magnetic pull of hopes and opportunities.*
> (*SMWB* 2, emphasis in original and boldface added)

As previously indicated, this passage, like the rest of the italicized prologue of McGregor's *So Many Way to Begin*, is marked by its lack of full stops, which accounts for its liquidity. It is also distinguished by the narrator's hyperbolic use of the /i/ sound. This phoneme is reminiscent of the sound people usually make while doing an extremely exhausting task or when in pain. Thus, the extensive use of this phoneme echoes the 'Trail of Tears' depicted by the above passage, namely the exhausting and painful journey many Irish teenagers were forced to take to England during the Second World War in order to provide financial support to their disadvantaged families.[30] Besides its semantic role, the hyperbolic use of the /i/ sound has an emotional impact. It produces a musicality that generates considerable emotion, under whose influence readers are compelled to feel the pain experienced by these young teenagers, which, as formerly indicated, falls in line with Levinas's conception of an ethical experience.

To conclude, sound patterns in McGregor's fiction have not only a semantic, but also and mainly an emotional import. This is because these metrical patterns not only reverberate with the meaning of the passages in which they are applied. Rather, they also produce a musicality that ineluctably evokes intense emotion. Under the sway of such emotion, readers are impelled to open to the traumas of McGregor's characters. Subsequently, they may experience contrastive feelings. They may either feel a deep sense of displeasure, since they are unwillingly experiencing the traumas of the author's characters. They may also welcome these traumatised characters' traumas, and, as such, transmute their reading of the author's fiction into an ethical experience.

[30] 'Trail of Tears' refers to "the perilous journey of the 'Five Civilized Tribes' of the Southeast who were forced by the U.S government from their ancestral homelands to a designated zone in the west" (Rennie n.p.). This term is used here metaphorically to parallel the Irish teenagers' suffering to the Indians' suffering.

Chapter 2
A Memory Alien to Time

The former chapter illustrates how McGregor's poetics is distinguished by four main features, the first of which is the author's hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. The second, paradoxical as it may seem, is the paucity of details in some of McGregor's narratives. The third is the author's use of certain narrative elements that evoke water imagery. As regards the fourth hallmark of McGregor's poetics, it is the musicality of certain of the author's narratives. By virtue of these four distinguishing features of his poetics, the author, as previously demonstrated, presents emotion, the main element of any traumatic memory. On account of its ample emotion, a traumatic memory does not fade or even change over time. Conversely, it persists as a vivid reminder of a traumatic past. That is why such a memory is alien to time.

But we should first concentrate on time. At first glance, time appears to be a quantifiable phenomenon, measurable by the ticking of a clock or the turning of the pages of a calendar. However, such techniques for measuring time do not capture its very essence. Many philosophers, since antiquity, have tried to address this conundrum.[31] Most of them agree that time can be divided into the past, the present, and the future. Nevertheless, these philosophers disagree about the very nature of these three temporal phenomena. Presentists, for instance, postulate that only physically present objects exist, denying the existence of any past object that has disappeared without leaving a trace (Tallan 479). Thus, a statement about the past, such as 'Dinosaurs once existed,' is true only by dint of physically present evidence. As for future objects, according to presentists, they are merely potential, and are therefore not real (Dowden n.p.). In a nutshell, presentists give prominence to the present, namely physically present objects, while neglecting anything pertaining to the past or to the future. However, according to the advocates of the Growing-Past Theory, the present is not an *emergent phenomenon*, but rather involves a constantly expanding past (Dowden n.p.).[32] Thus, these philosophers privilege the present and the past to the detriment of the future which is, for them, indeterminate, and therefore unreal.

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[31] Among these philosophers, one can mention Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Kant and McTaggart.

[32] An emergent phenomenon, according to emergentists, is radically irreducible to its constitutive elements (Dai 145). Take, for instance, the following chemical reaction:

NaOH	+	HCl	→	NaCl	+	H_2O
(Sodium Hydroxide)		(Hydrochloric Acid)		(Sodium Chloride)		(Water)

This chemical reaction is irreversible, proceeding in one direction. Thus, the products of this reaction cannot be converted back to the reactants, and are therefore emergent molecules. Drawing on such a form of reactions, emergentists conclude that there are two types of worldly phenomena, with each operating in a distinct way. There are mechanical phenomena that can be converted back to their constitutive elements. However, there are also emergent phenomena that are irreducible to their primary constituents.

Unlike the proponents of the Growing-Past Theory, Henri Bergson does not privilege any temporal phenomenon, whether it be the past, present or future. Nor does he, like the presentists, reduce these phenomena to the physical world. Instead, Bergson postulates that, unlike most physical phenomena, any past, present, or future moment does not obey the mechanistic laws of physics, notably the Law of Conservation of Energy (Bergson 1-74).[33] This is because each lived moment produces "pure quality," fleeting sensations beyond recall (Bergson 72).[34] In a word, each lived moment, according to Bergson, generates unique sensations, and is therefore singular, incomparable to other lived moments. However unique, lived moments do not have discrete boundaries, but rather "interpenetrate, even as they succeed one another" (Guerlac 65). Together they form "pure duration," understood by Bergson to mean a temporal synthesis of distinct moments which, overlapping like the notes of a melody, form the swift flow of time (Bergson 100-6). To put it succinctly, lived moments, for Bergson, generate incommensurable (irretrievable) sensations, and are therefore unique. However, these lived moments merge together, thus forming pure duration, namely the fleeting time flow.

Unlike other lived moments, a traumatic moment persists as "a piece of frozen time," i.e. an occurrence immune to the attrition of time, thus atemporal (Davoine xxx). This is because such an occurrence generates a traumatic memory highly charged with emotion. Under the sway of this cathected memory, a traumatised subject always experiences her traumatic past as a *simultaneity*, in Caruth's apprehension of the word, i.e. a past that keeps happening, each time as if for the first time (Caruth, *Trauma* 177). As will be demonstrated, the main reason why a traumatic past is always experienced as a simultaneity is because it finds expression in a cathected memory that always disrupts the consciousness of the subject it impresses. Subsequently, a traumatic past can never be recognised as past, but endures as a future past, a past that can be acknowledged as past only in an incessantly delayed future.

Drawing on the above, it will be illustrated in this second chapter how McGregor's narratives present traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon alien to time, i.e. a mental phenomenon that persists as a vivid reminder of a frightening past. In order to do that it will initially be shown how certain elements of McGregor's fiction, including certain verbal forms and an

[33] In physics, the Law of Conservation of Energy applies only to "a system of which the points, after moving, can return to their former positions. This return is at least conceived of as possible, and it is supposed that under these conditions nothing would be changed in the original state of the system as a whole or of its elements" (Bergson 152).

[34] "Bergson's radical claim is that the way things feel in experience depends upon the particular moment in which they occur. We never have exactly the same sensation twice, because the very fact of having felt something before changes the nature of the experience the second time around" (Guerlac 86).

unwonted typography, present traumatic memory as a *piece of frozen time*, an atemporal memory excised from the ongoing flow of time (Davoine xxx). It will then be elucidated how the seemingly inconsistent temporality of many of McGregor's narratives is debatably a metaphor for traumatic memory, under whose sway a traumatic past is repeatedly experienced as a *simultaneity*, i.e. a past that keeps happening, each time as if it were for the first time (Caruth, *Trauma* 177). It will eventually be evinced how many a metaphor employed in McGregor's fiction portrays traumatic past as a future past, a past that, owing to the cathected memory whereby it presents itself, can be recognised as past only in a perpetually deferred future.

1. A Piece of Frozen Time

As hitherto noted, traumatic memory is highly charged with emotion, and therefore persists as a frozen piece of time, i.e. a memory immune to the vicissitudes of time. This is illustrated by several passages of McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*, including the moment when David, the linchpin character of this novel, recalls his traumatic experience, namely his accidental discovery that he was adopted:

> He could pinpoint the moment precisely. His mother *nudging* into the room. The window open and a woman *zimmer-framing* her slow way across the garden. The sound of television laughter *coming* from the main room, and an unanswered telephone *ringing* somewhere. The cymbelline *shaking* of the teacups as his mother gasped and put down the tray.
>
> (*SMWB* 89, emphasis added)

In this passage, David does not use any complex sentences, but rather a series of simple clauses (verbal phrases), none of which is subordinated to another. Doing so, he presents these clauses as equal in semantic and emotional weight, which is typical of traumatic flashbacks. This is because these flashbacks, like David's clauses, carry the same emotional weight, since they are all *cathected*, highly charged with emotional energy (Freud, "Inhibition" 20: 137). Thus, the use of simple clauses in the previous passage can simulate, among other things, David's traumatic flashbacks.

On account of their intense emotion, traumatic flashbacks imbue the trauma they present with an untiring liveliness. This finds expression in the very verbal forms of the clauses David uses to recount his traumatic experience. These clauses only involve verbs in the present participle form. Semantically speaking, this verbal form expresses continuity in the past, the present, or the future, depending on the other conjugated verb(s) of the sentence in which it is included.

However, in his depiction of his traumatic experience, David does not use any sentence with conjugated verb(s), but only present participle phrases. These phrases do not involve any verb showing time, which suggests that David experiences the scene he depicts as an ongoing continuity without beginning or end. This is typical of any traumatic past, since such a past cannot be temporalised. Instead, it is repetitively experienced through flashbacks as a continuous presence, a clotted piece of time that the traumatised individual remembers in all its details throughout her entire life.

In like manner, and in the same novel, another fragment typifies the fact that a traumatic memory is a frozen piece of time. This fragment revolves around "Auntie Julia," the best friend of David's foster mother (*SMWB* 21). In this fragment, Julia describes to David the day of her marriage to Major William Pearson:

> A Friday evening in early June, 1939. A hotel ballroom just off The Strand. A renewed rumble of chatter and a tinkle of glasses. A brief light-fingered applause for the musicians. A rustle of loose sheaf paper at the orchestra's music stands. The unaccompanied glide and twirl of the white-jacketed waiters refreshing tall glasses with a stoop and a bow.
>
> (*SMWB* 48)

Although her marriage ceremony took place several decades before her narration of this passage, Julia still remembers each and every detail of that ceremony. This is because that ceremony evokes not only happy, but also and mainly traumatic souvenirs, as it reminds Julia of her short-lived marriage to Major William Pearson who was killed in World War Two shortly after their marriage. Julia's traumatic marriage experience finds expression in the passage's *scesis onomata*, i.e. succession of verbless clauses. Grammatically speaking, the verb is the only element of a sentence that shows time. That is why the omission of that element keeps the meaning conveyed by a verbless clause outside time. Thus, the use of verbless clauses in the above passage implies that Julia does not conceive of her marriage as an event that belongs to the past. Rather, she experiences it as a presence excised from the ongoing time flow, a congealed piece of time on which she is *fixated*.[35] That is why such a traumatic past usually aborts *mourning*.

Freud understands 'mourning' to mean the psychological reaction to the loss of a loved object (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 243). It is chiefly characterized by an exclusive devotion to the

[35] 'Fixated' is the word Freud would use while referring to the neurotic attachment of a traumatised individual to her traumatic past (*Beyond* 7).

lamentation of the lost object, along with an acute loss of interest in the outside world. Although such a condition usually persists for a certain time, it is not pathogenic. Conversely, it is a congruous psychological response to an incommensurable loss.[36] Mourning usually eventuates in the overcoming of grief and the acceptance of the loss. This concurs with the end of a "cathartic process" whereby the ego gradually withdraws its libidinal drives from the lost object (Freud, "An Autobiographical" 20: 27). Such successful completion of the cathartic process is not however a readily accessible upshot. The bereft do not willingly relinquish a beloved object in which they have invested a considerable portion of their libidinal drives, but demonstrate an unflinching attachment to it. This can be "so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis" (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 244). Yet, in most cases, respect for reality eventually gains the upper hand. The ego frees its libidinal drives from the lost object, and becomes uninhibited again (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 252).

In short, a successful mourning, according to Freud, involves the depletion of a cherished object's mental representation from libidinal drives. Subsequently, such a mental representation becomes devoid of any psychic value, and is therefore easily assimilated by the ego. However, this does not happen in the case of traumatic memory, as this memory, on account of its intense emotion, cannot be reduced to a mere mental image lacking any psychic value. Instead, a traumatic memory remains a coagulated piece of time endowed with an inexhaustible vividness, and, as such, preserves the event or the person it presents from oblivion. From this perspective, it can be argued that Julia's traumatic memory of her short-lived marriage aborts mourning, and thereby keeps Major Pearson's spirit alive inside her.

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[36] Freud differentiates between mourning and melancholia. Melancholia is originally tantamount to mourning, a psychological reaction to the loss of a cherished object which brings about "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity" (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 244). It may however degenerate into acute sensorimotor neuropathies, namely anorexia, nausea and insomnia. Melancholia is also and mainly marked by a critical disturbance of self-esteem. In contradistinction to mourning, it begets "a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 244).

The hallmark aetiology of melancholia is, according to Freud, an intrapsychic struggle between the ego and its superego over an object whereby hatred and love contend with each other. The superego, following from the exigencies of the external world, compels (as it usually does) its ego to dispense with an object which becomes worthless of love (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 248). This does not however bring about the usual "cathartic process" whereby the ego gradually withdraws its libidinal drives from a loved object (Freud, "An Autobiographical" 20: 27). In melancholia, and in contradistinction to mourning, the ego does not progressively relinquish a cherished object. Rather, it becomes "fixated" on it (Freud, "Obsessions" 3: 75). This can be so intense that the ego ends up incorporating the normally abandoned object. By so doing, the ego becomes the target of its superego which mistakes it for the rejected object. This eventuates in a persistent state of self-hatred whereby the ego, under duress of its superego, ends up directing against itself the hostility which is originally related to the loved object, hence the self-deprecation and the suicidal ideas, the distinguishing pathologies of melancholia (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 252).

Julia's traumatic past does not only involve the death of her husband, but also her World War Two experience as a nurse in a hospital caring for the injured soldiers. That experience remains ingrained in her mind until the last days of her life, which is evinced by the following excerpt:

> . . . suddenly she was talking about the war, *talking* as though the mist had cleared and she'd found herself twenty years younger, *working* in the hospital through years of airraid sirens, *walking* home in the morning to find whole streets flattened, *seeing* doodlebugs droning their way through a bare blue sky. (*SMWB* 91-2, emphasis added)

Although Julia suffers from Alzheimer's disease when narrating this passage, she still remembers even certain trivial details of her World War Two experience, including some flying 'doodlebugs.' This shows how a traumatic memory, unlike other memories, does not fade into oblivion, but rather remains immune to the attrition of time, hence its atemporality.

Traumatic memory does not usually cross the threshold of consciousness as one piece, but rather as "sensory fragments without a coherent semantic component" (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518). This is typified by the above passage, as it involves an incongruous series of short cuts (verbal phrases), each of which picturing a distinct mnemonic fragment of Julia's traumatic past. Each of these mnemonic fragments is not presented in an independent sentence ending with a full stop. Rather, it is reported in a clause demarcated from the others by a comma. The absence of full stops speeds up the reading pace, and thereby makes the reader switch indiscriminately from one clause to another. The effect that the absence of full stops has on the reader is reminiscent of the way traumatised individuals experience their traumatic past through flashbacks. Indeed, traumatic flashbacks usually cross the threshold of consciousness as a series of indiscriminate mnemonic fragments that interpenetrate, even as they succeed one another. That is why they form an ambiguous, rather than a lucid, representation of a traumatic past.

Traumatic flashbacks hold over time, as epitomised by the present participle phrases that constitute the latter passage. As previously demonstrated, such phrases suggest, among other things, that the actions or states they report reside outside time. Thus, the use of such phrases implies that Julia experiences her traumatic past as a series of flashbacks cut off from the ongoing flow of time, and therefore immune to oblivion. Under the dominant influence of these flashbacks, this character is impelled to testify repeatedly and without respite to the World War Two atrocities. Doing so, she pays tribute, even though unwittingly, to the millions who

lost their lives in one of the most dehumanising experiences of modern human history, hence the ethical outcome of Julia's traumatic flashbacks.

In *Even the Dogs*, as in *So Many Ways to Begin*, traumatic memory is presented as a mental phenomenon that withstands the wear of time. As already indicated, this novel is related by the 'We,' a choral narrator that depicts the dehumanising and traumatic experiences of this novel's protagonists, most of whom are homeless and drug addicts who died penniless, forlorn, and shunned by their extremely individualistic society. For many scholars, most notably Professor Jean Michel Ganteau, the 'We' is the ghost of the novel's deceased protagonists (Ganteau, "The Powers" 451). This narrator can also be seen as a personification of a collective traumatic memory that retains the protagonists' frightening life experiences. This interpretation is corroborated by the choral narrator's narrative which is punctuated with the words 'wait' and 'waiting' that are used two hundred and eighteen times. The hyperbolic use of these two words, along with other elements of this narrative, gives the impression that the 'We' is caught in a limbo, an atemporal space of endless waiting (Ganteau, "Vulnerable" 92). The atemporal existence of the 'We' evokes the atemporal nature of traumatic memories. Thus, it can be posited that the choral narrator, in its limbo-like space, mimics traumatic memory which, as already shown, is excised from the ongoing flow of time.

In like manner, McGregor's *Reservoir13* presents traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon immune to the vicissitudes of time. As formerly indicated, this novel revolves around the dwellers of an unnamed village in the Peak District whose lives are abruptly disrupted by the disappearance of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, on New Year's Eve. Despite the passage of time, it is impossible for the inhabitants of the unnamed village to forget the girl's disappearance that remains instilled in their memories, thus withstanding the test of time. This is evinced by many passages of the novel, including the following one:

> She would be seventeen by now, and the police published a computer-generated image of how she might look. There was something about this *approximate*-Becky that seemed *too smooth*. As though the Becky in the picture had been *kept in a sterile room*.
>
> (*Reservoir* 106, emphasis added)

As stated in this excerpt, the computer-generated image of how Rebecca might look like four years after her disappearance is 'too smooth.' This, among other things, means that this image is a mere simulacrum that only captures a few of Rebecca's physical aspects. As regards Rebecca, she is 'kept in a sterile room.' This can imply that this girl's otherness is kept in a sterile

memory, a traumatic memory immune to the wear of time, and therefore immune to oblivion. This is typical, as any traumatic memory, by dint of its concomitant emotion, gains untiring vividness. Subsequently, such a memory, as earlier indicated, does not dissolve or even change, but rather remains impervious to time. In this respect, it can be postulated that Rebecca's computer-generated image is a metaphor for the villagers' collective traumatic memory of this girl's disappearance. Because of this memory, these villagers cannot conceive of the girl as the totality of her phenomena that are, like any other phenomena, conditioned by time and space. Instead, Rebecca ends up being seen as an *infinity*, another whose otherness remains atemporal, and therefore irreducible to her phenomena. Thus, the villagers' collective traumatic memory of Rebecca's disappearance safeguards this girl's otherness against the wear of time, hence the ethical import of such a memory.

Much in the same vein, traumatic memory is presented throughout McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You* as a mental phenomenon that does not change over time. As formerly noted, *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* is a collection of thirty short stories that vary in many respects, including in their length, as they range from a single sentence, over a paragraph, to a full-fledged story. Nevertheless, McGregor's short stories still have two narrative elements in common. The first is their theme, since these short stories (except for a few of them) hinge on the traumatic experiences of their protagonists. As regards the second common element among these short stories, it is their setting, since they take place in the Fenlands, the rural areas that extend across Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire in the east of England.[37] "These notoriously flat, largely featureless areas consist of land reclaimed (originally in the 17th century) from the North Sea and are predominantly given over to arable farming" (Lea, "Jon" 236). They require, however, continuous vigilance and frequent draining for fear of floods. Such a fear is atemporal in that it has haunted the successive generations of people who have dwelled in the Fens. The atemporal nature of this fear is redolent of traumatic memory, since such a memory, as repeatedly indicated, is chiefly marked by its atemporality. In this regard, it can be said that the author draws on the topography of the Fens in order to evoke their inhabitants' constant fear of being overwhelmed by the North Sea waters. Such an atemporal fear, in turn, functions as a metaphor for the characters' constant, and therefore atemporal, fear of being overwhelmed by their traumatic memories that bring in their wake abundant emotion beyond assimilation.

[37] There are two short stories, namely "Close" and "We Wave and Call," which, albeit subtitled with locations in the Fenlands, respectively take place in Japan and Croatia.

In *If Nobody Speaks*, as in *Reservoir13*, traumatic memory is presented as a frozen piece of time. This is evidenced by the following fragment from this novel's opening scene:

> . . . all the noise and the rush and the non-stop wonder of the song of the city you can hear if you listen the song
>
> and it stops
>
> in some *sacred dead time*, sandwiched between the late sleepers and the early risers.
>
> Everything has stopped.
>
> And silence drops down from out of the night, into this city, the briefest of silences, like a falter between heartbeats, like a darkness between blinks. Secretly, there is always this moment, *an unexpected pause, a hesitation as one day is left behind and a new one begins*.
>
> (*INSRT* 3, emphasis added)

In this excerpt, the impersonal narrator of the novel's first narrative strand depicts a swift moment before dawn where the entire city, the backcloth of this narrative strand, comes to a standstill. This moment is described as 'an unexpected pause, a hesitation as one day is left behind and a new one begins.' This means that such a moment belongs neither to the day, nor to the night, and therefore lies outside of time, which is evocative of traumatic memory. Indeed, a traumatic memory is neither conscious, nor unconscious, but rather a *subconscious* mental phenomenon. Pierre Janet, the renowned French psychologist, understands 'the subconscious' to mean the collection of fixed ideas (*idées fixes*), especially traumatic memories (Janet, "Histoire" 139). These ideas persist over time, and they do so because they are highly charged with emotion. This is buttressed by many scientists, including Pierre Barrouillet and Valérie Camos, the two Swiss professors of developmental psychology. According to these scientists, cathected memories do not change over time, while memories devoid of emotion ineluctably undergo either *loss* or *reconstruction*, i.e. they are either totally erased from the mind, or are unconsciously transfigured into relatively new memories (Boileau 71-116). In short, the swift moment in the previous passage, as depicted by the impersonal narrator, is excised from time. In its characteristic atemporality, this moment arguably emulates traumatic memory which, by dint of its ample emotion, undergoes neither loss nor reconstruction, but remains immune to the vicissitudes of time.

The atemporal nature of traumatic memory also finds expression in the above passage's oxymoronic expression: 'sacred dead time.' This expression is seemingly self-contradictory,

since the sacred is always associated with immortality. However, it is highly meaningful, as it can be seen as a condensed translation of the very temporality of a traumatic memory. Indeed, a traumatic memory is *dead*, since it does not change over time. This memory is also sacred, as it gains, by virtue of its concomitant emotion, *numinosity*, in Jung's conception of the term, i.e. colossal psychic value (Jung, *Man* 96).

Given its inexorable numinosity, and as will be detailed in the subsequent subchapter, traumatic memory evokes for the subject it affects a feeling of fright reminiscent of that which she originally experienced during her traumatic accident. Such a feeling is so overwhelming that it disrupts reasoning. This is expressed by the former passage's disruptive typography, especially its unwonted leading, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for the disruptive effect that a traumatic memory has on a traumatised individual's reasoning.

Much in the same vein, and in the same narrative strand, another fragment epitomises the fact that a traumatic memory withstands the test of time. In this narrative fragment, the impersonal narrator recalls the split-second moment where the inhabitants of the unnamed street witness the car accident of one of their neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269):

> It seemed, or at least it seems now, that everything else was *motionless*.
> The beercan caught between the hand and the ground.
> The blanket not quite touching the wall.
> The boy with the tricycle a flinch away from the tree.
> A gasp in my throat, held back, like the air in the pinched neck of a balloon.
> (*INSRT* 9, emphasis added)

This excerpt presents the dwellers of the unnamed street's collective traumatic memory as a series of acausal short cuts (paratactic clauses) superimposed upon one another. This is typical, as any trauma victim experiences her traumatic past as a series of sensory fragments (flashbacks) devoid of any coherent semantic component (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518). Thus, the unwonted typography, along with the paratactic nature of the former passage's clauses, contestably simulates flashbacks by dint of which the protagonists are forced to remember their collective frightening experience.

As formerly indicated, traumatic flashbacks are atemporal, excised from the ongoing time flow. This finds expression in the above passage's *scesis onomata*. Devoid of any conjugated verb, these clauses typify the atemporal nature of the characters' traumatic flashbacks, on

account of which these characters are continuously and vividly reminded of Shahid's accident. Given its overwhelming nature, that accident has marked a turning point in the characters' relationships. As already indicated, these characters dwell on the same street. Although they are neighbours, they do not pull together, but rather relapse into "broken mosaics of irremediably atomised subjectivities, who touch and do not touch on one another, who—however closely interconnected—never form an entirety" (Schoene 155). Acting as strangers rather than neighbours, the dwellers of the anonymous street epitomise the neo-liberalist dictum that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" (Thatcher n.p.). After witnessing Shahid's accident, however, these neighbours spontaneously overcome their individualistic demeanour, as they inadvertently display an unusual sense of compassion and solidarity with the boy's parents. In this respect, one can postulate that the characters' collective traumatic memory of Shahid's accident has an ethical import. It withstands the attrition of time, and therefore reminds these characters compulsively and incessantly of their inexorable need for solidarity, hence, once again, the ethical use to which McGregor puts traumatic memories.

The atemporal nature of traumatic memory is not merely exemplified by the last two passages of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*. It is also echoed by this novel's entire first narrative strand which is mainly distinguished by the impersonal narrator's exclusive use of the present tense.[38] In English, the present tense is indubitably the most polysemous among other tenses, in that it can be used to express the past and the future, the real and the surreal, the singulative and the iterative. The present tense can also be used to refer to temporally marked events as well as to atemporal events. This is emphasised by Genette when he states that "The use of the present tense might seem, *a priori*, most likely to simulate atemporality" (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 82). Given its atemporal value, this tense brings to mind traumatic memory which, as already indicated, takes hold over time, thus persisting as a vivid reminder of a frightening past. The association of traumatic memory with the use of the present tense is corroborated by Davoine and Gaudillière, the two French psychoanalysts, who have noted that most of their traumatised patients employ the present tense when relating their traumas (Davoine 51-2). Following from this, it can be posited that the impersonal narrator's exclusive use of the simple

[38] McGregor is not the first to write an entire narrative in the present tense, as that has already been done by many writers. This is typified by many novels narrated basically in the present tense, including Graham Swift's *Last Orders* (1996), DBC Pierre's *Vernon God Little* (2003), and Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007). Or else Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005).

present throughout the first narrative strand of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* simulates the atemporal nature of traumatic memories, including that of this narrative strand's characters.

In a nutshell, McGregor's fiction, as typified by the former passages, is marked by a disruptive typography and by the abundant use of certain syntactic structures, especially paratactic clauses, *scesis onomata*, and present participle phrases. By virtue of these formal and syntactic properties, the author's narratives present traumatic memory as an obstinate mental phenomenon that does not yield to the wear of time. In its characteristic atemporality, traumatic memory, as evidenced by the previous passages, safeguards the event it afflicts against oblivion.

2. Simultaneity

A traumatic memory not only preserves the traumatic past it presents from the wear of time, but also, and by dint of its ample emotion, imbues such a past with ineffable vividness (Janet, *L'évolution* 198-211). That is why a traumatic past is repeatedly experienced as a *simultaneity*, in Caruth's conception of the word, i.e. a past that keeps happening, each time as if it were the first time (Caruth, *Trauma* 177).[39] This is illustrated by many of McGregor's narratives, among which the following fragment from *Even the Dogs* features prominently:

> A phone *rings*, and the policeman standing by the door *pulls* it from his pocket . . . *and* as the door *closes* behind him, we *see* Robert, and Yvonne, working back to back as they *take* down the old wallpaper, peeling and picking at it with a paint-scraper and a knife.
>
> (*ED* 9, emphasis added)

In this narrative fragment, the choral narrator braids together two scenes. The first is about the police discovering Robert Radcliffe's corpse, while the second is about Robert and his wife Yvonne refurbishing their new flat. These two scenes are distinct in time, as the first belongs to the present, i.e. to the choral narrator's simultaneous narration of what it sees. As regards the second scene, it belongs to the past, since it takes place several years before the first when Robert was still with his wife Yvonne. Nevertheless, these events are depicted as synchronous or consecutive. This is conceivably the outcome of the choral narrator's abrupt shift from the first to the second scene, without the signposting of paragraph breaks. The narrator also resorts

[39] 'Simultaneity,' as introduced in the present subchapter, is obviously evocative of what Freud calls "the compulsion to repeat" (Freud, *Moses* 23: 75). This compulsion, as *per* Freud, is the outcome of a *death drive*, a drive "powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character" (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 238). However, traumatic memory, as presented in this thesis and as demonstrated in the introduction, is not animated by a death drive, but rather by ample emotion. That is why, and to avoid any confusion with Freud's death drive, 'simultaneity' is used instead of 'the compulsion to repeat.'

to the coordinating conjunction 'and' when switching from the first to the second scene. Such a conjunction is usually used to link two simultaneous or successive events. However, the narrator employs it to relate two scenes separate in time, thereby presenting them as contemporaneous. This is emphasised by the narrator's use of verbs in the present tense in its description of the two scenes, which, once again, makes these scenes appear concurrent. By making the second scene that belongs to the past appear as contemporaneous with the first happening in the present, the choral narrator gives the impression that such a past scene is also happening in the present, thus taking place for the first time. This is evocative of traumatic memory, on account of which a traumatic past manifests "itself again, anew, as the new," i.e. a past repetitively experienced, each time as if for the first time (Derrida, *Specters* 61). Thus, it can be postulated that, in the former passage, the choral narrator's depiction of Robert's past as an event that takes place in the present emulates traumatic memory because of which a traumatised individual experiences her traumatic past as an ongoing presentness, a past that a traumatised individual always experiences as simultaneous with her living present.

Like the previous passage, and in the second chapter of the same novel, the choral narrator's narrative typifies the ongoing presentness of the traumatic past, the following narrative fragment from this chapter being a fair illustration of this aspect:

> Through the darkened windows of the van we *watch* him, slipping and hurrying down the hill to the main road and the underpass *and* through the darkened windows we *see* the city passing us by, whole streets abandoned to the cold, faint shadows moving behind curtains backlit by a flickering pale blue.
>
> (*ED* 17-8, emphasis added)

In this excerpt, the choral narrator describes two scenes, while sitting in an ambulance that carries Robert's corpse to the morgue. The first takes place three days before the second, and is about Danny who, frightened after having discovered Robert's corpse, walks aimlessly through the unnamed city, not knowing what to do. As for the second, it is about the choral narrator's simultaneous narration whereby it describes the anonymous city through the ambulance window. Although these two events are three days apart, they are described as concurrent. This is, among other things, the outcome of the passage's uninterrupted narrative whereby the choral narrator does not even use a full stop to separate the two scenes. Instead, the narrator employs the coordinating conjunction 'and,' which makes these scenes appear synchronous. The narrator also resorts to the simple present in its depiction of the two scenes, which, once more, conveys the impression that these events are contemporaneous. By making the first scene that belongs

to the past appear as contemporaneous with the second happening in the present, the choral narrator creates the impression that such a past scene is also happening in the present, thus taking place for the first time. In doing so, the narrator makes its narrative simulative of traumatic memory by means of which a trauma victim, including Danny in the former passage, always experiences her traumatic past as a simultaneity, i.e. always relives her traumatic past, as if she were still fully in that past, with no distance from it.

Similar to the previous passages, and in the fifth chapter of the same novel, the choral narrator's narrative weaves together past and present, the following excerpt from this chapter being a fair illustration of this feature:

> We *sit* at the back of the court and we *listen* to everything they say. We *sit* in the cold dark room and we *wait* until someone comes back for his body. We *read* the reports and we *look* at the notes and the photographs and we *read* the transcript of the inquest tucked away in the files. We *hear* more footsteps in the long corridor outside. A long metal trolley *is pushed* into the room and the men who drove the darkened van away from Robert's flat *come* to take him away again.
>
> (*ED* 165, emphasis added)

This excerpt contains two scenes, the first of which takes place in the present, as it involves the choral narrator's simultaneous narration whereby this narrator depicts itself while sitting in a court of law, waiting for the coroner's verdict on the exact circumstances of Robert's death. As for the second scene, it takes place several days before the first, and is about the 'We,' sitting next to a hospital morgue, and waiting for Robert's corpse to be carried to the crematorium. Despite being days apart, these two scenes are depicted as synchronous. This, amongst other things, stems from the narrator's exclusive use of the present tense in its description of the two scenes. The synchronicity of the two scenes is also the outcome of the passage's narrative structure. Indeed, the choral narrator, in this passage and unlike the former two passages, does not start with one scene, and then ends with another. Rather, it flits between the two scenes, and thereby creates the impression that they are concurrent. This, in turn, makes the second scene appear to be happening in the present, just like the first scene, which is, once again, redolent of traumatic memory whereby a traumatic past is always experienced as contemporaneous with the living present of the one it impacts.

Drawing on the previous three passages from McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, it becomes plain that the seemingly jagged chronology of the author's narrative mimics traumatic memory, by means of which a traumatic past always manifests itself as simultaneous with the living

present of a trauma victim. Such simultaneity finds expression not only in the above three passages from McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, but in this novel's entire narrative where the choral narrator alternates indiscriminately between past and present events, thus making these events appear concurrent. This narrator is obviously homodiegetic, as it rubs shoulders with all of the novel's characters. Nevertheless, it can be neither seen nor heard by these characters, and can therefore be perceived as the collective ghost of the novel's deceased protagonists, who lived on the fringes of society, and who died penniless, forlorn, and shunned by their countryfolk (Ganteau, *The Ethics* 137). One understands 'the ghost' to mean the "proper body without flesh" whereby those who are no longer or not yet living find expression (Derrida, *Specters* 6). By means of this incorporeal form, the dead and the unborn, as *per* Derrida, haunt the living present of those still alive in order to force them to question existing injustices (*Specters* 1-60). Such a spectral phenomenon, according to Derrida, is always experienced as "repetition *and* first time," i.e. is repeatedly experienced, each time as if it were the first time (*Specters* 10, emphasis in the original). Derrida's conception of the ghost squares with Caruth's conception of a traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon whereby a traumatic past is experienced as a *simultaneity*, a frightening event repeatedly relived as simultaneous with the living present of the one it impresses. With this in view, it can be assumed that the 'We' in McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, albeit apparently a ghost, is in reality the collective traumatic memory of the novel's departed protagonists. Acting like a ghost, this memory haunts these precarious protagonists' fellow citizens, and thereby forces them to care for the precarious individuals they usually overlook, hence the ethical import of such a memory.

Much in the same vein, and in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, traumatic memory is portrayed as a mental phenomenon that, owing to its ample emotion, always impels the one it haunts to experience her traumatic past as a simultaneity. This is clearly illustrated by many of this novel's narrative fragments, including those revolving around "the man with the burnt hands" from number sixteen (*INSRT* 146). This man is traumatised by a past accident wherein he tried in vain to save his wife from their burning house. Most of the fragments centring on this character are chiefly marked by their seemingly inconsistent narrative elements, as evinced by the subsequent excerpt:

> The man in the kitchen of number sixteen *hears* her voice *again*, saying *darling can't you reach me can't you*, and the plate in his scarred handshakes and spills toast crumbs to the floor.
>
> (*INSRT* 27, emphasis added)

This narrative fragment could have been free direct speech, if it were not for the reporting verb 'saying.' It is otherwise an indiscriminate blend of indirect and direct speech. The indirect speech involves a simultaneous narration whereby the man with burnt hands is depicted standing alone in his kitchen. This indirect speech is synchronous with a direct speech about the same man remembering his wife's calls for help before she died. This direct speech is not, however, presented as a "past present," a mere act of recollection (Derrida, *The Specters* 48). Rather, it creates the impression that the man with the burnt hands experiences his traumatic past as a "present," an event pertaining to his living present (Derrida, *The Specters* 48). This is the outcome of certain of the passage's narrative elements, including the verb of perception 'to hear.' Put in the present tense, this verb suggests that what comes next is not an act of recollection, but rather an act of perception of something that takes place in the present. The present tense verb 'to hear' is followed by a reporting verb 'to say' in the present participle form, which implies that the ensuing direct speech does not pertain to the past, but is rather a present action in progress. This direct speech has an unwonted punctuation, in that it lacks quotation marks. Semantically speaking, quotation marks signal the pastness of any statement they surround. In this respect, it can be posited that the absence of quotation marks around the man's wife's calls for help makes these calls appear to be happening in the present. Drawing on the above, it becomes obvious that, in this passage, the man with damaged hands experiences his traumatic past as belonging to his living present. However, it is not the first time that this man conceives of his traumatic past as such. This is exemplified by the adverb ('again') employed in the former passage, which suggests that the traumatised character always experiences his trauma as simultaneous with his living present. In light of the foregoing, it can be postulated that the above passage's seemingly inconsistent narrative, including its being an indiscriminate blend of direct and indirect discourse and its lack of quotation marks, is a metaphor for the man with the scarred hand's traumatic memory that impels him to relive his trauma as a simultaneity.

Under the thrall of his traumatic memory, this man is repeatedly reminded of his vulnerability, namely his inability to save his beloved wife. Thus, it can be said that this memory impels this widower to acknowledge his inherent vulnerability, which is, as *per* Pelluchon, the key step in developing consideration for the other vulnerable beings (Pelluchon 112). This interpretation is validated by the novel's eponymous passage where the man with the scarred hands tells his only daughter: "there are remarkable things all the time, right in front of us, but our eyes have like the clouds over the sun and our lives are paler and poorer if we do not see them for what they are. He says, *if nobody speaks of remarkable things*, *how can they be called*

remarkable?" (*INSRT* 239, emphasis added). The widower's statement, including his rhetorical question, shows that he has developed consideration for everything, including the minutiae of everyday life. This, among other things and as already posited, is the outcome of his traumatic memory that always presents his traumatic past as a simultaneity, and that subsequently impels him to own up to his vulnerability. By virtue of this memory, this traumatised character has ended up acknowledging his inherent vulnerability, and has therefore developed an ethic of consideration for each and every living being, including the most minuscule and the apparently frivolous.

In like manner, and in McGregor's *So Many Ways*, several passages exemplify the ethical import of traumatic memory. As earlier indicated, this novel centres on David Carter, a curator at Coventry museum, who only discovers that he was adopted as a grown man when the dementia of his aunt Julia causes her to let slip the truth of his parentage. David spends his entire life haunted by the scene where Julia unwittingly told him about his being adopted. This is typified by many of the novel's passages, including the ensuing one:

> But he kept his face to the window and he didn't say a word, seeing nothing, hearing only the sound of Julia's voice, fragments of it repeating over and over again.
> Of course we never saw the poor girl again.
> You'll have to keep the little darling.
> She disappeared off the face of the earth.
> Did I say something wrong?
>
> (*SMWB* 93)

This excerpt opens as indirect speech about David sitting on a train, just after his visit to Julia when she inadvertently told him the truth of his parentage. The excerpt then shifts into free direct speech about David recalling Julia's words that are presented as an incoherent series of paratactic sentences superimposed upon one another. The way Julia's words are transcribed parallels the way a traumatised individual reexperiences her shocking past as a series of "sensory fragments without a coherent semantic component" (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518). Thus, it can be said that the paratactic sentences and unwonted typography of the free direct speech in the prior passage are a metaphor for David's traumatic memory whereby he compulsively reexperiences his traumatic accident as a set of fragmented and incoherent flashbacks.

The free direct speech, in the above passage as elsewhere, is chiefly distinguished by the complete absence of the narrator's intermediary role. That is why such type of reported speech imbues the narrative to which it is applied with immediacy and vividness. The effect

produced by free direct speech is reminiscent of the effect produced by a traumatic memory, by means of which a traumatic past, as already indicated, gains ineffable vividness, being thus experienced as a simultaneity. In this respect, it can be postulated that the free direct speech in the preceding passage mimics David's traumatic memory that breathes an uncanny vividness into Julia's words, and that subsequently makes David reexperience these words as contemporaneous with his living present.

By virtue of the immediacy and the vividness it produces, the free direct speech in the prior passage makes Julia's words appear, on the spur of the moment, to be addressed not to David, but to the reader. Subsequently, the reader is spontaneously impelled to vicariously experience David's trauma. This falls in line with Levinas's conception of an ethical experience whereby an ethical subject is impelled to suffer from the other's sufferings "to the point of obsession, substitution for the other, turning the self inside out, hostage to and for the other, for the other's needs, for the other's life, to be sure, but also for the other's responsibility" (*Otherwise* xii). Following from this, it can be said that the use of free direct speech to report Julia's words forces readers to put themselves in David's place, and therefore to suffer in his stead, which is, according to Levinas and as earlier noted, the mainstay of an ethical experience.

Like David, his wife, Eleanor Campbell, is traumatised, as she had a childhood plagued by maternal abuse. In an attempt to overcome her traumatic past, Eleanor deserts her family, disowns her mother, and does not even attend her mother's funeral. And since "what we resist persists," Eleanor ends up experiencing her traumatic past as a simultaneity, a frightening past that keeps happening, each time as if it were the first time (Siegel 32). That is why she suffers from chronic depression, spending several days in her bed without talking to anybody. Even when she is well, Eleanor still recalls with vividness her past traumas, and therefore finds herself forced to talk about certain of her childhood's deeply painful experiences, including "being sent to bed without supper for cursing, or being smacked in the teeth for losing a schoolbook" (*SMWB* 172).

Similar to Eleanor, Julia, David's foster mother's best friend, has a traumatic past, as she abruptly lost her beloved husband, Major William Pearson, who was killed in World War Two shortly after their marriage. As previously demonstrated, Julia does not succeed to mourn her husband whose spirit haunts her until the last days of her life. This is most clearly evident in the subsequent passage where Julia recalls with vividness her short-lived marriage to Major Pearson, while teaching David, who was still then a young child, ballroom dancing:

> In the ballroom, the dance floor less crowded than it had been a few moments before**,** one of the tail-coated medical students and his partner danced alongside William and Julia, matching their movements step for step, the student looking at Julia with interest . . . *[Julia] leant forward to whisper in [William's] ear: My darling William stop Pregnant stop Surprised but happy be careful I love you stop Quietly, almost inaudibly, he replied, with a hoarse whisper in her ear: Surprised but happy also stop Suggest Laurence if a boy stop Be careful yourself all well here stop.* And almost while he was still speaking the blue sky of the ballroom ceiling was covered over with smoke and oily clouds*,* and a kettle-drum roll from the orchestra sent the soldiers in the corner, the officers of William's party, clambering under a table which offered no protection when the mortar shells came raining down through the stained-glass skylight, tumbling and exploding directly amongst them**,** scattering shrapnel and mess tins and glassware and limbs.
>
> (*SMWB* 54-5, emphasis added)

In this excerpt, the reported speech (italicised) is about Julia falling back on *confabulation* while recalling some fragments from her telegram correspondence with her husband when he was on the frontlines fighting the Nazis.[40] Confabulation, as previously noted, is among the main symptoms of certain neuroses, especially traumatic neuroses. It basically involves a neurotic individual's involuntary blurring of fiction and reality when recalling her pathological past (Janet, *L'évolution* 275-93). This is epitomised by the previous items of reported speech that show how Julia, while recalling her traumatic past, inadvertently confuses reality with fiction, as she takes what she and her husband said to one another in their correspondence to be the subject of their conversation while they had been dancing together during their marriage.

Other than being the outcome of confabulation, the former fragment in reported speech involves a hybrid combination of direct and free direct speech, as it is not surrounded by quotation marks, while opening with reporting verbs, namely 'to whisper,' and 'to reply.' Direct speech and free direct speech fall under the overarching concept of *reported speech*, understood by Genette to mean any reported discourse characterised by its immediacy and therefore by its vividness (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 56). Following from this, it can be assumed that the presentation of Julia's recollection of her correspondence with her husband as a hybrid combination of direct and free direct speech underscores the immediacy and therefore the vividness of this character's recollection. This, in turn, is reminiscent of traumatic memory which, owing to its intense emotion and as formerly indicated, breathes tremendous vividness into the frightening past it presents. Subsequently, such a memory makes the one it haunts repeatedly

[40] Among the reasons why it has been said that the italicized reported speech involves fragments from Julia's telegram correspondence with her husband is because it is punctuated with 'stop,' the very sign usually used in telegrams instead of a full stop.

experience her traumatic past, each time as if for the first time. Thus, one can advance that the transcription of Julia's confabulated memory as a hybrid combination of direct and free direct speech emphasises the immediacy and therefore the vividness of such a memory. Given its immense vividness, this memory forces Julia to relive her traumatic past as contemporaneous with her living present.

The coincidence of Julia's traumatic past and her living present also finds expression in the previous passage's shipwrecked temporality. This passage hinges on the different events that have marked Julia's life, including her marriage, her pregnancy and her husband's death. These events are not, however, described as taking place consecutively in the space of several months. Rather, they are presented as if they were happening simultaneously in the very ballroom and on the very night where Julia celebrated her marriage. This is the outcome of many of the former excerpt's narrative elements, especially its characterisation. Many of this excerpt's characters, including 'the medical student' and 'the soldiers,' are depicted as brushing shoulders with one another during Julia's marriage ceremony. However, in reality, they probably never met. The medical student, for instance, is presumably the one who Julia visited sometime after her marriage, and who informed her that she was pregnant. As for the soldiers, they are most likely to be those who died along with William when a Nazi mortar shell exploded directly among them. The reason why these characters are depicted as interacting with one another is arguably because each one of them evokes in Julia all of her traumatic past at once. As soon as Julia remembers one of these characters, she spontaneously and instantaneously remembers the entirety of her traumatic past, including the other characters associated with such a past. This is typical, as any trauma victim, as soon as she recounts anything redolent of her trauma, relives all of her traumatic past in one fell swoop (Freud, *Moses* 23: 95).

The simultaneity of Julia's traumatic past and her living present is also expressed by the previous passage's typography, punctuation and conjunctions. In terms of typography, the passage's narrative shifts from one event that has impacted Julia's life to another, without the signposting of paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions. Instead, it is punctuated by commas and the coordinating conjunction 'and,' which makes the otherwise temporally distant events that have marked Julia's life appear contemporaneous. This, in turn, once again echoes how Julia always relives her traumatic past events as simultaneous with one another and with her living present.

In short, the above narrative fragment is characterised by its jagged chronology and its unconventional structure, especially its being a jumble of direct and free direct discourse. By virtue of these unwonted elements, this narrative fragment emulates Julia's traumatic memory, on account of which Julia relives her traumatic past as if it were her living present.

Much in the same way, and in McGregor's *Reservoir13*, several narrative fragments typify the ongoing presentness of a traumatic past, i.e. the traumatised individual's compulsion to repeatedly relive her traumatic past as concurrent with her living present. As previously indicated, this novel centres on the dwellers of an unnamed village in the Peak District whose lives are abruptly disrupted by the disappearance of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, on New Year's Eve. However, there is scarcely any mention of this traumatic event throughout the novel that stretches out over thirteen years after the girl's disappearance, with each year reported in a distinct chapter made of long paragraphs, some of which sprawl over several pages. Throughout these monoliths of prose, the novel's impersonal narrator brings little new information to light, including recurrent updates on Rebecca's case that suddenly emerges every fifty pages or so.

This narrator's narrative is otherwise chiefly distinguished by its thematic and poetic repetitiveness (Ganteau, "Diffracted" n.p.). Thematically speaking, the novel's narrative is marked by its repetitive description of the anonymous village's recurring social events, including the well-dressing, the New Year's Eve fireworks, and the Spring Dance annual festival. The narrative is also marked by the disincarnate narrator's frequent focus on the local species' cyclical habits, including their feeding habits and their mating styles. This narrative also teems with references to the moon and its different phases: "There was a new moon, thin and cold and high," "A full moon rose over the reservoirs," "There was a half moon over the cricket ground" (*Reservoir* 62, 142, 246). For eons, the moon has been for many civilisations the symbol of the life cycle, namely birth, death and rebirth (Oliveira 367). Thus, the frequent references to the moon throughout the narrative can, among other things, be evocative of the cyclical nature of every living phenomenon. By drawing heavily on the cyclicality of both nature and culture, the novel's narrative gives the impression that nothing changes over time, as everything keeps being repeated.

Repetitiveness is also the main characteristic of this novel's poetics, as underlined by the iterative use of the same prepositional clause ('At midnight when the year turned') at the opening of eleven out of the novel's thirteen chapters. Besides this clause, the narrative involves

the rhyme-like recurrence of certain sentences, including ('The clocks went back and the nights overtook the short days,') and ('The clocks went forward and the evenings opened out'). Each of these two sentences is reproduced four times throughout the novel, which might evoke the natural landmark of the four seasons. This, in turn, brings to mind the periodical alternation of seasons and the regular succession of day and night, hence the cyclical essence of nature.

Despite being essentially cyclical, nature still retains its vividness, as evinced by the narrative that includes not a plethora of details about one natural species, but a plethora of natural species about which there are some details.[41] Thus, the narrative, to borrow the disincarnate narrator's words, typifies "nature's senseless access," i.e. nature's ineffable richness (*Reservoir* 270). This, in turn, shows how nature, however cyclical, never ceases to surprise and enchant s/he who opens up to it.

To put it succinctly, McGregor's *Reservoir13*, by virtue of its poetic and thematic properties, exemplifies how natural and cultural phenomena, despite being essentially cyclical, never exhaust their mystery, and thereby force individuals to conceive of them "anew as the new," i.e. to keep on experiencing them, each time as if for the first time (Derrida, *Specters* 61). The way this novel depicts nature and culture evokes the way a traumatised individual experiences her traumatic past as "repetition *and* first time," a frightening past that keeps happening, each time as if it were for the first time (*Specters* 10). Thus, it can be advanced that the way the narrative describes nature and culture as both repetitive and numinous imitates the novel's characters' collective traumatic memory of Rebecca's disappearance, because of which these characters always relive that trauma as simultaneous with their living present. Following this logic, one can postulate that, although seemingly neglected, only every so often mentioned, the characters' collective trauma is in reality latently present throughout the entire narrative, showing up in the bodiless narrator's prime focus on the numinous cyclicality of the unnamed village's culture and wildlife.

In tune with McGregor's *Reservoir13*, the six soundtracks that Richard J. Birkin composed for this novel evoke how a trauma is experienced as a simultaneity. What corroborates this claim is that these soundtracks are *minimalistic*, i.e. "highly repetitive, based on a few 'minimal' musical ideas" (Jones 419). Indeed, they mostly involve a *string trio* playing long

[41] Among the natural species mentioned in McGregor's *Reservoir13* are the names of trees, plants, fruits, bushes, mammals, birds, insects, fish, molluscs, amphibians, and invertebrates.

notes of G major.[42] However, the soundtracks scarcely give the impression that they are mostly made up of the same musical phrases. This is mainly because they are intermittently interspersed with *accompaniments*, such as the guitar arpeggio and the piano in "The Year Turned."[43] Thus, it can be advanced that these musical pieces combine repetition with its self-generated opposite—novelty. Similarly, and as already specified, a traumatic accident is always relived as both a repetition and a first time. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the soundtracks are composed in such a way as to echo traumatic occurrences, and more particularly the collective trauma of the characters of *Reservoir13*.

A further instance of how the soundtracks are haunted by the collective trauma in *Reservoir13* is the sonic texture of both "At Midnight" and "Dreams Were Had about Her, still." What is noteworthy about these two soundtracks is that they are similar and different at the same time. They are similar because they are played in B minor and by the same string trio. They are also different because they are not performed in exactly the same way. In fact, the string trio play the same notes simultaneously in "At Midnight" and consecutively in "Dreams Were Had about Her, still." Thus, the two musical pieces are a repetition of the same notes, but a repetition without replication. Likewise, and as such has been specified, traumatic memories are always relived as a mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty. Following the foregoing considerations, it can be advanced that the reason why in "At Midnight" and "Dreams Were Had about Her, still" the same notes are played differently is to evoke how trauma victims, including the characters of *Reservoir13*, reexperience their uncanny past as a blend of repetition and novelty.

In a nutshell, McGregor's fiction, as exemplified by the previous narrative fragments, is marked by certain unwonted elements, including unconventional reported speech and a shipwrecked chronology. By virtue of these unusual narrative elements, the author illustrates, among other things, that a trauma victim, on account of her cathected traumatic memory, always relives her frightening past as a simultaneity, i.e. a traumatic past that keeps happening, each time as if it were for the first time.

[42] In the present album, the string trio are a cellist, violinist and violist.

[43] "Accompaniment: music and players providing a bass line, chord structure, and beat in support of a solo performer. The accompaniment may provide harmonic support (as in the continuo playing of the 17th and 18th centuries), melodic imitation and continuation of the solo part (as in many 19th-century songs), atmospheric background (as in orchestral accompaniments to operatic arias), and so on" (Jones 3).

3. Future Past

In the last subchapter, it has been demonstrated how a traumatic memory always compels the subject it affects to experience her traumatic past as a simultaneity. This is chiefly because this memory, owing to its intense emotion, always disrupts the *intentionality* of a traumatised individual's consciousness, and therefore can never be retained as a memory of a past event. Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, the renowned German philosopher and the founder of modern phenomenology, understands 'intentionality' to mean the inherent tendency of human consciousness to be always directed towards objects outside of it, not of its own making (Husserl XXIV). Thus, consciousness, for Husserl, does not present to the ego its own representations of the world. Rather, it is a transparent interface, whereby the ego is, in each of its living presents, in immediate contact with the world's objects.

Apart from being a transparent interface, consciousness, according to Husserl, has an extended intentional field (Husserl 180).[44] This means that consciousness is always directed not only towards its immediate present ("the just now"), but also simultaneously towards its immediate past ("the just-past") and its immediate future (Husserl 112, 242). Husserl calls the ability of human consciousness to be always directed towards the immediate past of its immediate present "retention" or "primary memory" (Husserl 25, 32). As regards the ability of human consciousness to be always directed towards the immediate future of its immediate present, Husserl terms it "protention" or "primary expectation" (Husserl 40, 41). One should not, however, confuse retention with recollection, as the former is a passive and non-objectifying awareness of an immediate past, while the latter is an active and objectifying awareness of a relatively distant past (Husserl 83). By the same token, protention should not be equated to expectation or imagination. This stems from the fact that protention, unlike expectation and imagination, does not attempt to picture the future. Rather, it involves the instantaneous and spontaneous awareness whereby human consciousness always expects its immediate future to be not yet present in its immediate present (Husserl 89).

Another key concept of the Husserlian theory of consciousness is *fulfilment*. According to Husserl, fulfilment takes place when an *intentional object* is consecutively perceived by consciousness as an immediate future (protention), a just now (primary impression) and eventually

[44] Because he conceives of consciousness as having an intentional field that extends beyond the immediate present, Husserl calls consciousness "absolute consciousness" (Husserl 294).

a just-past (retention) (Husserl 110-1).[45] Fulfilment does not, however, happen in many cases, especially when the intentional object is a traumatic memory. This is because such a memory, as has repeatedly been indicated, gains, on account of its ample emotion, numinosity, in Jung's acceptance of the term, i.e. a tremendous psychic value (Jung, *Man* 96). Being numinous, this memory cannot be captured in its totality by the traumatised individual's consciousness. That is why a traumatic memory can never be perceived as an immediate present, and therefore cannot be retained as a just-past (retention). Thus, this memory aborts fulfilment, and, as such, keeps the traumatic past it presents as a future past, a past that can be retained as past only in a perpetually deferred future.

Drawing on the above, it will be illustrated in this subchapter how many of McGregor's writings show that a traumatic memory maintains the eerie past it presents as a future past. Among these writings, "The Remains," one of the short stories in McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, features prominently (*TISTHSLY* 188-90). This text is deeply reminiscent of McGregor's *Reservoir13*, as it opens with a police search for 'The Remains' of a missing girl. However, and unlike *Reservoir13*, "The Remains" is devoid of many narrative elements, including characters. This is evinced by its opening scene that proceeds as follows:

> *Are believed* to still be intact . . . *Are believed* to have been concealed . . . *May be* laid in a resting position with legs together and hands folded and head turned gently to one side. . . *Could* well be recoverable given the relinquishing of certain key details known to person or persons unknown. *May* ultimately need to be recovered using a team from the forensic archaeology department.
> (*TISTHSLY* 188-9, emphasis added)

This narrative fragment departs from syntactic and narrative conventions. This is arguably because it does not involve any characters or narrative progression, but instead proceeds through a paratactic series of descriptive sentences. As well as being descriptive, these sentences have a common but omitted subject that is only found outside the actual body of the text, namely in the title: 'The Remains.' The omission of the sentences' common subject suggests, amongst other things, that this subject ('The Remains') is a "nonphenomenal phenomenon," a phenomenon that, unlike other phenomena, cannot be captured in its entirety by the ego's consciousness (Derrida, "Violence" 160). This brings to mind a traumatic memory which, by dint of its abundant emotion, takes on a numinous character, and thereby disrupts the intentionality of the ego's consciousness, in Husserl's understanding of the word, i.e. the ability of the ego's

[45] By 'intentional object,' Husserl means any object that falls under the intentional field of consciousness, i.e. any object captured by consciousness (Husserl 294).

consciousness to present the totality of any objects that fall under the scope of its intentional field (Husserl 131-3). Thus, it can be said that, in 'The Remains,' the absented subject of the latter passage's sentences, mimics traumatic memory which, owing to its ample emotion, eclipses consciousness, thus cannot be made present.

Alongside its absented subject ('The Remains'), the latter passage is distinguished by its passive voice sentences, including 'believed to be' or 'understood to be.' This, in turn, can be seen as a metaphor for the passivity of a traumatised subject's consciousness before a traumatic memory which, in its numinosity, can never be made a *present*, a phenomenon that consciousness can present in its totality. Rather, a traumatic memory persists as a *present absent*, a mental phenomenon whose presence disrupts consciousness. Thus, such a memory cannot be made wholly present to the ego, but rather persists as an ineffable mystery that can be demystified, made present in its entirety, only in a perpetually postponed future.

Given the fact that it cannot be presented by consciousness, a traumatic memory cannot be assimilated by the ego, since the ego can only assimilate objects presented by its consciousness. This finds expression in the verbs employed in the earlier passage, including 'may,' and 'could.' Semantically speaking, these two modal verbs express possibility. Thus, the use of these modal verbs in the previous excerpt suggests that 'The Remains' persist as a possibility, i.e. as a potential rather than an actual object of knowledge. This is underscored by the rest of the short story that is chiefly made up of the hyperbolic reiteration of the same truncated sentence ("Have yet to be found") (*TISTHSLY* 189-90). This sentence implies, among other things, that 'The Remains' have not yet become an actual object of cognition. This is chiefly because they have not yet become an intentional object, an object that consciousness presents in its entirety. This interpretation is substantiated by the last truncated sentence of the short story: "have yet to be" (*TISTHSLY* 190). This sentence suggests that 'The Remains' are a future past, a past object that has not yet exhausted its meaning in terms of the ego's consciousness, and that thereby persists as a *potential intentionality*: an object that can be presented in its totality by the ego's consciousness only in the future to come.

As indicated, "The Remains" opens with the previously quoted passage, and then proceeds through the reiteration of the same subjectless sentence ('Has yet to be found'). The passage that involves the hyperbolic repetition of this sentence is intermittently punctuated with two similarly subjectless sentences, namely "*is* gone" and "*are* gone" (*TISTHSLY* 190, emphasis added). These two sentences show that 'The Remains' cannot be envisaged as singular or

plural. This is because, in the first sentence, 'The Remains' are referred to by the verb 'to be' in the singular form, while in the second sentence, they are referred to by the same verb in the plural form. Thus, these two sentences show that 'The Remains' cannot be phenomenologised, i.e. they cannot be captured in their entirety by consciousness, and therefore cannot be rendered into a lucid present. This, in turn, disputably simulates traumatic memory, since such a memory, as has repeatedly been noted, cannot be totalised by consciousness, i.e. it cannot be identified in its entirety by consciousness. Thus, the use of the verb 'to be,' both in the singular and plural form, to designate 'The Remains,' emulates traumatic memory that keeps the traumatic past it presents beyond any totalising account produced by the ego's consciousness.

Alongside the two previously analysed sentences ('is gone' and 'are gone'), there is another truncated sentence that interrupts the hyperbolic reiteration of 'have yet to be found.' This sentence is: "Will not bring her back," and it suggests that no consciousness can ever give the absent, the probably departed girl, her due, i.e. no consciousness can ever re-present (make present again) the probably deceased girl in her entirety (*TISTHSLY* 190). This is typical, as any traumatic past, including the missing girl in this short story, finds expression in a traumatic memory. On account of such a cathected memory, a traumatic past cannot be made present in its entirety, but rather remains tied to *differance*.[46] Derrida understands 'differance' to mean the mental process whereby certain objects always *differ from* (are in excess of) a subject's consciousness. Subsequently, these objects can become intentional phenomena, phenomena perceived in their entirety by a subject's consciousness, only in a perpetually *deferred* future (Derrida, *Specters* 170-1).

To put it succinctly, "The Remains" breaks from grammatical and narrative conventions, as it involves, amongst other things, subjectless sentences, and is devoid of any narrative progression. By virtue of these unwonted elements, this short story, as has been demonstrated, typifies that a traumatic memory keeps the frightening past it presents as a future past, a past that a traumatised subject's consciousness can present in its totality only in some perpetually deferred future.

Like "The Remains," "If It Keeps on Raining" is another short story in McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* that epitomises how a traumatic memory, owing its ample emotion, keeps

[46] 'Differance' draws on "the two senses of the French verb *différer,* which can mean either to differ or to defer. It thus draws simultaneously on the notions of spacing (to differ) and temporization (to defer)" (Wilson 34).

the traumatic past it presents as a future past (*TISTHSLY* 57-74). As earlier indicated, the protagonist of this novel is an unnamed loner who witnessed the death of two children during a football stadium stampede reminiscent of the 1989 Hillsborough stadium tragedy (Lea, "Jon" 239). Traumatised by this experience, this protagonist retreats from society, and develops an obsession with an impending cataclysmic flood during which he imagines he will be able to save the two children he could not save during the stadium disaster. In anticipation of a flood of such epic proportions, he starts the construction of a tree-house and a raft. Although apparently bearing no relation to the protagonist's traumatic experience of the stadium human crush, his obsession with an imminent flood is in reality a metaphoric expression of that eerie past. This is because the epic flood, much like the football stadium stampede, produces an unstoppable momentum that sweeps away everything in its path. Following from this, it becomes obvious that, under the dominant influence of his traumatic memory, the protagonist conceives of his traumatic past as a future past—a past that is yet to come.

By keeping the protagonist's uncanny past as a potential future, his traumatic memory impels him to do justice to the two children by saving them, which is obviously impossible. Such an impossible form of justice is the main element of an ethical experience, in Levinas's conception of the term, i.e. an experience where giving the other her due is virtually impossible (Levinas, *Totality* 45).

Much like "If It Keeps on Raining," and in the same collection of short stories, "I'll Buy You a Shovel" clearly illustrates how a traumatic past, on account of the cathected memory through which it is presented, persists as future past (*TISTHSLY* 219-249). This short story is the longest among McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, and it revolves around the traumatic past of its characters, including Jackie whose only child Mark died at war in a desert. Like Jackie, the short story's unnamed narrator also has a traumatic past, as his mother died and was buried far away from her hometown, while he was serving a prison term. Upon the death of his mother, the anonymous narrator develops an obsession, which is to exhume his mother and to rebury her among her people. Such an obsession shows that the narrator is not so much bothered by his mother's death as by her being buried away from where he wants her to be buried. Symbolically speaking, the act of burying is much like the act of mourning, as it attempts to absent the other. Thus, it can be said that the anonymous narrator's obsession with reburying his mother where he wants her to be buried is a conscious expression of his unconscious desire to mourn her.

According to Freud and as already indicated, mourning only occurs when the ego completely assimilates its loss of a loved object (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 252). However, and as has been explained, the ego can assimilate only objects presented by its consciousness, which is not the case of a traumatic past. This is because such a past is always made present by means of a cathected memory which, as indicated previously, disrupts consciousness, and therefore cannot be assimilated. Withstanding assimilation, a traumatic memory always aborts mourning that can transpire only in a perpetually deferred future.

In the light of the foregoing, it can be posited that the anonymous narrator's unconscious desire to mourn his mother will always fail. This interpretation is validated by the eponymous scene towards the end of the short story. In this scene, the narrator confides in his close friend Ray about his intention to exhume and rebury his mother among her people. Ray then answers sarcastically, "I'll buy you a shovel and you can dig up your mam" (*TISTHSLY* 241). Ray's sarcastic statement is highly significant, as it implies, amongst other things, that, even if the narrator reburies his mother, he will not have what he wants—mourning. Following this interpretation, it can be postulated that the narrator's traumatic memory keeps his disquieting past as a future past, a past that can be assimilated and therefore mourned only in an unceasingly delayed future.

Much in the same vein, and in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, a traumatic past is depicted as a future past. As already mentioned, the trigger of this novel is the collective trauma of the dwellers of an unnamed street whose lives are abruptly disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbours' twin sons. Such a traumatic incident, like any frightening experience, persists as a recalcitrant mystery that can be assimilated only in a constantly deferred future. This is most clearly evident in the scene where 'the young man from number eighteen' packs his bags during his last day at his apartment. In this scene, this protagonist, reluctant to leave his apartment without leaving a trace, decides to place between the floor joists under his bed a jar where he has piled up some of his collection of urban scraps. While reporting this scene, the impersonal narrator compares the jar to "an egg" and the scraps placed inside to "a bundle of memories waiting to hatch into the future" (*INSRT* 57). The narrator's simile evokes the way a traumatic memory keeps the traumatic past it presents. This is because such a memory, as has been evinced, never yields the past it carries in the form of full presence, i.e. it never allows the disconcerting past to present itself in the form of a lucid present. Instead, a traumatic memory, owing to its intense emotion, imbues the traumatic past it presents with an

overwhelming ambiguity, and, as such, disrupts the ability of the traumatised individual's consciousness to present the totality of any objects that fall into the ambit of its intentional field. That is why a traumatic past remains as a potential intentionality, a phenomenon that can be retained as past only in a continually postponed future. Thus, it can be said that the impersonal narrator's previously stated simile emulates the novel's characters' traumatic past that, like any frightening pasts, yields itself in the form of full presence only in a constantly deferred future.

This interpretation is authenticated by many of the novel's passages where the triggering event, the young boy's car accident, is portrayed as haunting those who witnessed it. Among these passages, the following narrative fragment is a fair illustration:

> I heard *this* noise and it cut right through me . . . and *it was so sudden, and it seemed to go on forever*. That's what they'll say, when they run out of ways to express the sound . . . they'll say *it was so sudden and it seemed to go on forever*. They will mean different things when they say forever. Some of them will mean that as the noise began time seemed to stretch out, that as they turned and saw the source of it *an awful inevitability flooded into the street like a shadow across the sun* and *all they could do was wait for the noise to end*.
>
> (*INSRT* 255, emphasis added)

The noise the impersonal narrator depicts in this passage is the screech of brakes that the unmanned street's dwellers had heard just before the young boy was hit by a car. This noise gains, by dint of the traumatic memory it has generated, an untiring vividness, as typified by the incorporeal narrator's reiterative expression 'it was so sudden, and it seemed to go on forever.' While referring to the braking noise, the narrator employs 'this' instead of 'that.' Grammatically speaking, 'this' is a determiner employed to indicate someone or something as present. However, the narrator resorts to this determiner to designate a noise that pertains to the past, which highlights the inexhaustible sharpness of this noise.

In its relentless vividness, the screech of brakes exceeds cognition, and therefore cannot be transmuted into an intelligible narrative. This is corroborated by the latter passage that shows how the anonymous street's inhabitants fail to give even an approximate account of the braking noise they heard during their traumatic experience. This noise outpaces understanding first and foremost because it cannot be phenomenologised, i.e. it cannot be captured in its entirety by the novel's traumatised characters' consciousness. This is exemplified by the disembodied narrator when it describes the traumatic moment as 'an awful inevitability flooded into the street like a shadow across the sun.' In this sentence, 'the sun' can be seen as a metaphor for consciousness.

This is because consciousness, like the sun, makes the beings of the world present to the ego. In its inexorable vividness, however, the braking noise, to borrow the narrator's words, lingers 'as a shadow across the sun,' which arguably means that this noise eclipses the novel's characters' consciousnesses. Thus, such a noise remains a future past, a past that can be retained by the characters' consciousness as past only in a future to come. This interpretation is confirmed by the passage's last sentence: 'all they could do was wait for the noise to end.' This sentence illustrates how the traumatised characters cannot assimilate their traumatic past, especially the braking noise, and therefore develop a *self-possessed waiting* for a future when they will assimilate their trauma, a future that may never come. Matthew Pianalto understands 'self-possessed waiting' to mean a calm waiting for a deferred gratification (Pianalto 3). According to Pianalto, this form of waiting is the core aspect of *patience*, with 'patience' being, for this philosopher, "the root and guardian of all virtue" (Pianalto 3).[47] Drawing on this, it can be posited that, although seemingly tormenting, these characters' traumatic past, including the braking noise, is profoundly ethical. It endures as a future past, a past that can be captured in its totality by the characters' consciousness only in an incessantly delayed future. Unable to assimilate such a past, these characters develop a self-possessed waiting, which is, according to Pianalto, the mainstay of patience, the root and safeguard of all virtues, hence the ethicality of these characters' trauma (Pianalto 4).

Similar to *If Nobody Speaks*, and in McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, a traumatic past is portrayed as a future past. As earlier indicated, the novel's events are mainly reflected through the prism of a disincarnate narrator that refers to itself as 'We.' For many scholars, especially Jean Michel Ganteau, Barbara Korte and Catherine Emmott, this choral narrator is made up of the ghosts of the novel's departed fellow drug addicts and homeless characters. This spectral narrator's narrative is punctuated with the present tense and present participle form of the verb 'wait.' The hyperbolic repetition of this verb that is employed two hundred and eighteen times throughout the novel's narrative gives the impression that the spectral 'We' dwells on some sort of limbo (Ganteau, "Vulnerable" 92). Dominated by endless waiting, the choral narrator's limbo-like existence can disputably be read as the outcome of the deceased characters' longing for redemption from their overburdening traumatic past experiences.

[47] In his book *On Patience: Reclaiming a Foundational Virtue*, Matthew Pianalto treats 'patience' as including four main aspects: uncomplaining endurance of various burdens, forbearing and tolerance, perseverance and constancy, and finally and most importantly self-possessed waiting (Pianalto 13-38).

As already illustrated, the 'We' can also be seen as the collective traumatic memory that retains all of the deceased characters' frightening experiences. This traumatic memory cannot, however, be retained by the novel's characters who are still alive. This is epitomised by many of the novel's passages where the 'We' sees, hears, and rubs shoulders with all of the novel's characters, without being phenomenologised by these characters, i.e. without being captured by these characters' consciousness. This is typical, since any traumatic memory, as previously demonstrated, captures a traumatic past that cannot be captured by the consciousness of the subject it affects. Following from this, it can be conjectured that the endless waiting in McGregor's *Even the Dogs* pertains not to the novel's dead protagonists, but rather to the characters who are still alive. Plagued with a traumatic past that is not their own, these characters await the day they can assimilate such an impersonal past which, by dint of the cathected memory through which it presents itself, persists as a future past, a past that can only be totalised in an infinitely delayed future.

To put it succinctly, many of McGregor's narratives, as typified by the passages examined in this subchapter, have an unwonted syntax, and are rife with metaphors. By virtue of these elements, the author shows, amongst other things, how a traumatic memory disrupts the intentionality of the ego's consciousness, in Husserl's conception of the term, i.e. the ability of the ego's consciousness to present the totality of any object that falls under the scope of its intentional field (Husserl 131-3). In doing so, and as demonstrated by many a narrative fragment from McGregor's fiction, a traumatic memory keeps the traumatic past it presents as a future past, a past event that can be captured in its entirety by the consciousness of the one it impacts only in an incessantly postponed future. Being refractory to consciousness, a traumatic past cannot be assimilated by the ego, since the ego can only assimilate objects captured by its consciousness. Thus, the ego is impelled to conceive of its traumatic past as an *infinity*, i.e. an ineffable *noumenon* beyond assimilation, which is, according to Levinas, the mainstay of an ethical experience, an experience where the ego is driven, despite itself, to overstep its cognitive powers, and thereby to open to the other in her irreducible alterity (Levinas, *Totality* 77).

Chapter 3
A Saying without a Said

The previous chapter exemplifies how McGregor's narratives are distinguished by an unwonted typography, the hyperbolic use of unusual syntactic structures and an unhinged chronology. By virtue of these unconventional elements, the author presents traumatic memory as an atemporal mental phenomenon because of which a traumatised subject always experiences her eerie past as a simultaneity, a past that keeps happening, each time as if for the first time. As already detailed, the reason why such a past is always experienced as a simultaneity is because it always manifests itself by means of a traumatic memory which, owing to its intense emotion, always disrupts the traumatised subject's consciousness. This is exemplified by many a narrative element of McGregor's fiction, especially certain metaphors. By means of these narrative elements, the author typifies the inability of a trauma victim to assimilate her traumatic past that persists as a future past, a past event that can be captured in its entirety by the consciousness of the one it impresses only in an incessantly postponed future.

Withstanding assimilation, a traumatic past cannot subsequently be rendered into a coherent narrative, as is clearly illustrated by the case of Anna O., one of Josef Breuer's traumatised patients (Freud, *Studies* 2: 21-45).[48] Anna O. was a young woman passionately attached to her father who died of peripleuritic abscess, a lethal disease at the time. Devastated by her father's death, Anna developed several cognitive disabilities, most conspicuously an acute dysfunctional organisation of her speech. At first, she was "at a loss to find words, and this difficulty gradually increased. Later she lost her command of grammar and syntax; she no longer conjugated verbs, and eventually she used only infinitives, for the most part incorrectly formed from weak past participles; and she omitted both the definite and indefinite article" (Freud, *Studies* 2: 25). Like Anna O., most traumatised individuals usually produce disjointed, solecistic and silence-riddled discourse when reminded of their traumas (Dalenberg 61). This evidences that a traumatic experience is "a saying without a said" (Levinas, *Otherwise* 45). Levinas employs 'saying' and 'said' to mean successively the signified (the meaning) and the signifier (the linguistic configuration) of a sign. Being extremely frightening, a traumatic experience as a sign gains an ineffable saying, a meaning in excess of any unequivocal said, i.e. any lucid linguistic representation.

[48] Josef Breuer (1842-1925) is a distinguished physician who laid the foundation to psychoanalysis as developed by his disciple Sigmund Freud.

In light of the foregoing, it will be demonstrated in this third chapter how McGregor's narratives are marked by certain rhetorical devices by means of which the author presents traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic experience, as a semantic surplus exceeding the cognitive capacities of a trauma victim, who therefore cannot express her trauma in any plain said. In order to do that, it will initially be shown how, by drawing heavily on certain rhetorical devices, especially aposiopesis and non-sequitur, the author presents traumatic saying as a disruption of linguistic representation. It will then be evinced how the author's broad use of certain tropes, notably euphemism and metalepsis, suggests that a traumatic saying is an ineffable mystery that can be communicated only by way of allusion. The reason why such a saying cannot be expressed in plain language is because it finds expression in a traumatic memory which, by dint of its ample emotion, gains numinosity, in Jung's conception of the word, i.e. an extraordinary psychic value (Jung, *Man* 96). Subsequently, a traumatic saying cannot be assimilated, as is clearly illustrated by many narrative elements of McGregor's narratives, especially their narrators. Appearing as a disembodied camera eye passively recording and not thinking, many a narrator of McGregor's fiction, as will eventually be illustrated in this chapter, reflects the inability of a traumatised subject to assimilate her uncanny past.

1. Figures of Disruption

As previously indicated, a traumatic memory cannot be placed within a trauma victim's scheme of prior knowledge, and therefore cannot become a *narrative memory*. Janet understands 'narrative memory' to mean a flexible mental phenomenon that allows a subject not only to retain a past occurrence, but also to adapt her linguistic representation of such an occurrence to different communication situations (Janet, *L'évolution* 251-72). Unlike a narrative memory, a traumatic memory is an inflexible mental phenomenon, under whose thrall a trauma victim cannot give any lucid account of her traumatic past (Janet, *L'évolution* 213). Instead, when recounting her uncanny past, a traumatised individual usually produces an unfathomable narrative, interrupted, amongst other things, by ellipses and non-sequiturs **(**Dalenberg 61). This is typified by many narratives of McGregor's fiction, including the following excerpt from the opening scene of McGregor's *Even the Dogs*:

> *We see* someone getting out of a taxi parked further up the hill . . . She comes up the short flight of steps, and bangs on the door. This is Laura.
> . . . *Later, in the evening of the same day or the day after that*, *we see* Mike scrambling up on to the garage roof.
> . . . *We see* Heather, *another morning*, hauling herself up the steps.
> (*ED* 1-2, emphasis added)

In this narrative fragment, the 'We,' the choral narrator of the novel, describes most of the novel's characters a few days before the police discover Robert Radcliffe's decaying body on his living room floor. The choral narrator resorts in this passage to indefinite temporal indicators: 'Later, in the evening of the same day or the day after that' and 'another morning.' This suggests that the 'We' is unable to peg to specific dates the different occurrences it depicts, which is typical of trauma narratives, mainly narratives related by traumatised individuals or secondary witnesses (LaCapra 186).[49] The main reason why these individuals cannot localise the eerie pasts they recount in terms of exact dates is because they always experience them as a simultaneity, occurrences that keep happening, each time as if for the first time.

Other than being devoid of any definite temporal indicator, the previous passage is characterised by a disrupted focalisation. This is because it proceeds through a series of causally unrelated narrative snapshots, each starting with the choral narrator's anaphoric expression 'We see.' The acausal nature of these narrative snapshots is accentuated by the passage's typography, as each of these snapshots is reported in a distinct paragraph. By dint of these unwonted textual and paratextual elements, the choral narrator produces a fragmented narrative that does not give a readily apprehensible account of the scene it depicts, which is specific to trauma victims whose testimonies usually do not offer any completed statements of their eerie pasts (Caruth, *Trauma* 16).

Along the same line, and in the second chapter of the same novel, the choral narrator produces a narrative chiefly marked by its fragmentation, since it proceeds through a series of narrative short cuts causally unrelated to one another, the ensuing passage being a fair illustration of this feature:

> *Off again past the back of the council offices, Einstein not wanting to leave the food behind but limping along beside him all the same. Past the alleyway down to the back of the shopping centre and through the multi-storey carpark and there still weren't no one there*. Could have told Maureen. She would have told the police for him. *Out on to the Royal Square*. Could have asked to use the phone and done it himself. They'd have to be told. What the fuck was he thinking. Couldn't just leave Robert lying on the floor. Couldn't just wait while someone . . . found him lying there like that.
>
> (*ED* 25, emphasis added)

This passage is about Danny who, frightened after having discovered Robert's corpse, walks aimlessly through the unnamed city, not knowing what to do. Danny's inability to assimilate

[49] A secondary witness is someone who rubs shoulders with a traumatised individual, and who may become vicariously traumatised by his acquaintance's trauma (LaCapra 143).

his traumatic experience finds expression in the passage's italicised segments about the different places Danny has strolled through, along with his dog Einstein. These italicised segments are almost devoid of any verb showing time, which contestably echoes Danny's traumatic memory, since such type of memories, as already illustrated, is always experienced as an atemporal phenomenon, a phenomenon that cannot be temporalised by the one it impacts.

The italicised segments also involve an unwonted linguistic structure: 'weren't no one there' instead of 'weren't anyone there.' This unusual structure is not an exception, as most of McGregor's narratives are punctuated with unconventional grammatical structures that disputably echo the ineffable nature of trauma. Indeed, a trauma, by dint of the cathected memory whereby it presents itself, persists as a saying, a meaning that cannot be absorbed by any said, any conventional language (Eaglestone 147). That is why such a saying usually manifests itself as a disruption of the said, hence the author's deliberate use of unconventional grammatical structures when relating his traumatised characters' uncanny experiences.

The passage's italicised segments are interspersed with free indirect speech through which the choral narrator depicts the many thoughts that have crossed Danny's mind after his discovering Robert's rotting corpse. Most of the sentences forming this free indirect speech open with the same syntactic structure ('could have') both in the affirmative and negative form. Semantically speaking, this structure is commonly used to convey a sense of guilt. Such a feeling is frequent among traumatised individuals who usually hold themselves responsible for their traumas, which accounts for their fixation on such highly painful accidents (Caruth, *Trauma* 86). Thus, it can be assumed that the hyperbolic use of 'could have' in the narrator's free indirect speech underscores Danny's deep sense of guilt for not telling anybody about Robert's death.

The choral narrator's free indirect speech also boasts a solecistic punctuation, as it involves a question that ends with a full stop instead of a question mark: 'What the fuck was he thinking.' This solecistic punctuation can be interpreted in three different ways. The first is that it shows how Danny's trauma, similar to other traumatic experiences, aborts any said, any regular form of linguistic representation. The second possible interpretation of the choral narrator's unusual punctuation of the question it reports is that this question does not expect an answer—a rhetorical question. As regards the third possible interpretation, it is that the choral narrator believes the question it reports to be inaudible, thus unanswerable, hence its use of a full stop rather than a question mark. This last interpretation is substantiated by many scholars who, as

previously stated, conceive of the choral narrator as a *ghost,* in Derrida's understanding of the term, i.e. a spectral phenomenon that hears and sees without being heard or seen (Derrida, *Specters* 5-6).[50]

Alongside its solecistic punctuation, the choral narrator's free indirect speech involves sentences whose common subject (Danny) is omitted. One possible interpretation of these truncated sentences is that they suggest that Danny's trauma is so overwhelming that it eclipses this character, i.e. it reduces Danny to a present absent, an individual devoid of any sense of self. This interpretation draws on disparate psychiatric surveys, according to which traumatic neuroses can readily degenerate into *depersonalisation*, an intermittent disruption of a traumatised subject's sense of self (American Psychiatric Association 272).

Thus far, the choral narrator's subjectless reported speech has been read as free indirect speech where this narrator depicts the many thoughts that cross Danny's mind after his discovering Robert's corpse. Another possible reading of this reported speech is that it is free direct speech about the choral narrator's reaction to Danny who does not tell anybody about Robert's death for fear of being held as a suspect. Following from this, it can be said that the narrator's anaphoric expression ('could have') probably expresses blame. Believing Danny's reaction to Robert's death untenable, the choral narrator ends up considering this character unworthy of notice, hence its use of truncated sentences, devoid of any direct or indirect reference to Danny.

By the same token, and in the same novel, the last chapter is distinguished by its amphibology, as it abounds, amongst other things, with non-sequiturs and aposiopeses. In this chapter, the choral narrator flits haphazardly between two narrative strands. The first, as earlier demonstrated, is a pastiche of different types of reported speech, and is about the choral narrator sitting in a court of law, and waiting for the coroner's verdict on the exact circumstances of Robert's death. As regards the second narrative strand, it is the court transcript of the coroner's inquiry into Robert's death. This transcript departs from usual official documents, as it is incomplete and incoherent, the following narrative fragment being a fair illustration of these features:

> LAURA: (inaudible)
> CORONER: Did you have anything further you wanted to add?
> LAURA: (inaudible)

[50] Among the scholars who conceive of the 'We' as a ghost is Professor Jean Michel Ganteau who states that, "the choral narrator is made up of the souls or ghosts of the departed fellow dossers and drug-addicts who are present throughout, delivering the unflinching testimony that constitutes the novel" (Ganteau, "The Powers" 451).

> CORONER: No. Right then. Thank you. I'll move on . . . We might be tempted to speculate as to the reasons why Mr Radcliffe abruptly stopped drinking, and what effects this may have had on his body . . . But none of this speculation would be relevant, or admissible, and none of it would help us reach a verdict today. Ultimately, the exact mechanics and circumstances of his death will remain a mystery to us. And sadly this is often the —.
>
> (*ED* 190)

Like the rest of the coroner's official inquiry into Robert's death, this narrative fragment is interspersed with aposiopeses, non sequiturs, and parenthetical notes recording inaudible responses or expletives. These figures reflect how the language of law fails to do justice to Robert whose traumatic death remains an unsolved mystery, which typifies how a traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic experience, is a semantic surplus, refractory to any said.

In McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes*, as in *Even the Dogs*, trauma is presented as an "unsayable saying," an ineffable meaning that ruptures any said (Levinas, *Otherwise* 44). As noted previously, *The Reservoir Tapes* is a series of fifteen short stories set in the anonymous village of *Reservoir13* during a summer day leading up to and the day immediately following Rebecca's disappearance. The first of these short stories is the transcript of an interview with Charlotte, Rebecca's mother, about her only daughter's disappearance (*TRT* 1-16). This transcript begins *in medias res*. It then proceeds through an unnamed interviewer's questions, and is peppered with the interviewer's apologies and words of comfort in response to Charlotte's omitted answers. One possible reason for the omission of Charlotte's answers is to imply that this mother's traumatic wound is beyond words, which evinces, once again, how trauma is recalcitrant to language.

On a similar note, and in the third short story of McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes*, a traumatic saying is introduced as an incommunicable meaning. This short story is about Deepak, a young dweller of *Reservoir13*'s anonymous village who works as a paperboy during his spare time (*TRT* 27-35). While delivering newspapers the morning after Rebecca's disappearance, Deepak meets Clive, an old gardener and a loner. Clive helps Deepak fix his bike's chain, then invites the young boy into his kitchen. While cleaning his hands of his bike's chain grease, Deepak sees a gun on the table of Clive's kitchen, which brings him out in a cold sweat. Deepak's traumatic experience is reported in a scene that runs over more than five pages (*TRT* 30-35). This scene is marked by its syntactic disruption, as it involves paratactic sentences, some of which are causally unrelated to the others. Besides its unwonted syntax, the scene is also distinguished by its unconventional typography, as some of its paratactic sentences are set

as distinct paragraphs demarcated by double spacing. The scene's unusual syntactic and typographical elements echo, among other things, Deepak's inability to transfigure his trauma into a legible narrative, which is, yet again, a fair illustration of the unsayability of a traumatic saying.

Following suit with the narrators of McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes*, "the girl from number twenty-two," the narrator of the second narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, presents a traumatic saying as a breakdown of the said (*INSRT* 193). This is made manifest by the scene where she phones her mother to tell her that she has become accidentally pregnant. This scene is labelled by its syntactic and typographical disruption, as it proceeds as follows:

> I breathe deeply, trying not to sigh.
> I wrap the telephone cord around another finger.
> *Mum*, I say.
> . . . *Mum*, I say, again, can I just, but she doesn't hear me, or she won't let me speak.
> . . . I say *mum*, there was something I needed to say, can I just, and she says sorry love what was it?
> I hesitate, I squeeze a coil of telephone wire into my fist. I say *mum*, I'm pregnant.
>
> (*INSRT* 81, emphasis added)

This narrative segment is marked by the female narrator's repetitive calls for her mother's attention ('Mum') that echo, amongst other things, the narrator's pressing need for her mother's affection, a need she has been deprived of throughout her entire childhood. This narrative fragment is also marked by the exclusive use of the present tense. As aforementioned, a traumatised individual usually resorts exclusively to the present tense when recounting her trauma (Davoine 51-2). This reflects, amongst other things, how a trauma victim always experiences her trauma as belonging to her living present. With this in mind, it can be postulated that the female narrator's exclusive use of the present tense reflects her being traumatised by the scene she recounts. This interpretation is validated by the rest of the narrative when the reader learns how this narrator is shocked by the utter insensitivity that her mother shows in response to her accidental pregnancy.

Being traumatic, this scene cannot therefore be translated into an intelligible narrative. This is substantiated by the scene's unwonted textual and paratextual elements. In terms of its textual elements, the scene involves an unwonted direct speech that lacks quotation marks. It also proceeds through paratactic clauses, some of which are causally disconnected to the others.

As regards its paratextual elements, the previous scene has an unusual typography, as some of its clauses are set as discrete paragraphs, superimposed upon one another. On account of these elements, this scene typifies how a traumatic saying, including the narrator's shocking experience, not only resists language, but actively destroys it.

Like the female narrator's narrative strand, the first narrative strand of the same novel is disjointed. As earlier noted, this narrative strand takes place three years before that of the female narrator, and is about a disincarnate narrator who relates the day the inhabitants of an anonymous street witness the car accident of one of their neighbours' twin sons. The narrator also intermittently shows the repercussions of some of these inhabitants' traumatic pasts upon their living present. Among these inhabitants, "the man with the burnt hands" from number sixteen features prominently (*INSRT* 146). This man is traumatised by a past accident wherein he tried in vain to save his wife from their burning house. Unable to grasp the import of his trauma, this character does not subsequently succeed to transmute this frightening past into a *narrative memory*, in Janet's conception of the word, i.e. a memory translatable into several lucid narratives (Janet, *L'évolution* 251-72). This is evinced by many narrative segments about this character, including the subsequent scene:

> Her face**,** was beautiful.
> Her hands**,** were beautiful.
> Her skin**,** was smooth **and** clear **and** unbroken . . .
> She was tall, **and** strong, **and** she kept her hair coiled tightly around the back of her head **and** she had intricate paintings on the secret parts of her body
> . . . He loved her deeply, but this was not enough to help her. *Please, darling*, she called out to him, through the closed door. ***Please darling*** *can't you help me* she called. He could not reach to her, he was not enough.
> . . . She said ***darling*** *I am very hot I cannot breathe* ***please*** *can't you reach me*.
>
> (*INSRT* 158, emphasis and boldface added)

The trigger of this scene is the young student from number seventeen who makes a loud banging noise when he tries to force open his flat jammed door. Upon hearing this noise, the man with the burnt hands remembers the banging noise he made years before when he attempted in vain to knock open his burning house door. He thereupon reexperiences his traumatic past with the utmost vividness. This is made manifest by the lack of quotation marks around the man's reminiscence of his wife's calls for help. Broadly speaking, quotation marks are employed not only to separate speech from narration, but also to signal, among other things, the pastness of the speech they surround. In this regard, it can be posited that the absence of these punctuation marks around the man's wife's calls for help implies that this man experiences his wife's calls

as belonging not to his past, but rather to his living present. This is symptomatic of traumatic neuroses, since many a traumatised subject intermittently reexperiences with harrowing vividness her trauma, as if she were still fully in that eerie past, with no distance from it (LaCapra 143).

Alongside its lack of quotation marks, the man's recollection of his wife's calls for help has an uncommon punctuation, as it involves questions ending with a full stop instead of a question mark: 'can't you help me,' 'can't you reach me.' One possible interpretation of these unwonted questions is that they are rhetorical, namely questions intended not to ask about the character's ability, but rather to confirm his inability to save his wife. This reading is corroborated by the character's own aposiopetic sentence that most probably lacks the word 'strong': 'He could not reach to her, he was not enough.' This sentence not only evidences the foregoing interpretation of the passage's unusual questions. Rather, it also evinces the traumatised man's inability to find a word that can appropriately incarnate his trauma's saying, namely his inability to save his beloved wife.

The unsayability of this character's trauma is also exemplified by the passage's segmented narrative. Indeed, the passage is made up of paratactic sentences, some of which are placed as distinct paragraphs superimposed upon one another. On account of their unusual syntactic and typographical features, these sentences echo, amongst other things, the man with the burnt hand's trauma that can never be transposed into a coherent said. Conversely, and as before indicated, the very meaning of any trauma ruptures any said, hence the passage's textual and paratextual disruption.

The reason why a trauma disrupts any said is because it always finds expression in a memory whose intense emotion overwhelms the one it impacts. Such an emotion is summoned by many of the previous passage's elements, including the reiterative use of beseeching and endearment words: 'please' and 'darling.' Strong emotion is also generated by the widower's extraordinary depiction of his wife, a depiction primarily distinguished by two unwonted features. The first is the use of polysyndeton 'and,' while the second is the solipsistic use of commas in the passage's first three sentences. Both of these unusual elements slow down the reading pace, impel the readers to dwell on each of the man's wife's attributes, and thereby present this woman as a mesmerising creature. The widower's remarkable portrayal of his wife conjures ample emotion, under whose sway the reader cannot help but feel empathy for this character, hence the ethical outcome of many of the passage's unwonted elements.

Characterised by unwonted narrative elements, McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*, much like *If Nobody Speaks*, epitomises how a trauma cannot be rendered into a lucid narrative. This novel traces David Carter's life, from his early childhood to his late middle age. As previously indicated, this protagonist is a curator at Coventry Museum whose life unravels when he discovers at the age of twenty-two that he was adopted. David's traumatic discovery finds expression in the very structure of the novel's narrative that does not unfold chronologically, but is rather segmented into anachronistic chapters about disparate memories of David's past. This disrupted narrative echoes, amongst other things, David's inability to form his own *narrative identity*, understood by Paul Ricœur to mean a coherent narrative, notably a biography or an autobiography, whereby the happenings, events, and actions specific to an individual's life are configured in a chronological order (Ricœur 113-39). The reason why David cannot form a narrative identity of his own is because he does not succeed to find his birth mother, and is therefore left with 'So Many Ways to Begin,' so many possible origins. Thus, it becomes evident that the novel's fragmented narrative mimics David's traumatic discovery of his adoption which, like any traumatic experience, is anti-narrative.

Much like the novel's overall narrative, each of this novel's chapters is characterised by its disruption, the eighteenth chapter being a fair illustration. This chapter flits in a haphazard fashion between two narrative strands. The first involves italicised fragments from a disciplinary letter filed against David because of his failure to fulfil his job obligations. As for the second narrative strand, it is contemporaneous with the first, and is about David who lapses into alcoholism during the months following his traumatic discovery. This narrative strand is labelled by several unwonted narrative elements, as is typified by the following excerpt:

> *There were weeks, months, when he could think of nothing else, could hear nothing else besides the slow refined sigh of Julia's voice, saying the words over and over again*. Of course we never saw the poor girl again. You'll have to keep the little darling. Did I say something wrong? . . . *he could get to sleep only by drinking too much and leaving the radio on, loud.* You'll have to keep the little darling. We never saw the little darling. You'll have to keep the poor girl. And of course she disappeared off the face of the earth . . . *And even when he was at work he struggled to concentrate, his thoughts blurred by the many questions he wanted answering*: **why he'd never been told; why he'd never suspected; whether Susan was lying when she said she'd never known; what he could do now to find the answers he was looking for.**
>
> (*SMWB* 125-6, emphasis and boldface added)

This passage opens with the description of David after his discovering the truth about his parentage. This description (italicised) is made up of three segments that are nearly devoid of full-

stops, and that involve solecistic punctuation, e.g. the lack of comma in 'And even when he was at work he struggled to concentrate.' Because they lack punctuation marks, especially full stops, these segments appear even longer than they actually are. This can be a metaphor for David's trauma which, like any traumatic occurrence, expands *ad infinitum*, i.e. is always experienced by the one it impresses as contemporaneous with her living present.

Likewise, the passage's free indirect speech (in bold) about the many questions haunting David is distinguished by its punctuation, since it exclusively involves semicolons. Such punctuation is commonly employed to join independent clauses, and is used, in the present case, to suggest, among other things, that the many questions crossing David's mind interpenetrate as they succeed one another, which is symptomatic of traumatic neuroses. Indeed, any trauma victim usually reexperiences her trauma through recollection as a jumble of overlapping sensory fragments (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518).

David's trauma also finds expression in the passage's free direct speech about this character's recollection of his trauma, namely his Auntie Julia's inadvertent avowal that he was adopted. One possible reason for the presentation of David's recollection of Julia's words as free direct speech is to emphasise the vividness with which this character always remembers his trauma. This interpretation draws on Genette when he states that free direct speech is commonly used to produce a sense of immediacy, thus to imbue the narrative in which it is embedded with vividness (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 56). In its vividness, the passage's free direct speech becomes mimetic of David's traumatic memory, under whose dominant influence this protagonist cannot translate his trauma into a legible narrative. This is illustrated by the free direct speech's distorted narrative. Indeed, this narrative is made up of paratactic sentences causally unbound to one another, which mirrors David's inability to translate his trauma into a coherent narrative.

Distinguished by its incoherence, "In Winter the Sky," the second short story of McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, typifies its characters' inability to narrate the unnarratable, namely their trauma (*TISTHSLY* 5-35). As previously indicated, the story proper belongs to George and to his wife Joanna, two farmers living in the Fenlands along with George's paralysed father. This short story switches in a haphazard manner between two narrative strands. The first is an anachronic rendering of George's life, a life blighted by the knowledge of how he killed a pedestrian whilst driving his father's car and then buried his body in the Fens. As regards the second narrative strand, it involves excerpts from Joanna's notebook,

marked by both their syntactic and typographical disruption. Indeed, these excerpts are made up of paratactic clauses, some of which are crossed out while others are either punctuated with line breaks or superimposed upon one another. The unwonted textual and paratextual elements of Joanna's notebook reflect, among other things, her being vicariously traumatised by her husband's trauma which, like any traumatic past, is refractory to linguistic representation.

Likewise, in McGregor's *Reservoir13*, trauma is presented as an untold experience recalcitrant to linguistic representation. As previously indicated, this novel's narrative opens with the disappearance of the young Rebecca Shaw from an unnamed village in the Peak District. The narrative then proceeds through monoliths of prose where the disincarnate narrator flits back and forth between the depiction of the village's dwellers' daily lives and the description of local wildlife. The narrator's seamless narrative is intermittently interrupted by updates on Rebecca's case that abruptly emerges every fifty pages or so. Other than lacking any causal connection with the rest of the narrative, these updates are marked by the choral narrator's reiterative expression: "The missing girl's name was Rebecca, or Becky, or Bex" (*Reservoir* 29, 56, 106, 182, 260, 323). This expression suggests, amongst other things, that Rebecca has become "*Plus d'un* [More than one/No more one]," an ineffable mystery to which no single name can be convincingly attached (Derrida, *Specters* 2). This evinces, once again, how a trauma is an untold experience that ineluctably withstands any totalising said, any single linguistic configuration which absorbs the totality of the meaning it carries.

In a nutshell and as illustrated by the passages scrutinised in this subchapter, McGregor's narratives depart from linguistic and typographical norms, as they are distinguished by an unhinged typography and the author's hyperbolic use of certain literary figures, notably non-sequitur and aposiopesis. By drawing heavily on these unconventional narrative elements, the author does not merely present trauma as an ineffable experience that always disrupts linguistic representation, rather he also leaves the reader estranged from any clear sense of reality, which is one of the main trauma symptoms. Indeed, many a trauma victim intermittently experiences a deep sense of *derealisation*, "a persistent or recurrent experience of unreality of surroundings (e.g., the world around the individual is experienced as unreal, dreamlike, distant, or distorted)" (American Psychiatric Association 272). From this standpoint, it can be postulated that McGregor's disrupted and therefore alienating narratives impel readers to vicariously experience the author's traumatised characters' traumas. Subsequently, readers

unwittingly become secondary witnesses, individuals who suffer from others' sufferings, hence the ethical use to which McGregor puts trauma.

2. Figures of Allusion

As demonstrated by the last subchapter, McGregor's narratives are punctuated, among other things, with aposiopeses and non-sequiturs. By relying significantly on these literary figures, the author typifies that a traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic experience, is always refractory to linguistic representation. Confronted with the inadequacy of language to express her traumatic saying, many a traumatised individual usually resorts to *language muting,* understood by the American psychotherapist Yvonne Dolan as an abstract and indirect language whereby a traumatic past is communicated by way of allusion **(**Dolan 140). This is made manifest by many of McGregor's narratives whose characters' traumas are most often stated by means of circumlocutions, especially euphemism and metalepsis.[51] These rhetorical figures permeate the second narrative strand of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* which, as above-mentioned, is related by a female narrator who is traumatised because of her accidental pregnancy after a one-night stand. Until about halfway through the novel, this narrator does not explicitly talk about her pregnancy, the following passage being a fair illustration:

> Another of the leaflets had a section on physical effects.
> *You may find you become tired it said, you may find yourself experiencing dizziness, insomnia, a change in appetite*.
> I spent a long time thinking about them all, wondering which ones I'd get.
> I thought about backache, nausea, indigestion, faintness and cramps and piles.
> (*INSRT* 51, emphasis added)

In this narrative fragment, the female narrator does not avow that she is pregnant. Instead, she refers metaleptically to her pregnancy by stating many pregnancy symptoms listed in the leaflet she reads, which can be explained in two different ways. The first is that it is a defence mechanism whereby the narrator circumvents her traumatic pregnancy for fear of the overwhelming emotion it may otherwise generate. As for the second possible reason why the female narrator states her trauma in a roundabout way through metalepsis, it is because she fails to find any straightforward said to which her accidental pregnancy can be convincingly attached. Following from this reading, it can be postulated that the narrator's metaleptic reference to her trauma

[51] Metalepsis is a variety of metonymy that proceeds by temporal transfer to express the antecedent by its consequent or the consequent by its antecedent (Geneviève 73-4).

is a paradoxical said, a linguistic representation that attests to the unsayability of the narrator's traumatic saying.

The ineffability of the narrator's accidental pregnancy also finds expression in the way the pregnancy symptoms are listed in the last passage. Indeed, these symptoms are not enumerated in one sentence, but are split over distinct sentences set as discrete paragraphs superimposed upon one another. One possible reason why they are presented this way is to make them appear even more numerous than they actually are, and thereby to echo the narrator's anxiety because of which she conceives of these symptoms as infinite in number.

As previously indicated, the narrator is extremely anxious because of her accidental pregnancy, which is embodied by the unwonted indentation of the passage's paragraphs. Indeed, each of these paragraphs has its first line protruding from the main body of the text, which is visually evocative of the swollen stomach of a pregnant woman. Thus, it can be postulated that each of the passage's hanging paragraphs mimics the narrator's trauma: her accidental pregnancy.

Alongside its unusual indentation, the passage involves an abrupt shift to direct speech (italicised), unmarked by quotation marks and opening with the second personal pronoun 'you.' Because of these features, the direct speech lures readers into thinking that they are addressed surreptitiously. Subsequently, readers are impelled to feel the anguish this woman experiences when reading the many symptoms she would probably develop. Thus, they cannot help but feel empathy for her, hence the ethical drift of this unusual direct speech.

As earlier noted, the female narrator is traumatised not only by her accidental pregnancy, but also by another eerie experience she had three years before falling pregnant when she witnessed the car accident of one of her neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269). However, and until nearly the end of the novel, she does not make any overt mention of such an eerie experience, but only hints at it by means of circumlocutions, especially euphemism. This is most clearly evident in the scene when she starts reading a book in a vain attempt to eschew her traumatic memory of Shahid's accident:

> But I couldn't concentrate, I kept thinking about *that day*, *that moment*, *that afternoon*.
> About *what happened* and why there are so many names I can't remember. About whether I knew the names in the first place.
> (*INSRT* 63, emphasis added)

This narrative fragment opens with a simple sentence ('But I couldn't concentrate'). It then proceeds through a long and complex sentence whose clauses are set as discrete paragraphs layered upon one another. By breaking from syntactic and typographical norms, this sentence epitomises, among other things, how the saying, the very meaning, of the female narrator's uncanny experience is not only refractory to language, but actively destroys it, which, as previously demonstrated, is typical of a traumatic saying.

Faced with a saying that no said can absorb, the narrator falls back on *language muting* which, as already indicated, is an abstract and indirect language that trauma victims usually employ to allude to their uncanny pasts. This is clearly illustrated by the last passage through which the female narrator averts to the day of Shahid's accident by way of euphemism as 'that day,' 'that moment,' 'that afternoon,' and 'what happened.'

Shahid's accident is not the only trauma evoked by the latter passage that also elicits the female narrator's other trauma—her pregnancy. Indeed, this passage involves hanging paragraphs, each of which, as before indicated, simulates the narrator's swelling stomach. This, in turn, evinces the *multidirectionality* of traumatic incidents, understood by Michael Rothberg, the contemporary American Holocaust historian and the memory studies scholar, to mean that traumas are not mutually exclusive, but deeply interconnected (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 36). Rothberg develops this concept by drawing on several trauma cases which evidence that any traumatic experience ineluctably evokes other similarly eerie experiences. Following from this, it can be advanced that the last passage epitomises the multidirectionality of the female narrator's traumas, namely that, as soon as the narrator remembers one of her traumas, she unwittingly remembers the other.

Following suit with the female narrator, and in the other narrative strand of the same novel, the incorporeal narrator does not make any plain reference to Shahid's accident. Instead, and until the near end of the novel, it averts to this traumatic occurrence through circumlocutions, as is made manifest by the scene when the disincarnate narrator describes in detail the moment Shahid was hit by a car:

> I *couldn't understand what was happening*. I *couldn't believe what was happening*.
> I sat there, in the warm afternoon of the last day of summer, and I *couldn't work out* what I was seeing.
> *I watched him moving across the street, the boy from number eighteen*, and I tried to understand.

> I don't remember seeing *it*, not *the moment itself*, I remember *strange details, peripheral images,* small things that happened away from the *blinded centre*.
>
> (*INSRT* 7, emphasis added)

Peppered with expressions like 'I couldn't understand' and 'I couldn't believe,' this excerpt typifies the narrator's inability to assimilate its trauma. This is primarily because this particular type of events generates a traumatic memory that cannot be phenomenologised, i.e. that cannot be captured in its integrity by the consciousness of the one it impresses. Instead, such a memory usually manifests itself to consciousness as an incongruous series of flashbacks, which is exemplified by the passage's series of causally unbounded narrative shortcuts (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518).

Under the sway of its traumatic memory, the narrator remembers 'strange details, peripheral images,' which is characteristic of traumatic neuroses. Indeed, any trauma victim, as already indicated, remembers with the utmost vividness peripheral details of her trauma (Conway 92-3). As regards the central details of such uncanny experiences, they are usually so intense that they disrupt a traumatised individual's consciousness. This may account for the reason why the impersonal narrator perceives the central details of its trauma in the last passage as a 'blinded centre,' an event that overwhelms its consciousness.

Outpacing the narrator's consciousness's capacity for representation, Shahid's accident cannot therefore be assimilated, and, as such, cannot be transmuted into lucid narrative. This is typified by the former passage, through which the impersonal narrator employs commas instead of full stops, hanging paragraphs, and Right Dislocation Construction ('I watched him moving across the street, the boy from number eighteen').[52] These unwonted typographical and syntactic elements show, among other things, how the narrator's trauma is recalcitrant to linguistic representation.

Bedevilled with an eerie experience refractory to language, the narrator recurs to language muting, as it refers in the last passage to its trauma through euphemism as 'what was happening,' 'the moment itself,' and the impersonal pronoun 'it.' This passage is not an exception, as the bodiless narrator averts to Shahid's accident until about the end of its narrative through circumlocutions, mainly euphemism and metalepsis.

[52] "The Right Dislocation Construction (RDC) is a construction in which a dislocated NP appearing in sentence-final position refers to a pronoun, as observed in example (1), with the relevant pronoun in italics and the dislocated NP in boldface. (1) *He* is real smart, **John**" (Kamada 221).

Like the disembodied narrator, the choral narrator of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* produces a narrative abounding with euphemisms and metalepses. As before indicated, the triggering event of this narrative is the traumatic death of Robert Radcliffe whose decaying body is only discovered several days after his death. Nevertheless, the choral narrator elides any overt mention of the protagonist's tragic death, but leaves "its possibility hanging clearly in its suggestive prose" (Ely 154). This is epitomized by the novel's first chapter about the forensic investigation of Robert's death scene, including the subsequent narrative fragment:

> The younger man . . . looks at the body. *The swollen and softening skin, the sunken gaze, the oily pool of fluids spreading across the floor*. **The twitch and crawl of newly hatched life, feeding**.
>
> (*ED* 5, emphasis and boldface added)

This excerpt is about the scene when a young policeman discovers Robert's corpse on his living room floor. However, nowhere in this excerpt is Robert's death openly stated. Instead, it is evoked metaleptically through a series of verbal phrases about Robert's putrefying corpse. These phrases echo, among other things, the horror of the scene which is so overwhelming that it cannot be temporalised by anyone witnessing it. This is because such a scene, like any frightening occurrence, finds expression in a traumatic memory which, as already demonstrated, keeps the eerie past it presents as an atemporal event, hence the last passage's verbal phrases. Basically, unmarked for tense, these phrases debatably simulate the atemporality of the traumatic scene to which they pertain, namely the discovery of Robert's decomposing corpse.

The last of these phrases (italicised and in boldface) is presented as an independent syntactic structure, set off from the others by a full stop. The reason for this can be to make this phrase more conspicuous, and thereby to emphasise the iconic poignancy of the awful sight it describes, namely Robert's maggot-infested corpse. The choral narrator could have made the scene much less shocking, had it simply stated that Robert was dead. However, by presenting Robert's death in such a shocking way, the narrator compels the reader's sympathy, and, as such, makes Robert *grievable*. Judith Butler, the American philosopher and gender theorist, understands 'grievable' to mean anyone whose loss hurts, and therefore matters (Butler, *Frames* 15). Thus, it can be postulated that, although apparently atrocious, Robert's death scene impels the reader to feel pain for Robert's dehumanising death, makes Robert grievable, and therefore assumes a strong ethical function.

Robert is not the only protagonist to die, as most of the novel's characters are dead by the end of the novel. As previously pointed out, these characters are Robert's friends who are mostly drug addicts and homeless individuals relegated to the margins of their individualistic society. The choral narrator describes their death scenes in the same allusive language it employs when depicting Robert's death scene, as it resorts to the hyperbolic use of certain circumlocutions, especially metalepsis. This is clearly evident in the scene when the narrator describes Ant who is lying dead:

> And we see Ant. Stretched out on the floor nearby, his works arranged carefully on a square of black cloth between them. His body stiffening and slackening again even while we watch. *The flies already arriving to lay their eggs, in his mouth, in his eyes, in the weeping needle holes up and down his arms*.
> (*ED* 158, emphasis added)

Like most of the novel's characters, Ant is a vagrant and drug addict who lost one of his legs while serving as a British soldier in Afghanistan. However, nowhere in the novel does the choral narrator explicitly state that Ant is a unilateral lower-limb amputee, but only makes this known through its suggestive narrative. This includes the scene when the narrator refers to Ant's handicap through metalepsis by depicting the trousers he wears: "His empty trouser leg hanging loose and swinging like a long rag" (*ED* 112).

In the same way, and while depicting in the last passage Ant's death scene, the choral narrator resorts to metalepsis, as it refers to Ant's death by describing, among other things, his 'stiffening and slackening' body. This passage includes only one complex sentence, some of whose verbal phrases are set off by full stops. The narrator's unwonted and hyperbolic use of full stops slows down the reading pace, impels the reader to dwell on each phrase, and thereby accentuates the scene's iconic poignancy. This is most clearly evident in the italicised phrase about Ant's corpse riddled with flies laying their eggs. In this phrase, the anaphoric structure ('in his') underscores the fact that Ant's corpse swarms with flies, and thereby increases the vividness of such an upsetting sight. The italicised phrase also includes a personification of the needle holes all over Ant's arms that are described as a 'weeping' human being. This imagery obviously refers to the bodily fluid oozing out of these needle holes after Ant's death. One possible purpose for such imagery is to lift Ant from sheer anonymity by presenting him as a grievable individual, a singular human being whose death hurts, leads to 'weeping,' and therefore counts.

The allusive language the choral narrator employs in the last passage as well as in its entire narrative is not only typical of McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, as the same sort of language permeates the author's other writings, including *So Many Ways to Begin*'s italicised prologue. The reason why this prologue is italicised is most probably because it is either an email or a letter, since letters and emails embedded in this novel are all set in italics. Alongside its unusual font style, the prologue is marked by its elliptical account of Mary's adolescence trauma. Mary is an old Irish woman David wrongly believed to be his biological mother. When she was still an adolescent, she immigrated to London to work as a maid for a wealthy English family. She was then sexually abused by her employer, fell pregnant, and eventually abandoned her new-born son after a short stay in hospital. These traumatic occurrences are not, however, overtly mentioned in the prologue, as is typified by the following narrative fragment:

> *They sent her to light the fire in each of the rooms by turn, but mostly she was asked to go to the father's room, and it was here that she found it hardest to not make a sound. . . . She kept* ***it*** *hidden. She wore* ***bigger clothes***.
> (*SMWB* 8, boldface added and emphasis in the original)

This excerpt does not openly state that Mary becomes pregnant after her employer has taken a passing interest in her. Instead, Mary's pregnancy is addressed either metaleptically through the 'bigger clothes' she starts wearing, or through euphemism by the impersonal pronoun 'it.' Such an illative language can be seen as *inkling of infinitude*, understood by Friedrich Schlegel, the German poet and philosopher, to mean an allegorical language that contends itself with merely hinting at a meaning no language can encapsulate (Hüsch 216). Following from this, it can fairly be assumed that the use of metalepsis and euphemism in the last passage testifies to the ineffability of Mary's traumatic pregnancy.

In like manner, and in the rest of the same novel, the characters' disquieting experiences are most often stated by way of allusion. This is epitomised by the scene when David recalls his dead foster father:

> Just the memory of that cough, the angry defiant bark of it, dry and choked, as though his lungs were full of tangled steel wool . . . *If he was asked, he was going to say that he remembered his father as a strong man, as someone who could balance two dozen bricks on his broad shoulders while he climbed a ladder, who could swing both him and his sister up in the air at the same time*.
> (*SMWB* 45, emphasis added)

In the first sentence of this excerpt, David does not avow that Albert, his adoptive father, died of lung cancer, but relates to this through metalepsis by stating some of Albert's lung cancer

symptoms, including persistent cough and shortness of breath. One interpretation of David's metaleptic rendering of Albert's death is that it echoes David's willingness to deny such a highly painful event. This is corroborated by the italicised sentence whereby David does not own up to Albert's death, but depicts Albert's remarkable physical makeup before falling sick, which can be seen as a defence mechanism whereby David eludes the fact that Albert is dead. Another possible rendering of the italicised sentence is that it reflects the ineffability of David's bereavement. Made up of several subordinate clauses, this sentence seems to expand *ad infinitum*, and thereby evokes, among other things, David's inability to communicate in any totalising language his deep state of grief for losing his cherished, adoptive father.

Besides reflecting David's inability to express his grief, the last passage carries an ethical overtone. It shows how Albert's stamina has failed him, and thereby opens the readers' eyes to the inherent vulnerability of any human being, which is, as *per* Pelluchon, the key step towards developing an ethics of consideration (Pelluchon 112). Thus, it can be assumed that the passage impels readers to own up to their vulnerability and thereby to be considerate of other vulnerable beings, hence the ethical import of such a passage.

On a similar note, and in the first short story of McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes*, the saying of an eerie past is introduced as a semantic surplus, a meaning that overflows any said. As earlier mentioned, this short story is the transcript of an interview with Charlotte, Rebecca's mother, about her only daughter's disappearance (*TRT* 1-16). In this transcript, the interviewer refers to the day of Rebecca's disappearance through euphemism as "that day," "that morning," and "the third day of your stay" (*TRT* 1, 2, 4). Such an inferential language echoes, among other things, the interviewer's awareness that the mother's trauma cannot be communicated by any plain language. That is why the interviewer approaches such a trauma *ex negativo*, i.e. by means of an allusive language that does not so much denote as attest to the unsayability of the mother's traumatic wound.

Such an illative language permeates many short stories of McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, among which "What Happened to Mr Davison" features prominently (*TISTHSLY* 176-81). This short story is the statement of one of Mr. Davison's neighbours about a fight he and three of his neighbours had with Mr. Davison. However, nowhere in the short story does the narrator refer plainly to the fight, but rather alludes to it in a roundabout way through euphemism as "what happened" (*TISTHSLY* 176*2, 181). The narrator's inferential language conceivably echoes his deep sense of guilt for the harm he and his neighbours have inflicted upon

Mr. Davison. This is corroborated by the narrator's guilt-infested statement which is punctuated with expressions of regret such as: "I feel a sense of sadness about what happened to Mr Davison" (*TISTHSLY* 181). According to LaCapra, the feeling of guilt is common among perpetrators who usually become traumatised by the violence they have committed (LaCapra 79). Following from this, it can be postulated that the narrator's allusive language echoes his traumatic sense of guilt because of which he cannot communicate in any unequivocal language the violence he has perpetrated.

Much like "What Happened to Mr Davison," most of the short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* hinge on their characters' traumas. These eerie experiences most often take place outside the frame of the short stories to which they relate, i.e. they happen either before the stories unfold or after they end. This, in turn, deepens the uncanniness of these events, since readers, as before mentioned, are left with so many scenarios about how these traumatic occurrences could have happened, which is the case of "We Were Just Driving Around" (*TISTHSLY* 52-4). As its title suggests, this short story is about a group of friends, including the narrator, who 'Were Driving Around' when they abruptly had an accident. The narrator reports the accident scene as follows:

> *Amanda said* **Josh will you slow down a bit** *and he turned round to ask her what she'd said* so that must have been how come he never saw the corner**?**
> (*TISTHSLY* 54, emphasis and boldface added)

In this excerpt, the narrator addresses his car accident in a roundabout way through metalepsis by merely referring to the cause of the accident and not to the accident itself. By doing so, he acknowledges, among other things, his inability to communicate his trauma in straightforward language, which, in turn, evinces the ineffability of such an eerie experience.

Besides its metaleptic turn, the previous passage does not include any punctuation marks (except a question mark), and is therefore presented as a jumble of indirect speech (italicised), direct speech (in boldface), and free direct speech about the narrator's comment on the cause of the accident. The passage's lack of punctuation shows, yet again, how a traumatic memory disrupts conventional language. This is because, as earlier noted, such kind of memories conjures overwhelming emotion, causes considerable excitement, and eventually leads to abnormal behaviour, including *speech pressure*. Psychologists understand 'speech pressure' to mean the core syndrome of certain intense emotional states in which many a neurotic produces an unrelenting speech without pauses when reminded of her eerie experiences (Gawlik 7). Thus, it can

be said that the absence of punctuation marks in the last passage emulates the narrator's speech pressure, namely his propensity to speak with urgency about his trauma because of the intense emotion his recollection of such an eerie experience generates.

As previously noted, the only punctuation used in the last passage is a question mark at the end of the free direct speech whereby the narrator comments on the cause of the accident. At first, the narrator seems certain that the accident took place because Josh, the driver, was distracted by his friend, Amanda. This is emphasised by the narrator's use of 'must have been,' a syntactic structure usually applied to denote a high degree of certainty. However, the narrator ends his affirmative statement with an unwonted punctuation, a question mark, which shows that the narrator is neither sure nor unsure, and both sure and unsure about the cause of his accident. This, in turn, evinces the uncanniness of a traumatic experience, in Freud's understanding of the term, i.e. an experience both known *and* unknown to the one it impacts (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 241). Keeping this in mind, it can be conjectured that the narrator's paradoxical statement about the cause of his accident epitomises the uncanny nature of his trauma.

Drawing on the above scrutinised examples from McGregor's narratives, it becomes evident that the author relates to his characters' traumas mainly through euphemism and metalepsis. The author's hyperbolic use of these two literary figures shows, among other things, that a traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic experience, cannot be communicated in *positive language*, i.e. in lucid linguistic representation that absorbs the totality of the meaning it carries. Instead, a traumatic saying, as emphasised by many psychiatric studies, is ineffable, and therefore can only be expressed by means of *language muting*, an abstract and indirect language used by many trauma victims while referring to their uncanny experiences. This is typified by McGregor's narratives which, abounding with figures of allusion, especially metalepsis and euphemism, illustrates that a trauma can only be conveyed in *negative language*, an illative language that does not so much clarify as attest to the unsayability of a traumatic saying.

3. The Indigestible Past

The previous two subchapters evince how McGregor's narratives typify that a traumatic memory cannot be communicated in any plain language. This is chiefly because such a memory cannot be assimilated, as is emphasised by Caruth when she states that ". . . the possibility of speech [in trauma victims] is not simply the vehicle of understanding, but mainly the locus of what cannot yet be understood" (Caruth, *Trauma* 155). Drawing on this, it will be shown, in

the present subchapter, how McGregor's narratives epitomise the inability of trauma victims to assimilate their uncanny experiences. Among these narratives, "We Wave and Call" features prominently (*TISTHSLY* 130-43). Unlike most short stories of McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, this short story does not take place in the Fenlands, the rural areas in the East of England, but is rather set in "a war-torn country that appears to be Croatia" (Lea, "Jon" 237). Put briefly, the short story is about a young man who realises, while attempting to swim to the shore, that he is dragged by the current further out to sea. This traumatic occurrence is woven through a second person narrative that breaks from narrative and syntactic norms, as is clearly illustrated by the subsequent passage:

> . . . **you** *keep swimming* because *this isn't the sort of thing that happens to someone like* **you**, **you**'*re* a good swimmer, **you**'*re* young, and healthy, and the rocks *aren't* really all that far away . . . but *now* there*'s* a pounding sensation in ***your*** head and a reddish blur in **your** eyes and a heavy pain in **your** chest as though the weight of all that water *is pressing* against **your** lungs and **you** *can't take* in enough air and so **you** *stop* again, for a moment, just to catch your breath.
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 139-40, emphasis and boldface added)

This narrative fragment is almost devoid of punctuation marks, which speeds up the reading pace, and thereby makes reaching the end of this passage like coming up for a gulp of air. This is reminiscent of the short story's protagonist who, exhausted from swimming against the current, stops every now and then to catch a breath. Thus, it can be said that the passage's lack of punctuation makes the reader vicariously experience the protagonist's weariness.

Given the fact that it accelerates the reading pace, the lack of punctuation leaves no leisure for thinking about the *why*, but hustles the reader into a new *how*. Thus, the quasi absence of punctuation does not allow readers to grasp the scene that the last passage depicts. This is symptomatic of traumatic neuroses, as many a traumatised subject fails to assimilate her traumatic experience that usually exceeds "the human cognitive capacity to perceive and to assimilate the totality of what was really happening at the time" (Caruth, *Trauma* 69). In this respect, it can be posited that, because of the last passage's lack of punctuation, readers cannot comprehend the totality of the young man's drowning scene, which evinces the inassimilibility of such kind of happenings.

The lack of punctuation also makes the passage appear as a monolithic structure of inseverable parts, which can be seen as a metaphor for the narrator's inability to assimilate the eerie scene he relates. This interpretation stems from the fact that human beings cannot, at times,

grasp certain objects in their wholeness. That is why they usually examine such objects part by part, thus reducing them to a set of clearly demarcated and therefore fathomable parts. In this respect, it can be advanced that the absence of punctuation in the last passage indicates the narrator's inability to scrutinise the scene he narrates strand by strand. This, in turn, reflects his inability to fathom such a shocking scene that remains an indivisible and thus an ungraspable whole.

The narrator's inability to comprehend the scene he describes also finds expression in his use of the adverb ('now'), along with two of the present tense aspects: the simple and the progressive, e.g. 'aren't' and 'is pressing.' These elements show that the narrator conceives of the traumatic scene as pertaining not to his past but rather to his living present, which evinces that he has been unable to assimilate such an eerie scene.

Other than displaying the inassimilibility of a traumatic occurrence, the last passage carries an ethical overtone, which is basically the outcome of the narrator who keeps referring to himself by the second person pronoun ('you'). By doing so, the narrator lures readers into thinking that they are addressed surreptitiously, and thereby impels them to put themselves in the place of the protagonist who, although 'young,' 'healthy,' and 'a good swimmer,' fails to reach the shore, and has most probably drowned. Thus, readers have their eyes opened to the fact that what happened to the protagonist can readily be the 'Sort of Thing That Happens to' them. Subsequently, they become aware that they are inherently vulnerable, susceptible to being devastated by catastrophes that can rear up in their lives without warning. As earlier noted, the awareness of one's inherent vulnerability is the basis for developing an ethic of consideration towards other living beings (Pelluchon 112). Following this statement, it can be conjectured that, by resorting to the second person pronoun while depicting an eerie scene, the narrator impels readers to own up to their vulnerability, and thereby to be considerate of other vulnerable beings, which shows the ethical drift of the narrator's atypical use of the ('you').

Rhyming with "We Wave and Call," "The Remains" is another short story from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* that exemplifies the inassimilibility of a traumatic past. This short story revolves around a police search for 'The Remains' of a missing girl. The short story's narrative departs from syntactic and narrative conventions, as is epitomised by its opening scene that goes as follows:

> *Are believed to* still be intact. *Are understood to be* within an area of approximately seventeen square miles. *Are believed to* have been concealed. Are either partially or completely buried. *Are likely to be* without clothes.
> (*TISTHSLY* 188, emphasis added)

As already indicated, this passage, like the rest of the short story, does not involve any characters or narrative progression, but instead proceeds through a paratactic series of descriptive sentences. Besides being merely descriptive, these sentences have a common but omitted subject: 'the remains.' This subject is only found in the title, thus beyond the actual body of the text, which suggests, among other things, that it lies beyond the narrator's grasp.

Alongside the absented 'remains,' the latter passage is also marked by an unconventional narrator, a self-effacing narrator who only reports the scene of the police search without installing himself in it. This shows, among other things, the narrator's incapacity to benchmark himself against the scene he describes, which subsequently indicates his inability to apprehend such a traumatic scene. This interpretation is corroborated by the narrator's narrative which is entirely rendered through passive voice sentences, including 'Are believed to be,' 'Are understood to be' and 'Are likely to be.' Such a type of sentences simulates, among other things, the narrator's passivity before the shocking scene he reports, which elucidates his inability to grasp this scene that remains an unassimilable mystery, inaccessible to reason.

Just like the last short story, the first narrative strand in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* evinces the inassimilibility of a traumatic incident. As earlier indicated, this narrative thread hinges on the collective trauma of dwellers on an anonymous street whose lives are disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbours' twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269).The incapacity of the street dwellers to digest their collective trauma finds expression in many of the narrative strand's elements, especially its *focaliser* who is also its narrator. Genette understands 'focaliser ' to mean a plot-conscious mind from whose point of view a story is told (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 72-8).[53] However, in the case of the present narrative thread, the narrating and focalising agent does not appear as a plot-conscious mind, a person who presents a reflected version of what she perceives, the following scene being a fair illustration:

[53] The fact that Genette conceives of the focalizer as a plot-conscious mind, a person who reflects upon what she presents, is clearly illustrated by his following statement: "If *focalizer* applied to **anyone**, it could only be the **person who** *focalizes the narrative* —that is, the narrator" (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 73, emphasis in original and boldface added). Thus, Genette overlooks the fact that certain narratives are focalised through impersonal agents.

> **The young man at number eighteen with the dry eyes, he's not dressed yet**, but he's awake and he's busy, he's crouched on the floor, arranging a collection of objects and papers.
>
> *A page from a TV guide. An empty cigarette packet . . . Train tickets.*
>
> (*INSRT* 27-9, emphasis and boldface added)

This scene includes unwonted syntactic structures, including Left Dislocation Construction (in boldface) and a series of noun phrases (italicised) set as independent sentences.[54] Because of these elements, the description becomes, to a certain extent, illegible, and cannot therefore be attributed to an ordinary focaliser , a plot-conscious mind who usually produces a reflected and therefore readily intelligible focalisation. That is why it can fairly be assumed that this scene is either that of a disturbed focaliser or a *camera eye*. Norman Friedman, the American literary critic, defines 'camera eye' as "the ultimate in authorial exclusion. Here the aim is to transmit, without apparent selection or arrangement, a slice of life as it passes before the recording medium" (Freidman 1178). Friedman's conception of the camera eye falls perfectly in line with the last scene whose left dislocated noun phrase (in boldface) can be seen as a close-up of the protagonist's face. The scene then proceeds through a series of sentences set off from one another by commas, which can be envisioned as an uninterrupted zoom-out that eventually gives a wider picture of the protagonist, thus showing him arranging his collection of urban minutiae. The scene closes on a series of noun phrases (italicised) demarcated from one another by full stops. Each of these noun phrases can be regarded as a close-up on one of the items from the protagonist's collection, while each full stop arguably simulates a jump-cut.[55]

The last scene's cinematic rendering draws on the fact that the author, as noted in the introduction, studied media technology and production at Bradford University. Following from this interpretation, it can be conjectured that the last scene veers from norms of intelligibility because it is not focalised by a plot-conscious mind. Rather, its focaliser is most probably a camera eye, whose ultimate role, according to the German narratologist Christian Casparis, is to make whatever it captures "*manifestius* without having to make it sound *credibilius*" (Casparis 82). Because it manifests itself as a camera eye, the narrating and focalising agent of the previous scene, as well as of the entire first narrative thread from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, has been designated in this thesis by the impersonal pronoun 'it.'

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[54] "Left Dislocation Construction is represented by the English sentence in (1a). In this example, the proper noun *Peter* occurs in a dislocated position before the clause, and is resumed within the clause by a co-referential pronoun *him*: (1) a. [Peter,]i I've known himi for a long time" (Westbury 21, emphasis in original).

[55] A jump cut is a cinematic technique that involves an abrupt cut from one shot or scene to another without intervening devices, such as fade-outs (Chandler 230).

On account of its ontological status as an impersonal camera eye, the last scene's focaliser can be seen as a metaphor for the deep sense of *depersonalisation* a traumatised subject endures when impelled to recall her trauma. As already stated, and as will be detailed in the second part of the thesis, 'depersonalisation' is one of the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses which involves a trauma victim's intermittent loss of her sense of self (American Psychiatric Association 272). Taking this into account, it can be assumed that the narrator's ontological status as an impersonal camera eye mimics the characters of its narrative thread. Overwhelmed by Shahid's frightening car accident, these characters endure, every now and then, a sense of depersonalisation, and thereby become like a camera—impersonal recorders of a dreadful past from which they remain detached. This is made manifest by "the girl from number twenty-two," one of the witnesses of Shahid's car accident, and a former inhabitant of the anonymous street where the accident takes place (*INSRT* 193). As stated earlier, this young woman is the narrator of the second narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* that takes place three years after Shahid's accident. Despite the passage of time, this female narrator fails to grasp the importance of her traumatic experience, as epitomised by the following scene from her narrative thread:

> It seemed, or at least it seems now, that everything else was motionless.
> **The beercan caught between the hand and the ground**.
> **The blanket not quite touching the wall.**
> *The boy with the tricycle a flinch away from the tree.*
> (*INSRT* 9, emphasis and boldface added)

This scene is about the female narrator's unwitting recollection of Shahid's accident. Devoid of any explicit or even implicit reference to the narrator, the scene debatably imitates this narrator's sense of depersonalisation, which, as already noted, involves many a traumatic subject's loss of her sense of self. Thus, it can be said that the last scene typifies how, whenever the female narrator's traumatic memory forces its way into her consciousness, it reduces her to an individual devoid of any sense of self. Subsequently, the narrator becomes an impersonal agent that, acting like a camera, reports Shahid's accident while retreating into anonymity.

Besides excluding any mention of the female narrator, the last scene is chiefly made up of a noun phrase (italicised) and two verbal phrases (in boldface). Because they are devoid of any verb showing time and are set as distinct paragraphs, these phrases can be envisioned as an interrupted series of freeze-frame shots, each capturing a segment of Shahid's accident scene. Seen in this light, the scene's phrases arguably emulate the narrator's traumatic flashbacks,

since such kind of flashbacks usually cross the threshold of consciousness as an incongruous series of mnemonic fragments (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518).

Drawing on the above interpretations of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, it becomes clear that the author uses some unconventional textual and paratextual elements as metaphors for certain cinematic techniques, including the camera eye. By virtue of these elements, he evinces how, whenever reminded of Shahid's accident, his characters undergo a deep sense of depersonalisation, and thereby lose their sense of self. This evidences that a trauma exceeds not only a trauma victim's cognitive capacity, but also her capacity to persist in her identity, i.e. her will to have an irrevocable sense of self.

Along similar lines, many of McGregor's narrative elements in *Even the Dogs* indicate that a trauma remains an indigestible past. As aforementioned, this novel mainly centres on Robert Radcliffe, a former soldier and an alcoholic whose decaying body is only discovered several days after his death in his derelict flat. This traumatic discovery, like the rest of the novel's events, is focalised through the 'We,' the novel's choral narrating and focalising agent. Because it appears as having no physical presence, this narrator, as previously indicated, is perceived by many scholars as the collective ghost of Robert's former associates, the vagrants and drug addicts whom Robert often granted shelter in his flat. The 'We' can also be seen as a special type of camera eye—a subjective camera. In television and film, 'a subjective camera' is used "to show us events as if from a particular participant's visual point of view" (Chandler 412). The first essentially subjective-camera film is Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1948), a detective story focalised through a detective's eyes. This film was then followed by several similar films, including those of Alfred Hitchcock, whose events are chiefly presented through the subjective perspective of one of their actors. Akin to subjective-camera films, McGregor's *Even the Dogs* finds its vitality in the 'We,' through whose subjective angle of vision readers perceive the novel's scenes. This is exemplified by the ensuing excerpt from the novel's first chapter that goes as follows:

> ***We see*** someone getting out of a taxi parked further up the hill . . . This is Laura. She *shouts* through the letterbox. She *gestures* for the taxi-driver to wait, and *goes round* to the side of the building.
>
> *Later, in the evening of the same day or the day after that*, . . . ***we see*** Mike scrambling up on to the garage roof. We *hear* shouting, and something being broken. ***We see*** Ben, running down the hill towards town.
>
> ***We see*** Heather, *another morning*, hauling herself up the steps and *banging on* the door.
>
> (*ED* 1-2, emphasis and boldface added)

In this excerpt, as well as in the rest of the novel, the choral narrator acts as a subjective camera, since the novel's events are only seen through its eyes. Thus, what this narrator, this 'I,' sees is also what the reader, the 'you,' sees, in other words, what the 'we' see, hence the passage's anaphoric expression: 'We see.'[56] Acting like a subjective camera, the 'We' urges readers to identify with its way of seeing events and even to become *secondary witnesses*. As already explained, a secondary witness is she who experiences vicariously another individual's trauma (LaCapra 143). Drawing on this, it can fairly be assumed that, by simulating a subjective camera, the choral narrator forces readers to become secondary witnesses to the traumas of the novel's characters. Subsequently, readers are impelled to suffer in these characters' stead, which is profoundly ethical, since the mainstay of ethical experience, as *per* Levinas, is an ethical subject who suffers, despite herself, for the other's suffering (Levinas, *Otherwise* 50).

Alongside its ethical resonance, the presentation of the 'We' as a camera eye reflects this choral narrator's inability to assimilate the traumatic scenes it focalises. This is evidenced by the narrator's entire narrative thread that has two hallmark features. The first is its temporality, as this narrative strand is primarily rendered in the present tense. Such a temporality is also that of a camera eye, as the sole function of a camera eye is to present, to make *present*, whatever it captures. However, a camera eye is heedless of whether or not what it presents makes sense, as it can introduce "undigested raw materials," i.e. scenes that are joined together in a haphazard fashion, linked neither temporally nor causally (Casparis 151). This is the second feature of the choral narrator's narrative thread, since, by employing exclusively the present tense, the narrator makes the scenes it reports appear as simultaneous, the last passage being a fair illustration. This passage is made up of four scenes, each opening with the same anaphoric expression ('We see'). Although they are temporally distinct, these scenes are presented as contemporaneous, because of the narrator's exclusive use of the present tense. This suggests, among other things, that the narrator cannot temporalise, and therefore cannot assimilate the passage's four scenes that subsequently remain indigestible raw materials.

The presentation of the choral narrator as a mere camera, passively recording without understanding, fits in with Caruth's depiction of a traumatised individual who, while giving her testimony, usually appears as a mere medium of her traumatic past that she reports without being able to decipher (Caruth, *Trauma* 31). Following this statement, it can be posited that the

[56] McGregor is not the first writer to apply a first-person plural point of view. In fact, this has been used before in fiction, notably in Julio Cortázar's short story "Axolotl", and in Steven Millhauser's collection of short stories *The Knife Thrower and Other Stories* (Scrivenor 2-3).

reason why the choral narrator is presented as a camera eye, passively recording without thinking, is to mimic the novel's characters, as these characters appear as *passive witnesses*, testifying to their traumatic experiences, without being able to grasp them.

Acting like a camera eye, the disincarnate narrator of McGregor's *Reservoir13* does not install itself in the narrative it relates, but rather steps back into anonymity. As formerly indicated, the trigger of the narrator's narrative is the enigmatic disappearance of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, from an unnamed village in the Peak District, on New Year's Eve. This narrative is presented as undigested raw material, since, among other things, its scenes are spliced together in acausal fashion, which is also the hallmark of a camera eye's focalisation. Indeed, and as stated before, a camera eye is a plot-unconscious mind that only makes the phenomenologically given "*manifestius* without having to make it sound *credibilius*" (Casparis 82). After the fashion of a camera eye's focalisation, the incorporeal narrator produces an inconstant narrative, as typified by the ensuing narrative fragment:

> **A man fitting the missing girl's father's description *was seen* walking further and further away from the village;** *at the far side of Ashbrook Forest, past the last of the thirteen reservoirs* . . . The bracken was rusting in swathes across the hill . . . Mischief Night passed and it wasn't what it had been in recent years. No one quite had the spirit, besides whoever filled the telephone box with balloons. Jackson's boys brought the flock down to the bye field and spent the day clipping around the tails, getting ready for tupping. At the school the lights *were seen* on early, and there was black smoke rising from the boilerhouse.
>
> (*Reservoir* 23-4, emphasis and boldface added)

The passage's first sentence about Rebecca's father includes an unwonted punctuation, namely the semicolon. Such punctuation is usually used instead of conjunctions to connect independent clauses that are related in terms of meaning. Nevertheless, the narrator employs it to connect an independent clause (in boldface) with a dependent clause (the italicised noun phrase). Thus, it becomes evident that the narrator uses the semicolon not to link two independent clauses that have a common meaning, but rather to link two shots that have a common focus—Rebecca's father. The second shot following the semicolon (italicised) has a perspective of Rebecca's father higher than that of the first shot (in boldface). In this regard, it can be said that the semicolon is used to signal an uninterrupted zoom-out on the main protagonist's father. Seen in this light, this uncommon semicolon typifies that the narrator is a camera eye.

Another reason indicating that the narrator is arguably a camera eye is its prose that moves in deliberate non-sequiturs, since the narrator does not join the successive scenes it

depicts in a causal manner. Rather, it shifts from one scene to another, without the signposting of paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions. In doing so, the narrator manifests itself as a camera eye, a plot-unconscious mind that presents the different phenomena it captures without making them sound coherent.

The inconsistency of the narrator's narrative gives the impression that this incorporeal narrator exists in a world where reality is not allowed to go any deeper than the surface it sees. This is redolent of derealisation, "the persistent or recurrent experience of unreality of surroundings" many a trauma victim undergoes whenever reminded of her traumatic past (American Psychiatric Association 272). Thus, it can be argued that, by acting like a camera eye, recording without being able to give any coherent account of what it records, the narrator simulates traumatised individuals, including its narrative's characters. Overpowered by frightening happenings beyond their cognitive means for assimilation, these individuals intermittently undergo derealisation, experience the world around them as distorted, and thereby become like a camera eye, merely perceiving through their five senses, without being able to make sense of what they perceive.

The incapacity of the novel's characters to assimilate their collective trauma is also expressed by the incorporeal narrator's hyperbolic use of passive voice sentences, including those of the last passage, e.g. 'was seen,' and 'were seen.' Peppered with such a syntactic structure, the narrator's narrative is debatably a metaphor for the characters' passivity before their collective trauma, which, in turn, shows their inability to decipher such an uncanny happening that remains "a kind of forbidden zone, inaccessible to reason" (Wiesel 183).

Following from the present subchapter's foregoing interpretations, it becomes clear that the author's narratives are marked by certain unwonted narrative and syntactic elements, including second person singular and plural narratives, nouns phrases set as independent sentences, and unwonted punctuation. As previously demonstrated, these unconventional elements are applied, among other things, as a metaphor for certain cinematic techniques, especially the camera eye. Appearing as a mere camera eye, recording without being able to assimilate what they record, many a narrator of McGregor's narratives simulates, among other things, the author's traumatised characters who, like any trauma victims and as noted above, cannot decipher their traumas. Instead, whenever recollecting their traumas, they undergo, among other things, derealisation, no longer recognising their surroundings, and therefore becoming like a camera eye, simply perceiving without being able to fathom what they perceive.

On account of their ontological status as a camera eye, McGregor's narrators not only reflect the incapacity of traumatised individuals to grasp their eerie pasts, but also have an ethical impact upon readers. This is because, by acting like a camera eye, these narrators do not install themselves in their narratives, but rather retreat into anonymity while reporting their narratives' scenes. In so doing, they renounce their intermediary role, and thereby force readers to vividly experience the traumas of the characters. Thus, readers become secondary witnesses to these characters' sufferings, cannot help but identify with them, and, as such, become *hostages* to these traumatised individuals. Levinas employs 'hostage' to mean the condition of being caught in a responsibility from which there is no release (Levinas, *Otherwise* 11). Drawing on this statement, it can be conjectured that, by making use of camera-eye narrators, the author impels his readers to identify with his traumatised characters. Thus, readers cannot help but become hostages to these suffering individuals, unwillingly feeling responsibility towards them, hence the ethical end to which the author puts his use of camera-eye narrators.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the first chapter, McGregor's poetics displays four main features, the first of which is the author's hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. The second, paradoxical as it may seem, is the paucity of details in some of McGregor's narratives. The third is the author's use of certain narrative elements that evoke water imagery. And the fourth is the musicality of certain of the author's narratives. By virtue of these four distinguishing poetic characteristics, the author evokes intense emotion. Under the sway of such an emotion, readers are driven, despite themselves, to be considerate of the author's traumatised characters, hence the ethical effect of such a poetics.

On account of its excessive emotion, a traumatic memory does not fade or even change over time. Conversely, it persists as a memory alien to time, a vivid reminder of a traumatic past, which, as exemplified by the second chapter, finds expression in the author's hyperbolic use of unusual syntactic structures and an unhinged chronology. By virtue of these unconventional elements, the author presents traumatic memory as an atemporal mental phenomenon by dint of which a traumatised subject always experiences her eerie past as a simultaneity, a past that keeps happening, each time as if for the first time. The reason why such a past is always experienced as a simultaneity is because it always manifests itself by means of a traumatic memory which, on account of its intense emotion, always disrupts the traumatised subject's consciousness. This is typified by many a narrative element of McGregor's fiction, mainly certain metaphors. By means of these narrative elements, the author evidences the trauma victim's incapacity to assimilate her traumatic past that persists as a future past, a past event that can be retained as past only in an incessantly delayed future.

Because it withstands assimilation, a traumatic occurrence cannot be transfigured into a lucid language. Instead, such an occurrence endures as a saying without a said, a semantic surplus in excess of any plain linguistic configuration. This is illustrated by McGregor's narratives which, as shown in the third chapter, brim with certain rhetorical devices, mainly aposiopesis and non-sequitur. By drawing heavily on these devices, the author evinces how a traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic event, not only resists language, but actively destroys it. Unable to communicate her trauma in a plain language, a traumatised subject usually resorts to language muting, an abstract and indirect language whereby a traumatic past is averted by way of certain circumlocutions. This is evidenced by McGregor's narratives which, abounding

with certain tropes, especially euphemism and metalepsis, underscore that a traumatic saying can only be conveyed by negative language, an illative language that does not so much clarify as attest to the unsayability of a traumatic saying. The incapacity of a traumatised individual to communicate her trauma in a lucid linguistic representation reflects the inassimilibility of such a frightening past. This is made manifest by several elements of McGregor's narratives, especially the author's primary use of camera-eye narrators. Manifesting themselves as a mere camera, recording without thinking, many a narrator of McGregor's fiction shows how a trauma victim is a passive witness, merely perceiving through their five senses, without being able to fathom what they perceive.

Thus far, it has been shown how a traumatic occurrence exceeds the cognitive capacities of the one it affects. However, this alone is not the exclusive long-term effect of trauma. Additionally, it should be noted that the opposite is not necessarily true: anything that cannot be assimilated is traumatic, which is obviously not the case. Accordingly, it will be demonstrated in the subsequent part that the main reason for the deep and lasting impacts of trauma is its disruption of the backbone of the self—one's self-identity.

Part II

Traumatic Memory : A Disruption of Self-Identity or a Compulsion for Alterity?

Introduction

In the first part of the thesis, it has been highlighted how McGregor's narratives are distinguished by certain properties, including the hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, an unhinged chronology and a disrupted linguistic representation of the characters' traumatic experiences. By means of these properties, the author typifies how traumatic memories exceed the human cognitive capacities for assimilation.

As already shown, the main reason why traumatic memory cannot be grasped is because it is extremely charged with emotion. However, and by dint of its intense emotion, traumatic memory does not merely endure as an unassimilable mental phenomenon. Rather, it also takes on an *uncanny* character, in Freud's conception of the term, i.e. it is usually experienced as "something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it" (Freud, *An Infantile* 17:241). On account of its uncanny character, traumatic memory does not fit into "the great organization of the ego" (Freud, "Inhibition" 153). Instead, it persists as a *double*, understood by Otto Rank as an *alter ego*, a splintered psyche that acts as a ubiquitous reminder of an individual's dreadful experiences (Rank, *The Double* 30). Acting as a double, and as will be detailed, traumatic memory ineluctably causes the disruption of the ego's *self-identity*.

But first, what is self-identity? According to Levinas, self-identity amounts to the totality of the immutable aspects of the ego, notably its moral norms. This totality, in turn, reflects the inflexibility of the ego which, according to Levinas, is essentially solipsistic (Levinas, *Totality* 135-40). However, according to Ricœur, self-identity not only reflects the solipsistic nature of the ego, but also demonstrates that the ego is also open to the Other. This is most perfectly illustrated when an individual spontaneously promises to "keep [their] word" (Ricœur 123). By making such a promise, a person shows that she can be responsive, flexible, and therefore actively engaged with other individuals (Ricœur 123). While Levinas and Ricœur hold different views of self-identity, they still agree that it amounts to the totality of the persistent characteristics of a human being. This totality allows the ego to be perceived, either by itself or by others, as a distinct entity, separate from the Other.

The ego is not, however, always able to conceive of itself as a discrete being, especially when faced with traumatic memories. This is because traumatic memories, being extremely charged with emotion, take on an uncanny character. They therefore cross compulsively and

without respite the threshold of consciousness that always fails to capture them in their totality. That is why such memories do not fit into the inclusive structure of the ego which, unable to identify them as part of itself or as an external other, becomes haunted by a deep "feeling of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who [it] is and what is being experienced" (Royle 1). Thus, the ego's sense of self, its self-identity, undergoes critical disturbance.

Because they disrupt the ego's self-identity, traumatic memories appear *prima facie* to be detrimental. Nevertheless, and as will be demonstrated, traumatic memories yield ethical effects. This is because they impel the ego to transcend its self-identity which, as propounded in the general introduction, is, to some degree, tantamount to what Freud calls *the superego*. Indeed, self-identity is made up of the extraneous objects with which the ego identifies. These objects condition, in part or in whole, the engagement of the ego with the world, and thereby mark the end of its individuality.[57] By way of example, and as already mentioned, a son who identifies with his parents does not form an autonomous personality. Rather, he follows in the footsteps of his parents, adopting, almost unreflectively, their ways and manners. This example is only about one form of identity that may be called *positive identity*, an overarching concept covering the different objects to which the ego unconsciously submits itself, and which thereby shape the ego's perception of the world. As opposed to this form of identity, what may be termed *negative identity* is understood as the overall concept involving the objects that the ego resists. Take, for example, a child who is maltreated by her parents. Such a child will most probably detest her parents, and, accordingly, her perception of the world will be shaped by her rejection of them. Such a form of identity falls into negative identity which, along with positive identity, forms what is called in this thesis self-identity. In short, self-identity involves objects with which the ego either positively or negatively identifies. These objects determine the way the ego perceives the world, and therefore do not allow the ego to experience the world in its unforeseeable singularity. Following this statement, one can postulate that a traumatic memory may prove ethical in the end. It causes the disruption of the ego's self-identity, and thereby impels the ego to experience the world in its irreducible otherness. And since there is not a concept in psychoanalysis that accounts for the ethical impact of traumatic memory, it will be termed *excendance*, in Levinas's acceptance of the word, a drive of openness to the alterity of the beings of the world (Levinas, *Cultural* 54).

[57] Identity is more or less a permanent mental phenomenon that results from *identification*, namely the unconscious mental process whereby a subject is gradually estranged from himself in favour of an object, notably her mental representations of her parents (Jung, *The Basic* 254-5).

In light of the foregoing, it will be demonstrated in this second part how McGregor's fiction presents traumatic memory's disruption of trauma victim's self-identity as an instance of *excendance*, an impetus towards openness to otherness. In order to do that, the fourth chapter will show how many an element of McGregor's fiction, including the cinematic properties of certain of the author's narratives, evinces the uncanny nature of traumatic memory. Due to its characteristic uncanniness, traumatic memory persists as a double, and therefore unhinges the ego's self-identity. This is evidenced by McGregor's narratives which, as will be shown in the fifth chapter, involve depersonalised narrators, and abound with instances of what Genette has defined as *narrative metalepsis*. Owing to these elements, along with several others, the author's narratives typify how traumatic memory entails a critical disturbance of the ego's self-identity. Because it unhinges the ego's self-identity, the set of objects that condition the ego's engagement with the world, traumatic memory forces the ego to have its eyes open to the irreducible otherness of each and every other, and is therefore deeply ethical. This is epitomised by McGregor's narratives whereby the author draws on the disruptive effect of traumatic memory upon the traumatised subject's self-identity in order to subvert many stereotypes, including human superiority over nature, which testifies to the ethical potentiality of such a memory.

Chapter 4

An Uncanny Mental Phenomenon

The first part of the thesis demonstrates how traumatic memory surpasses the ego's cognitive powers. This is mainly because, owing to its ample emotion, traumatic memory gains *numinosity*, in Jung's acceptance of the word, i.e. paramount psychological value (Jung, *Man* 96). Subsequently, such a memory cannot be captured in its totality by the ego's consciousness, the medium by means of which the beings of the world become present to the ego (Dalla Barba 112). Instead, traumatic memory takes on an *uncanny character*, understood by Freud as an overwhelming ambiguity (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 241).

Given its typical uncanniness, traumatic memory persists as a recalcitrant mystery, haunting not only traumatised individuals, but also people close to them. This is emphasised by French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche when he redefines *Nachträglichkeit*, a concept conceived by Freud as early as 1895 and most frequently translated into English as 'afterwardsness' or 'belatedness' (Eickhoff 1454).[58] Freud understands *Nachträglichkeit* to mean the delayed onset of traumatic symptoms in a witness of a frightening event (Freud, *Moses* 23: 77). Freud's conception of *Nachträglichkeit* has been refuted, as psychologists have discovered that what Freud perceived as delayed onset is in reality "a *delayed expression*, with the recognition that some symptoms typically appear *immediately* and that the delay is *in meeting full criteria*" (American Psychiatric Association 276, emphasis added). By the early nineties, Jean Laplanche had taken over the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*. However, and as will be detailed in the third subchapter, Laplanche does not use *Nachträglichkeit* in the same way as Freud does. Instead, he employs it to refer to the deferred effects of what the two psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok call a *transgenerational phantom*: a trauma that "the parents themselves had inherited and now transmit willy-nilly to their own reluctant offspring" (Abraham 181). Put in simple terms, Laplanche understands *Nachträglichkeit* to mean the belated outset of traumatic symptoms in someone who becomes traumatised by someone else's trauma, usually a child who inherits one of his progenitors' trauma (Laplanche, *Problématiques* 171).

In light of the foregoing, it will be shown in this fourth chapter how certain of McGregor's narratives show three of the uncanny aspects that traumatic memories assume. The

[58] '*Nachträglichkeit*' is also translated as 'deferred action,' 'retroactive temporality,' 'latency,' and 'retroactive attribution' (Eickhoff 1454).

first is the *paradoxical phenomenality* of these memories, namely their being a peculiar commingling of the known and the unknown (Royle 140). This finds expression in certain of McGregor's narratives through which the author employs, among other things, unwonted syntactic structures to perform certain cinematic techniques, including jump cuts. By means of these techniques, and as will be demonstrated in the first subchapter, the author presents traumatic memory as a paradoxical phenomenality: a mental phenomenon partly accessible but mostly inaccessible to the human consciousness.

Paradoxical phenomenality is only one of several uncanny aspects traumatic memory assumes. Another eerie aspect of such a memory is its *latency*. Indeed, even when under the threshold of consciousness, traumatic memory still finds expressions in some seemingly untraumatic mental representations (Kalsched 71). This is buttressed by McGregor's narratives which, as will be detailed in the second subchapter, are distinguished by certain narrative elements used as a metaphor for the latent character of traumatic memory.

As earlier indicated, traumatic memories are *contagious*, as they affect secondary witnesses, people who become traumatised by others' traumas (LaCapra 143). And since such traumas do not pertain to the biography of secondary witnesses, they are always experienced as alien mental phenomena, which is another uncanny aspect of traumatic memories. This is exemplified by McGregor's fiction which, as will be evidenced by the third and last subchapter, is marked by certain narrative elements, including second person singular and plural narratives. By way of these elements, the author emphasises that traumatic memories are essentially contagious, affecting not only traumatised individuals, but also other people brushing shoulders with them.

1. Paradoxical Phenomenality

According to the Dutch psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, traumatic memory engenders *deficits in imagery*, i.e. it cannot be captured in its entirety by the human consciousness (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 95). This present thesis goes further to suggest that the deficits in imagery are essentially caused by the intense emotion traumatic memory generates. On account of its ample emotion, traumatic memory does not exhaust its meaning in terms of the human consciousness. Instead, it is usually experienced as a *paradoxical phenomenality*, a mental phenomenon that does not so much elucidate as obscure the frightening past it intermittently presents (Royle 140). This is exemplified by many of McGregor's narratives, including the scene

from McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* where Julia recalls her short-lived marriage to Major Pearson, while teaching David, who was still then a young child, ballroom dancing:

> In the ballroom, the dance floor less crowded than it had been a few moments before, *one of the tail-coated medical students and his partner danced alongside William and Julia . . . the student looking at Julia with interest. She glanced across at him nervously, and he* ***said*** *excuse me, I'm sorry, may I? reaching his hand out to her stomach, slipping a stethoscope from his inside pocket and looping its end inside her dress. . .* **[Julia] leant forward to *whisper* in [William's] ear: My darling William stop Pregnant stop Surprised but happy be careful I love you stop** . . . And almost while he was still speaking the blue sky of the ballroom ceiling was covered over with smoke and oily clouds . . . the officers of William's party, clambering under a table which offered no protection when the mortar shells came raining down through the stained-glass skylight, tumbling and exploding directly amongst them, scattering shrapnel and mess tins and glassware and limbs.
>
> (*SMWB* 54-5, italics, bold and underlining added)

This scene is deeply cinematic, as it involves many an unconventional narrative element employed to carry out a *quadruple superimposition*, the superposition of four distinct events.[59] The first (unmarked) is Julia's marriage ceremony to Major Pearson. The second (italicised) is mainly about 'the medical student' who informs Julia that she is pregnant. The third (boldfaced) is chiefly about fragments from Julia's telegram correspondence with her husband when he was on the frontlines fighting the Nazis. As for the fourth (underlined), it is mostly about the soldiers who died along with William when Nazi mortar shells exploded directly among them. Although these four events are distant in time and space, they are introduced as happening in the very ballroom and on the very night where Julia celebrated her marriage. This is the outcome of many of the last scene's formal properties, including its punctuation, as in this scene, the four events Julia recollects are not set off by any paragraph breaks or full stops (except once). Instead, they are demarcated either by commas or by no punctuation at all, which gives the impression that these events succeed one another without interruption, hence the impression of superimposition, and of quasi simultaneity.

More than just following one another in an uninterrupted sequence, the four events appear as fused together, the boldfaced segment being a fair illustration of this feature. This segment involves a hybrid combination of direct and free direct speech. This is because it is unmarked by any quotation marks, albeit opening with an introductory verb ('whisper'). The

[59] Superimposition is a cinematic technique which offers "an image that gathers, unites, and fuses different scenes" (Casetti 34). This technique is employed in many films, including Sam Wood's *Our Town* (1940), Garson Kanin's *Tom, Dick and Harry* (1941), and Alexander Hall's *Here Comes Mr Jordan* (1941).

reason why this segment is presented as a blend of direct and free direct speech is probably to suggest that it is a blend of reality and fiction. Indeed, in this fragment, Julia takes what she and her husband wrote to one another in their telegraph correspondence as the subject of their conversation while they had been dancing together during their marriage.

Likewise, the italicised fragment involves an amalgam of direct and free direct speech, as it includes an utterance that, although opening with an introductory verb ('said'), is not surrounded by quotation marks. One explanation why this fragment mixes up direct and indirect speech could be to echo its content which is a mingling of reality and fiction. In fact, in this fragment, Julia experiences her visit to 'the medical student' who informs her that she is pregnant as taking place during her marriage ceremony.

Julia's conflation of fiction and reality also finds expression in the underlined section. Indeed, in this section, Julia's recollection gives the impression that the Nazi mortar shells which killed many British soldiers, including her husband, exploded during her marriage ceremony. This is most probably the outcome of *confabulation*, the unconscious process whereby "the memory of traumatic events is often confabulated with unconscious fantasies, making it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction and making the trauma worse" (Kalsched 71).

In a nutshell, the previous scene includes a hybrid combination of direct and free direct speech, and is devoid of full stops, paragraph breaks and quotation marks. These unusual formal properties are employed to produce superimposition. In films, "the use of superimposition aims to combine various elements that are not easily separable" (Casetti 34). Much in the same way, superposition is employed in the present scene to suggest that the four events that have marked Julia's life are inextricably linked. As soon as Julia remembers one of them, she inadvertently remembers the others. Superimposition in the latter scene also leads to the loss of intelligibility, as it makes the four mentioned events appear as contemporaneous, taking place in the very ballroom and on the very night where Julia celebrated her marriage. Thus, the use of superimposition in this scene clearly illustrates how Julia's traumatic memory takes on a paradoxical phenomenality—a consciousness form that obfuscates rather than elucidates the eerie past it represents—which ties in with the general rule of the presence of traumatic past.

Throughout the novel, much like Julia, David reexperiences his abrupt discovery of his adoption as a *nonphenomenon*, a mental phenomenon whose presence is a certain absence (Derrida, "Violence" 112). This is evinced by the following excerpt:

> He could pinpoint the moment precisely. Julia with her cigarette held up beside her face, his mother nudging into the room. The window open and a woman zimmer-framing her slow way across the garden. The sound of television laughter coming from the main room, and an unanswered telephone ringing somewhere. The cymbelline shaking of the teacups as his mother gasped and put down the tray.
>
> (*SMWB* 89, emphasis added)

In this passage, David remembers the scene when his aunt Julia, because of her mental deterioration, unwittingly told him the truth about his parentage. The passage is distinguished by its unwonted syntactic structure, in that it is made up of one sentence whose verbal phrases are set off by full stops. Each of these verbal phrases captures only a fragment of David's trauma. As regards each full stop separating the verbal phrases, it is arguably employed to render a *jump cut*, an editing technique used in films to break the continuity of a shot or a scene (Chandler 230). Accordingly, David's recollection of his trauma is presented in the last passage as a fragmented sequence of short cuts, which is typical of traumatic memories. Indeed, many a traumatised subject relives her trauma through recollection as "stereotypic images, ideas, and movements that represent fragmented reexperiences of frightening past events" (Caruth, *Trauma* 164). Because of its fragmentary nature, traumatic memory does not form a *noema*, a meaningful unity (Levinas, *The Theory* 125-31). Instead, it persists as a paradoxical phenomenality, a mental phenomenon whose parts, albeit intelligible, make up an unintelligible whole.

In the same vein as David's recollection of his trauma, McGregor's *Reservoir13* is marked by the unintelligibility of many of its passages. As earlier noted, this novel only scarcely addresses its triggering event, namely the disappearance of the young Rebecca Shaw from an unnamed village in the Peak District. Instead, the novel mainly proceeds through monoliths of prose where the narrative moves "in deliberate non-sequiturs, shifting from character to character, human to animal, ground to sky, without the signposting of paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions" (McGregor, "I Wanted" n.p.). This is exemplified by the following scene about the local shepherd Jackson looking out of his window to his neighbour Les Thompson while walking in his field:

> In the morning Jackson took a bowl of scrambled eggs. Through the window he could just see Les Thompson walking his fields across the river, checking on the ripening grass. The heads would be forming and the leaves falling.
>
> (*Reservoir* 41)

This scene is made up of three paratactic sentences, each used to perform a different type of shots. The first sentence is a *medium shot* of Jackson while preparing his breakfast.[60] The second sentence is a *long shot* of Jackson watching Les Thompson walking in his field.[61] And the third sentence is an *establishing shot* of Les Thompson's 'ripening grass.'[62] As regards each full stop separating the three sentences, it possibly signals a *jump cut* which, as before indicated, is employed in films to break the continuity of a shot or a scene. Accordingly, the last scene is displayed as a fragmented sequence of different types of shots, and thereby does not offer any *synthetic image*, i.e. any cohesive and therefore translucent representation (Derrida, *Specters* 94). Because of its fragmentary nature, the previous scene contestably simulates the collective trauma of the anonymous village's inhabitants, namely Rebecca's disappearance. This is because such a type of frightening experiences cannot be integrated into a unitary whole. Instead, it is usually "stored in memory as isolated fragments consisting of sensory perceptions or affective states," hence the fragmentary character of the last scene (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 510).

On account of its fragmentary nature, a traumatic memory is always experienced as an invisible visibility, a mental phenomenon that can only be partly retained by the human consciousness. This is made manifest by the scene where the incorporeal narrator from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* reports the scene of Shahid's car accident:

> *He can see* the road stretching out behind the car, the still-wet surface gleaming darkly, *he can see* the houses on either side, . . . *he can see* the funny man at number eighteen, . . . *he can see* the people sitting outside the house next to his, . . . *he can see* the small boy on his tricycle.
>
> (*INSRT* 252, emphasis added)

In this scene, the disembodied narrator presents segments of what Shahid sees in the split second before being hit by a car. These visual segments are set off by commas, and open with the same anaphoric expression ('he can see'). The use of commas instead of full stops in the present scene probably suggests that the visual fragments of Shahid's trauma follow one another

[60] In photography, film and television, a *medium shot* is "a standard shot size in which there is a balance between a foreground subject and the background surroundings in terms of screen area. A medium shot of a person would show their head and body above the knees" (Chandler 271).

[61] *A long shot* is a standard shot size which shows "all or most of a fairly large subject (for example, a person) and much of the surroundings" (Chandler 244).

[62] An *establishing shot* can be "an extreme wide sweeping shot with a crane or a drone to show a particular time period or details of a location, like a burned forest or traffic jam, or it can be a wide exterior of a building like a museum. You can also use tighter shots that show pieces of a location like an office. For example, you can show a close-up shot of wheelchair wheels, an IV and an MRI machine to show you are in a hospital" (Chandler 129).

without interruption. As regards the impersonal narrator's anaphoric expression ('he can see'), it arguably implies that the listed visual fragments succeed one another at breakneck speed. Accordingly, the narrator creates a *whip pan effect*, the often-disorienting blur effect created in films when the camera rotates at high speed (Chandler 459). In so doing, the narrator puts readers in a similar dizzy state as that of the young boy, and thereby impels them to be a 'Shahid.' In Arabic, 'Shahid' can be read as شَاهِدٌ *shāhid*, namely a witness. It can also be read as شَهِيدٌ *shahïd*, which means a martyr. In the present scene, 'Shahid' is debatably an instance of *double entendre*, since it is probably employed to mean both *witness* and *martyr*. It means a *witness*, since the narrator presents Shahid's accident scene as a vertiginous sequence of visual fragments, and thereby makes readers experience the young child's panic-struck vision. Subsequently, readers are forced to be *secondary witnesses*, i.e. individuals who, despite themselves, suffer in others' stead. However, readers can be secondary witnesses only when they *martyr* their self-identity, i.e. only when they transcend their self-identity. This is because, as earlier explained, self-identity is a mental phenomenon that does not allow individuals to open up to the otherness of other beings of the world.

In short, in the previous scene, the incorporeal narrator creates a *whip pan effect* by means of certain narrative elements, and thereby puts readers in a similar state as that of Shahid in the split second before being hit by a car. Subsequently, readers are impelled to transcend their self-identity, and, as such, become secondary witnesses, individuals who suffer for others' sufferings, hence the ethical yield of the last scene. Alongside its ethical potential, the latter scene typifies how the memory of a traumatic event remains *in excess of representation*, i.e. cannot be transmuted by the human consciousness into a translucent mental image (Ganteau, *Trauma* 7). Instead, such a memory usually persists as a *reality without a reality*, a mental phenomenon whose manifestation is always superficial and equivocal (Levinas, *Totality* 65).

The equivocal nature of Shahid's accident is exemplified by many other passages of the same novel. This includes the early passage where the disembodied narrator gives an anachronic account of the accident:

> I remember a smell of burning, and seeing that the boys opposite had left their meat on the barbecue.
> *I could see* the smoke starting to twist upwards.
> *I could see* faces at windows.
> *I could see* people glancing up, looking at the one door which was still closed.
> (*INSRT* 11, emphasis added)

This scene involves portions of what the incorporeal narrator sees just after Shahid is knocked over by a car. These visual portions are presented in the form of paratactic sentences superimposed upon one another. This brings to mind *split screen*, the editing technique employed in films whereby "Each portion of the screen gives us only one fragment of an event" (Casetti 34). Accordingly, it can be said that the incorporeal narrator employs paratactic sentences layered upon one another in order to carry out a split screen. In doing so, the narrator presents the moment following Shahid's accident as a sequence of superimposed fragments, each showing a different portion of the same scene.

Another possible interpretation of the last scene is that it presents the moment following Shahid's accident as a compilation of photos placed under one another in a manner reminiscent of the way images are placed in a photo album. Following this interpretation, it can be said that the last scene mimics the "large red folder" of the young man from number eighteen, the album where this protagonist keeps the different photos he takes of his surroundings (*INSRT* 70).

In light of the previous two interpretations, it becomes conspicuous that, in the last scene, the incorporeal narrator resorts to an unconventional syntax and typography to give a fragmented picture of its traumatic memory, a picture which, although made up of legible parts, forms a fragmented and therefore illegible whole. Thus, the narrator shows how a traumatic memory persists as a paradoxical phenomenality, i.e. how a traumatic memory appears as being and not being the disquieting past it brings to light.

Just like the latter scene, many other elements of the same novel typify how a traumatic memory usually appears as being and not being the past it re-presents. This includes the way the disembodied narrator reintroduces certain characters throughout its narrative strand. By way of example, the narrator introduces the only daughter of the man with the burnt hands as "A girl with a hairband flattening her hair steps out of the door" (*INSRT* 133). Yet, a few pages later, the same girl is reintroduced in the same anonymous way as "A girl with yellow ribbon" (*INSRT* 172). The impersonal narrator does the same when referring to the young man from number eighteen, as it introduces him as "the boy from number eighteen" (*INSRT* 8). And then, a few pages later, the same character is reintroduced as "A young man, early twenties, a smooth round face, straight nose, full lips, pale hair losing thickness around the temples, a buckle of skin folded below each eye" (*INSRT* 31). Accordingly, the incorporeal narrator makes many a character of its narrative strand appears as a paradoxical phenomenality, i.e. a character who is and is not the same being.

After the fashion of the impersonal narrator from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, many a short story from McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes* presents its characters in an equivocal way, so much so that these characters appear as being and not being the same individuals. As aforementioned, *The Reservoir Tapes* is a collection of short stories set in the anonymous village of *Reservoir13* during a summer day leading up to, and immediately following, the day of Rebecca's disappearance. These short stories are titled with the names of their main characters, most of whom are already introduced in McGregor's *Reservoir13*. This includes "Charlotte," the first short story, which is presented as a redacted transcript of an interview with Charlotte, Rebecca's mother (*TRT* 1-16). There are, however, certain short stories whose protagonists are not introduced in *Reservoir13*, among which "Stephanie" features prominently (*TRT* 89-97). As its title suggests, this story is about Stephanie, a prostitute who used to live in the unnamed village of *Reservoir13* years before Rebecca disappeared. Upon watching the news about Rebecca's disappearance on television, Stephanie remembers a frightening experience she had in the anonymous village when "a farmer deliver[ed] his son to her, then attempt[ed] to abuse her after she [had] relieve[d] the boy of his virginity" (Crown n.p.). Stephanie's depiction of the father and his son corresponds to a great extent to the local shepherd Jackson and his elder son Gordon, two characters already introduced in *Reservoir13*. However, these two characters are only named at the end of the short story. Meanwhile, they are anonymously designated as "the older man" and "the young man" (*TRT* 89). Subsequently, readers become haunted by a deep feeling of uncertainty as to whether or not the two characters are indeed Jackson and Gordon. As previously stated, such an intense feeling of uncertainty is common among traumatised individuals. This is because these individuals usually reexperience their eerie pasts through recollection as a paradoxical phenomenality, past events which always assume equivocal forms, and which thereby disappear behind their manifestations. In this regard, it can be conjectured that the reason why Jackson and Gordon are kept unnamed until near the end of the novel is to make readers vicariously experience the strong sense of uncertainty Stephanie undergoes upon remembering her frightening accident.

Much like the previously scrutinised narratives from McGregor's fiction, "Wires," one of the short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, exemplifies how a traumatic memory takes on an overwhelmingly ambiguous manifestation (*TISTHSLY* 160-75). In short, "Wires" is about a young woman, Emily, who is driving on a motorway when a sugar beet crashes through her windscreen. This frightening experience is reported in the short stories as follows:

> *Item One*, how she'd said 'Oh' without any panic or fear. . . **;** *Item Two*, what would Marcus say when he found out . . . **;** *Item Three*, but she couldn't possibly be thinking all this in the time it was taking for the sugar-beet to turn in the air and crash through the windscreen . . . **;** *Item Seven* was just, basically, wtf.
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 161, emphasis in original and underscore added)

This scene is made up of sentences subsequently listed as 'item one,' 'item two,' until 'item seven.' Each of these sentences is set off by a semicolon, and is about the ideas that have crossed Emily's mind in the split second the sugar beet hits her windscreen. Semantically speaking, a semicolon is used instead of conjunctions to connect independent clauses that are related in terms of meaning. Nevertheless, semicolons are employed in the present passage to relate sentences that express different ideas. That is why it can be assumed that these semicolons do not express the continuity of the same idea, but rather render *continuity editing*, the filmic technique used to make a seamless transition between different shots in order to create the illusion of continuity (Chandler 75). Based on this interpretation, Emily's traumatic memory is depicted as an uninterrupted sequence of semantically unrelated and therefore incoherent fragments, which makes such a memory appear as an intelligible whole. Thus, the previous passage corroborates how traumatic memory comprehends a traumatic past incomprehensibly, i.e. it presents the totality of a traumatic past in an ambiguous and therefore incomprehensible way.

The incomprehensible nature of traumatic memory is expressed by many other short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*. This includes "We Wave and Call," a story about a young man who realises, while attempting to swim to the shore, that he is dragged by the current further out to sea (*TISTHSLY* 130-43). In this story, the subsequent scene clearly illustrates the inability of a trauma victim to form any totalising representation of her uncanny experience:

> . . . **1**[the rocks aren't really all that far away and it shouldn't take long to get there and there isn't anything else you can do] **but 2**[now there's a pounding sensation in your head] **and 3**[a reddish blur in your eyes] **and 4**[a heavy pain in your chest as though the weight of all that water is pressing against your lungs] **and 5**[you can't take in enough air and so you stop again].
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 140, brackets, enumeration, and boldface added)

This scene is distinguished by the narrator's use of the second person pronoun ('you'), which lures readers into thinking that they are addressed surreptitiously. Thus, readers are impelled to vicariously experience the trauma of the protagonist who, albeit young, fails to reach the shore and has probably died. In this regard, it can be postulated that the narrator employs the second

person pronoun to make readers own up to their inherent vulnerability—their susceptibility to being devastated by catastrophes that can rear up in their lives without warning.

Besides being narrated from the second person point of view, this scene is profoundly cinematic, as it is made up of five segments, each rendering a distinct type of shot. The first segment (1) is a long shot of the young man swimming in the sea and trying to reach the shore which is only a short distance away. The second segment (2) is a close up of the young man's face which most probably shows his exhaustion. The third segment (3) is an extreme close-up of the protagonist's eyes that have turned red most likely because of their being exposed for a long time to the sea's salty water. The fourth segment (4) is a close-up of the character's chest. And, eventually, the last segment (5) is a *full shot* of the character who takes a pause before trying to swim to the shore again.[63]

Apart from performing different types of shots, the five segments are not set off by any punctuation, but are rather demarcated by coordinating conjunctions (boldfaced). This suggests, among other things, that the different shots the five fragments render succeed one another at a dizzying speed. Thus, it can be postulated that, in the last scene, the young man's frightening experience is displayed as a quick succession of different types of shots, each offering a different perspective of the young man. In this respect, such an eerie experience is introduced as a vertiginous and therefore unfathomable whole, which echoes the inability of the young man to form any cohesive representation of his uncanny experience.

Incapable to have any consistent representations of their disquieting pasts, many traumatised characters of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* reexperience their traumas through recollection as overwhelmingly ambiguous occurrences. This is exemplified by the passage from the novel's second chapter that goes as follows:

> The driver talks to the policeman in the front, and for the first time we can hear what they say. Is this your first one, he**'s asking**, and the policeman **says** Yes, just about, first proper one like this, and the two men laugh and **say** You'll soon get used to it, chap**.** *We follow Danny down to the bottom of the hill, trailing his blankets, turning to call and hurry Einstein along*. The van sweeps up the sliproad at the interchange***, and*** *we lose sight of him for a moment as he stumbles down into the underpass*, the weight of Robert's body shifting in the bag between us as we turn on to the exit road ***and*** *see Danny.*
>
> (*ED*19, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

[63] In a full shot, the character body is fully displayed from head to toe.

In this narrative fragment, the 'We,' the spectral narrator of the novel, shuttles back and forth between two scenes distant in time. The first scene (unmarked) is about Robert's corpse being carried in an ambulance to the morgue, and it includes a conversation between the ambulance driver and the young policeman who is shocked after being the first to discover Robert's rotting corpse. This conversation involves introductory verbs (boldfaced) that are not followed by quotation marks, which makes it difficult to tell where description ends and speech begins. Thus, the omission of the quotation marks in the last scene blurs borders between characters and narrator, hence the ambiguity of such a scene.

Alongside its lack of quotation marks, the previous scene alternates at random with another scene (italicised) about Danny, a vagrant and a drug addict whom Robert often granted shelter in his flat. In this scene, Danny, shocked after having discovered Robert's decomposing corpse, strides along with his dog Einstein through the unnamed city, desperately trying to figure out how he should react. Although this scene and that of the ambulance carrying Robert's corpse are three days apart, they are presented as contemporaneous. This is the outcome of many of the previous passage's elements, including its tense. Indeed, while depicting the two scenes, the choral narrator resorts exclusively to the present tense, which makes these scenes appear as belonging to the living present of the narrator, thus simultaneous.

Another reason why the two scenes look synchronous is because they alternate without being demarcated by any paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions. Instead, they are set off by full stops, commas, or the coordinating conjunction 'and'. By resorting to this punctuation and the use of coordinating conjunctions while switching between the two scenes, the choral narrator arguably renders *cross-cutting*, an editing technique most often used in films. "In a cross-cut scene, the camera will cut away from one action to another action, which can suggest the simultaneity of these two actions" (Chandler 82).

In short, in the last passage, the choral narrator alternates between two scenes distant in time and space, while using, among other things, the present tense and the coordinating conjunctions. By means of these narrative elements, the narrator performs cross-cutting, and thereby blurs borders between the two scenes that eventually look concurrent. Accordingly, the narrator corroborates how a frightening experience, including Robert's tragic death, endures as a paradoxical phenomenality, a mental phenomenon that does not so much clarify as blur the dismaying past it intermittently presents.

In tandem with McGregor's fiction, the album that Birkin composed for *Reservoir 13* is equally telling of the distorted way traumatic memories intermittently represent disquieting experiences. As has been indicated, the album includes six soundtracks, among which "At Midnight" features prominently. What is remarkable about this musical piece is that it is *and* is not played in B-minor scale. Indeed, it opens as a progression of B minor, but resolves on D#, which is a note out of scale. The same goes for "Dreams Were Had about Her, still" which, however proceeding in B minor, ends with same odd note—D#. In their paradoxical phenomenality, their being and not being in B minor, the two soundtracks can be said to be the musical illustration of the uncanny way in which traumatic memories manifest themselves to the consciousness of those they impact.

To put it succinctly, and in light of the previously examined excerpts from McGregor's narratives, it becomes evident that the narrator's fiction involves many an unconventional narrative element, including hybrid reported speech and sentences whose clauses are set off by full stops. As already shown, these unwonted elements are arguably employed to carry out certain filmic techniques, including cross-cutting, whip pan, and split screen. By means of these filmic techniques, the author presents the traumatic memories of his characters as a paradoxical phenomenality: mental phenomena that appear as being and not being the frightening experiences they present, and that thereby mark the ruination of any fathomable representation.

2. Latency

The last chapter offers a fresh hermeneutic lens through which to interpret McGregor's fiction, as it shows how the author employs certain unwonted narrative elements in order to carry out some cinematic techniques. By way of these techniques, and as already illustrated, the author demonstrates how traumatic memory usually takes on a paradoxical phenomenality, i.e. how traumatic memory crosses the threshold of consciousness compulsively and without respite, while incessantly giving the impression of both being and not being the traumatic past it presents.

Alongside its paradoxical phenomenality, another uncanny aspect of a traumatic memory is its latency. Indeed, even when under the threshold of consciousness, such a memory still breathes its spirit into some non-traumatic experiences. This is emphasised by Caruth when she states that "the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (Caruth, *Trauma* 8). Following this

statement, it will be demonstrated in this subchapter how certain elements of McGregor's fiction are a metaphor for the latent character of traumatic memory.

As already underlined, McGregor's narratives mainly hinge on the traumatic experiences of their characters. Nevertheless, these eerie happenings are rarely made explicit, as they are most often designated in a furtive way by means of certain metaphors. This is evinced by McGregor's *Reservoir13* where the incorporeal narrator scarcely makes any overt mention of the novel's triggering event, namely Rebecca's disappearance. Instead, such an upsetting occurrence is mostly designated surreptitiously through certain of the novel's elements, including the bodiless narrator's prime focus on the cyclicality of culture and nature. Indeed, this narrator chiefly dwells on the recurring social events of the anonymous village where Rebecca goes missing, including the New Year's Eve fireworks and an annual dance festival. The impersonal narrator also describes through hypotyposis many natural phenomena of the local wildlife, so much so that these otherwise cyclical and therefore mundane phenomena gain uncanny vividness. The way the narrator presents natural phenomena as both ordinary and extraordinary falls in line with the way a traumatised subject relives her trauma through recollection as both "homely and unhomely, property and alienation" (Royle 6). In this respect, it can be advanced that, although seemingly overlooked, and only every so often mentioned, Rebecca's disappearance is latently present throughout the novel, as it breathes its spirit into the narrator's prime focus on the numinous cyclicality of the unnamed village's culture and wildlife.

The latency of Rebecca's disappearance is also metaphorically expressed by the veiled presence of Wallace Stevens's poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," throughout the novel, whose epigraph is the poem's twelfth stanza: "The river is moving / The blackbird must be flying." In this poem, Stevens mainly dwells on a flying blackbird he sees through the glass of his window. The poet's fascination with this bird is communicated by his anaphoric use of 'blackbird' which is mentioned thirteen times in the poem. Similarly, the same bird is mentioned thirteen times in McGregor's *Reservoir13* (*Reservoir* epigraph, 10, 31, 37, 62, 70, 101, 121, 147, 171, 175, 321, 324).

As has been established, the impersonal narrator of *Reservoir13* proceeds through paragraphs that sometimes sprawl over several pages. In these monoliths of prose, the narrative moves in deliberate non-sequiturs, as it switches abruptly back and forth between the description of one of the novel's characters and the depiction of a natural phenomenon. One reason why the narrative unfolds as an uninterrupted overlap between characters and natural

phenomena is, among other things, to suggest that "the human emanates from the natural, in the same way as the natural elements of the landscape are tightly intertwined with the human" (Ganteau, "Diffracted" n.p.). Likewise, Stevens's "Thirteen Ways" epitomises the interconnectedness and therefore interdependence of human and nature, as is made manifest by the poem's eleventh and twelfth verses: "A man and a woman and a blackbird /Are one."

In McGregor's *Reservoir13*, as previously explained, the narrator underscores the cyclical essence of every natural phenomenon. Similarly, Stevens's "Thirteen Ways" revolves around the idea that nature is essentially cyclical. This is typified by the poem's alternation between the black, notably the blackbird, and the white, including the snow, which can be seen as a metaphor for the alternation of day and night. The poem also brings together in its first three verses the motion of the blackbird's eyes and the motionlessness of the mountains, which disputably imitates the natural cycle of life and death.

Although nature is not so much evolving as revolving, it still retains a deep sense of mystery that never ceases to surprise and enchant. This is evinced by McGregor's *Reservoir13* which, as previously shown, involves a meticulous depiction of many natural phenomena that eventually appear as numinous, glowing with mystery. By the same token, Stevens describes nature as an inexhaustible source of mystery, which is evidenced by the fourth verse of his poem: "I was of three minds." One is usually accustomed to the expression 'being of two minds,' which means to be unable to decide what to do, or what to think about something. In this regard, it can be said that the poet employs in the last verse 'three minds' instead of 'two minds' to underscore his sense of bewilderment before the untold beauty of the natural phenomena he sees.

In light of what has been shown in terms of the thematic relationships between McGregor's *Reservoir13* and Stevens's "Thirteen Ways," it becomes evident that this poem is latently present in McGregor's novel. Accordingly, it can be postulated that the reason why Stevens's poem has a veiled presence in McGregor's novel is to emulate the veiled manifestations of traumatic memories, including the collective trauma of this novel's characters.

Before going any further, it is worth noting that the thematic connections between McGregor's *Reservoir13* and Stevens's "Thirteen Ways" fall into the category of *hypertextuality*. Genette understands this to mean "any relationship uniting a text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*), upon which it is 'grafted' in a manner that is not that of

commentary" (*Palimpsests* 5, emphasis in original). As Genette's definition suggests, hypertextuality is an implicit relationship (or set of relationships) between the hypertext and the hypotext, as the former neither duplicates nor eradicates the latter. Instead, the hypertext is a combination of repetition and difference—of familiarity and novelty—so much so that it reveals even while hiding the hypotext, and vice versa (Genette, *Palimpsests* 5-6). Drawing on Genette's conception of hypertextuality, it can be assumed that, since McGregor's *Reservoir13* reverberates with echoes of Stevens's "Thirteen Ways," it is then a hypertext—a mere *prosification* of this poem, i.e. a creative transfiguration of this poem into prose (Genette, *Palimpsests* 219). However, this is far from being the case, as this novel, much like the author's other writings, is chiefly distinguished by the originality of its thematic and poetic properties.

Among the original properties of McGregor's *Reservoir13* is the author's idiosyncratic symbolism, most notably his symbolic use of the *number thirteen*. This number is latently present throughout the novel, since it figures, among other things, as the number of the novel's chronological chapters. Each of these chapters covers a year since Rebecca's disappearance. Thus, the novel ends *thirteen* years after the girl's disappearance. The novel also involves thirteen species of animals, insects and plants, as corroborated by the writer when he avows in an interview: "I wrote a series of texts for each character, animal, plant, weather condition, work routine, village tradition, etc. Statisticians might care to know that there were 13 of these categories, with 13 examples in each category" (McGregor, "I Wanted" n.p.). Thirteen is also the number of sex scenes in the novel, all about Gordon, a local shepherd and a seducer who shows an insatiable desire for sex. All of these examples underscore the ubiquitous yet latent presence of number thirteen which is also the age of Rebecca when she goes missing. Following this consideration, it can be conjectured that the covert presence of number thirteen throughout the novel mimics the covert aspect of Rebecca's disappearance which remains a *present absent*—an unresolved mystery reverberating through many of the novel's seemingly untraumatic elements—hence the uncanniness of such an eerie event.

What further epitomises the uncanny nature of Rebecca's disappearance is Birkin's album which keys off many of themes of *Reservoir13*, including the latent nature of the characters' collective trauma. This statement is best illustrated by one of the album's soundtracks, "All Was Calm, All Was Bright," which is a mixture of two musical pieces, including "Silent Night." The choice of this Christmas carol is far from being random, as it brings to mind the very period of the year when the young Rebecca Shaw went missing. Thus, this musical piece

is arguably a metaphorical expression of such a traumatic event, and thereby epitomises how traumatic memories every so often breath their uncanny content is some untraumatic mental representation.

Just as Birkin's soundtracks show the latent nature of traumatic memory, so does McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*. As earlier noted, this novel is made up of two narrative strands. The first takes place three years before the second, and is a one-day narrative about the dwellers of an anonymous street whose lives are abruptly disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269). Among these dwellers, "the boy from number eighteen" features prominently (*INSRT* 7). This character shows a manifest obsession with the trifling matters of his urban environment, as evinced by his painstaking collection, which comprises, amongst other things, used syringes, broken glass and a page from a TV guide (*INSRT* 269). This collection amounts to a ritualistic shaping of reality whereby the young man tries "to control the world and reduce it from one incomprehensible mess to a structure which can be documented and understood" (Lea, "Jon" 209). This is clearly illustrated when the young man tells Michael, his twin brother, that he is an "archaeologist of the present" (*INSRT* 153). His statement is paradoxical as, by definition, archaeologists study past civilisations. Thus, such a statement reflects the character's obsession with *the present*. According to the Italian neuroscientist Gianfranco Dalla Barba, the present is made up of the spontaneous and instantaneous mental representations of both the external and internal world (Dalla Barba 105-24). These mental representations are basically phenomenological in character, and therefore do not capture the very essence of external or internal objects (Levinas, *Totality* 12). Nevertheless, they easily fit into the inclusive structure of the ego. Accordingly, it can be advanced that the young man's obsession with the present reflects his tendency towards the *phenomenologisation* of the Other, in Derrida's acceptance of the term, i.e. the reduction of other beings to easily assimilable mental representations (Derrida, *Specters* 154).

What also shows this character's proclivity for phenomenologisation is his obsession with photography, as he is frequently depicted while stealthily taking pictures of his neighbours "in an attempt to construct and fix some verifiable knowledge of these people about whom he knows so little" (Prescott 60). At the end of the novel, the young man from number eighteen dies alone in his apartment of a heart attack after being shocked by Shahid's accident. His death is highly emblematic, as it arguably symbolises the end of phenomenologisation. This

interpretation brings to mind traumatic memory, since, as already indicated, such a memory is refractory to phenomenologisation, i.e. it cannot be captured in its entirety by the human consciousness, and thereby marks the ruination of any totalising representation. In this respect, it can be postulated that the symbolic significance of the young man's death is a metaphor for the psychological impact of traumatic experiences, including the collective trauma of the unnamed street's dwellers. Based on this consideration, one can advance that, even when not explicitly stated, the collective trauma of the anonymous street's dwellers is still latently present throughout the novel, finding expression in the death of the young man from number eighteen.

Another example of the novel's narrative that mirrors the latency of the characters' collective trauma is the passage where the incorporeal narrator describes the swift moment before dawn as "an unexpected pause, a hesitation as one day is left behind and a new one begins" (*INSRT* 3). Such a moment obviously belongs neither to the day nor to the night, but is rather liminal, pertaining to the boundary between day and night. Similarly, traumatic memories are liminal, as they are stored in the *subconscious*, the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious (Janet, "Histoire" 139). In this respect, it is fair to argue that the fleeting moment depicted by the omniscient narrator is a *paradoxical incorporation* of the characters' collective trauma, i.e. it allows such a trauma to appear, while also keeping it concealed (Derrida, *Specters* 157). Thus, the way the narrator describes the swift moment is another instance of the latency of the characters' collective trauma, which, as previously pointed out, is one of the uncanny manifestations of traumatic memories.

The secretive nature of this collective trauma is also metaphorically expressed by the incorporeal narrator's description of flat number fifteen, a derelict and deserted flat in the anonymous street (*INSRT* 133-6). Among the many things suggested by the way the narrator refers to this flat is that it is a *present absent*, there and not there. This flat is present, as it physically exists in the unnamed street. However, it is also absent, as it is barely noticed by the anonymous street's dwellers. Similarly, traumatic memory is a *present absent*, since, and as earlier indicated, it breathes its spirit into many untraumatic phenomena while remaining hidden. Traumatic memory also endures as a *piece of frozen time*, an atemporal memory excised from the ongoing flow of time (Davoine xxx). This can be seen as metaphorically expressed by the "stopped clock" in the flat number fifteen (*INSRT* 134). In light of the foregoing parallels drawn between traumatic memory and the flat number fifteen, it can be conjectured that this flat is a

motif the incorporeal narrator employs to highlight the latent aspect of the characters' collective trauma.

Similar to flat number fifteen, many other elements of the second narrative thread from the same novel typify the shadowy manifestations of trauma. As earlier mentioned, this narrative strand is related by a female narrator who had two traumatic experiences. The first is her being an eyewitness of Shahid's car accident, the triggering event of the first narrative strand. As regards the narrator's second trauma, it is her becoming accidentally pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. Although rarely explicitly mentioned, the female narrator's accidental pregnancy is still ubiquitously but subtly expressed throughout the novel by means of three narrative elements. The first element is the *number nine* which is furtively presented throughout the female narrator's narrative. In fact, this narrative is organised into chapters that encompass *nine* paragraphs, each made up of *nine* sentences, which obviously echoes the narrator's pregnancy (Butter 212). The second narrative element that works as a metaphor for the narrator's pregnancy is debatably the hanging paragraphs that make up this narrator's narrative. Having its first line protruding from the main body of the text, each of these paragraphs can simulate the narrator's protruding stomach because of her pregnancy. As for the third element of the novel that mimics this narrator's accidental pregnancy, it is the twins' motif, in that the novel involves three pairs of twins: the first, Shahid and his brother; the second, the boy from number eighteen and his brother; and finally, the female narrator's twin sons. Being obviously of the same physical appearance, each of these three pairs of twins squares with Rank's conception of the double—the embodiment of trauma—as a mental phenomenon "of the same stature, of the same physique and bearing" as that of the one it haunts (Rank, *The Double* 29).

In short, the casual pregnancy of the female narrator is metaphorically expressed throughout the novel by means of three narrative elements: hanging paragraphs, the number nine, and the twins' motif. These three narrative elements debatably cloak the female narrator's accidental pregnancy: they allow such a distressing event to appear, while also keeping it concealed. Accordingly, it can be said that these elements typify the latent character of the narrator's pregnancy, which, as already mentioned, is one of the many uncanny expressions of traumatic memories.

Rhyming with the female narrator's narrative, many short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* epitomise the latency of traumatic memory. As earlier noted, most of these short stories are set in the Fenlands, the rural areas that extend across Lincolnshire and

Cambridgeshire in the east of England. “These notoriously flat, largely featureless areas consist of land reclaimed from the North Sea” (Lea, “Jon” 236). Such a landscape has a haunting presence throughout McGregor’s collection, including in “In Winter the Sky,” a story about George and his wife Joanna, two farmers living in the Fenlands along with George’s paralysed father. George’s life is plagued by the knowledge of how he killed a pedestrian whilst driving his father’s car and then buried his body in the Fens. Likewise, Joanna is haunted by her husband’s involuntary homicide, as epitomised by the subsequent excerpt from her notebook:

> 1[~~When I was~~ As a child I would spin around
> ~~with my eyes on the horizon~~ trying to catch the place where
> the line turned or bent but I never could
> the mystery of the straight, encircling line.
> 2[- - - - - - - - -
> (All the) other lines find their way to the horizon ~~sooner or later~~
> High lines, 3[(Years ago, playing in the
> connecting lines: telegraph wires furrows while your father
> railway tracks watched, you looked up +
> canals saw a line of boats gliding
> drains through the sky. The fear
> rivers] you felt, seeing those
> boats above your head.)].
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 15, erasure in original and brackets added)

This passage involves three segments about distinct elements that have marked Joanna’s life. The first segment (1) is about a memory from Joanna’s childhood, and is made up of a single sentence that conveys the same meaning before and after being rectified (the erasure). The reason why this sentence is modified only to express the same meaning can be to make such a sentence a metaphor for the topology of the Fens where one can look in different directions only to see the same thing: a flat expanse of land. In their characteristic flatness, the Fens conjure a mixed feeling of exposure on the one hand, and claustrophobia on the other (D’hoker, “Living” 98). Such a feeling in common among many a traumatised individual who usually experiences her trauma as an omnipresent other from which there is no escape. Accordingly, it can be advanced that the last segment reflects Joanna’s obsession with the inescapable flatness of the Fens. Such an obsession is arguably a conscious expression of her unconscious yet omnipresent obsession with what is buried in the Fens, namely the corpse of the man her husband has involuntarily killed.

Such a traumatic memory also finds expressions in another unwonted feature of segment (1), namely the blanks of varying length demarcating the different constituents of this segment. These blanks make Joanna’s recollection of her childhood experience appear as a series of

mnemonic fragments that do not form a unitary whole. This can be the outcome of the feeling of dizziness the protagonist reexperiences when remembering how she used to whirl around while looking at the landscape of the Fens. The unwonted blanks that punctuate segment (1) can also be a metaphor for traumatic memory, including that of Joanna. This is because such a memory, much like the disrupted segment, does not form any harmonious totality. Instead, it usually comes to light as a series of mnemonic fragments that subsequently form an indistinct and therefore a vertiginous mental picture of the weird past they re-present.

Unlike segment (1), segment (2) is not the outcome of recollection, but is rather about the present architecture of the Fens. This segment has an unconventional typography, as it opens with a series of dashes, then proceeds through a series of superimposed noun phrases. In this segment, the regularly spaced dashes can be emulating the topography of the Fens which is chiefly made up of regularly spaced fields predominantly given over to arable farming. As regards the superimposed noun phrases, they imitate the geometry of 'telegraph wires,' 'railway tracks' and 'canals drains' that are arranged in parallel and perpendicular lines throughout the Fens. Thus, the foregoing parallels drawn between the typography of the second segment and the topography of the Fens typify, once again, Joanna's fixation on this landscape.[64]

Much like the first and second segment, segment (3) is marked by its unusual typography, as it is made up of two sentences whose constituents are layered upon one another. In this segment, Joanna remembers another childhood experience when, while playing in some furrows, she abruptly saw 'a line of boats gliding through the sky.' One possible reason why Joanna saw the boats as looming above her head is because the ground on which she was standing, much like the rest of the Fens, is below sea level. However, in this scene, the sea is not mentioned, most probably because it is hidden behind seawalls. Nevertheless, its presence is still felt, which shows how the sea in the Fens is latent, there and not there. Just as in the real world, the sea is presented in the last segment as a looming spectre, omnipresent but unseen. In its latency, the sea can be regarded as imitating the latency of Joanna's trauma.

The invisible presence of Joanna's trauma is also surreptitiously expressed by the narrative of the three mentioned segments. This is because this narrative switches from one of the three segments to another in acausal fashion, which is redolent of traumatic memory, including

[64] 'Fixation' is the word Freud would use while referring to the neurotic attachment of a traumatised individual to her traumatic past (*Beyond* 7).

that of Joanna. Indeed, and as formerly indicated, such a memory manifests itself to the consciousness of the one it afflicts as an acausal series of mnemonic fragments.

To conclude, the previous excerpt of Joanna's notebook involves three elements that have marked her life. Two of these elements are childhood memories, while the third is about the actual architecture of the Fens. These elements are presented in the form of three narrative fragments chiefly characterised by their unwonted typography which, as before demonstrated, figures the topography and architecture of the Fens. Thus, such an unusual typography echoes Joanna's obsession with the landscape of the Fens, an obsession which is arguably triggered by the protagonist's subconscious and therefore latent fixation on what the Fens hide, namely the corpse of the man her husband buried. In view of this consideration, one can postulate that the unwonted topography of the latter excerpt typifies the latent aspect of Joanna's trauma, which, as has been indicated, conveys one of the main uncanny aspects of traumatic memories.

Just as the uncommon typography of Joanna's notebook underscores the covert presence of traumatic memory, so do some aspects of McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*. As earlier noted, the story proper belongs to David, a curator at Coventry Museum who only accidentally discovers at the age of twenty-two that he was adopted. Such a deeply distressing discovery finds its echo in many of the novel's passages, including the ensuing fragment:

> He'd learnt, working at the museum, how many people wanted someone to tell their family's story to, how often the children of people who died would bring their parents' possessions to the museum to be archived or put on display, assuming that because these *objects had belonged to someone who was no longer alive* they would naturally take on a historical importance, assuming that the words *museum* and *mausoleum* were somehow the same.
>
> (*SMWB* 32, emphasis added)

In this excerpt, David likens a museum to a mausoleum, because most of the objects put on display in museums belong to departed individuals. Thus, such objects, much like mausoleums, re-present the absent: they conjure up their deceased owners. David's analogy in this passage is deeply reminiscent of traumatic memory which, as has been shown, re-presents with harrowing vividness the absent, namely the frightening past of a trauma victim. Following from the above drawn correlation between David's analogy and traumatic memory, it can be advanced that such an analogy cloaks David's trauma, i.e. it allows David's disturbing discovery of his adoption to manifest itself in a clandestine manner, hence the uncanniness of such a profoundly disturbing occurrence.

By dint of its uncanny nature, and as has been demonstrated, traumatic memory cannot be totalised by the human consciousness, i.e. it cannot be reduced by the human consciousness into an intelligible mental representation. Instead, such a memory usually remains an *infinity*, in Levinas's understanding of the term, i.e. a noumenon refractory to phenomenologisation. This is furtively displayed by the punctuation of the latter passage. Because it is devoid of any full stop, this passage does not involve any semantic unity—any sentence. This, in turn, can be simulating traumatic memory, including that of David, which is intractable to any phenomenological unity, namely any translucent mental image that captures the whole of the unsettling past it presents.

Besides the last passage, many other elements of the novel echo David's trauma. This includes the stitched-up wound in David's stomach. David had that wound and was about to die after being beaten up by Chris, the husband of one of David's colleagues, who suspected him of having an affair with his wife. This physical wound arguably emulates David's psychological wound, namely his discovering the truth about his parentage (Ganteau, "Espousing" 61). Accordingly, it can be said that David's stomach wound is a motif employed in the novel to evince the latency of this protagonist's traumatic memory.

Throughout his life, David has had several experiences as disconcerting as his discovery that he was adopted. This includes his being laid off from his dream job as a curator in Coventry Museum after a career of twenty-three years because of his lack of formal qualifications. When breaking to him the news about his being made redundant, the unnamed young man, most probably the head of human resources at the museum, mistakenly calls David 'Daniel' (*SMWB* 302). Likewise, and several years earlier, Julia, the best friend of David's foster mother, calls him 'Daniel' when she unwittingly—and because of her mental deterioration—tells him the truth about his being adopted when he was still a baby (*SMWB* 61). Thus, 'Daniel' becomes metaphorically associated with David's traumas, and therefore can be seen as another instance in the novel that underscores the latent and therefore uncanny character of David's disquieting experiences.

Much like David's traumas, many eerie occurrences affecting other characters from the same novel are expressed in a furtive way. Among these occurrences, Albert's World War Two experience features prominently. As earlier noted, Albert is David's foster father. Upon his return from war to his family, he becomes iconophobic, as insinuated by David when he states: "I think that's how I got so interested in history, he would say, since there was so little of it at

home. There weren't even any photos on the wall until after my father had died" (*SMWB* 46). Albert's iconophobia can be viewed as a conscious expression of his unconscious recognition that no representation can ever give his war experience its due. Drawing on this reading, it can be argued that Albert's iconophobia is another instance from McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* that exemplifies the way a traumatic occurrence reverberates through untraumatic conscious forms, while remaining hidden.

Similar to Albert's iconophobia, many narrative elements of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* evince the latency of traumatic memory. Among these elements is the 'We,' the choral narrator of the novel. As has been indicated, this narrator mainly dwells on both the past and present dehumanising and traumatic experiences of the novel's protagonists, most of whom are vagrant drug addicts. Although it sees, hears and brushes shoulders with the novel's characters, the 'We' cannot be seen or heard. That is why it can be regarded as a *spectre*, understood by Derrida to mean "the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible," i.e. the covert manifestations of a deeply disturbing past which comes to light under the cloak of disparate forms, and which thereby remains hidden (Derrida, *Specters* 6). Derrida's conception of the spectre dovetails with the way in which traumatic memory is introduced in this subchapter as a latent phenomenon. Accordingly, it can be conjectured that, by dint of its ontological status as a spectre, the 'We' typifies the latency of traumatic memories, including those of this novel's characters.

Alongside the 'We,' many other components of the same novel evidence the invisible visibility of traumatic memory. This includes the novel's triggering event, namely the death of Robert Radcliffe, a former soldier and an alcoholic whose decaying body is discovered on New Year's Eve (*ED* 36). This day is deeply liminal, since it is a day when a year is about to end and a new one is about to begin. In its characteristic liminality, such a day can be seen, in the present novel, as a figurative expression of eerie experiences, including Robert's death. This is because such occurrences are usually stored in the subconscious, the threshold between consciousness and unconsciousness (Janet, "Histoire" 139). They subsequently turn into liminal mental phenomena, namely traumatic memories that are neither conscious, nor unconscious. Drawing on what has been shown in terms of the typical liminality of both traumatic memory and New Year's Eve, it can be posited that such a day is employed in the novel as a metaphor for traumatic memory. Thus, this day is another example from the novel that shows the latency of traumatic memories, including that which Robert's death has generated in the minds of those who were close to him.

Another instance from the same novel that typifies the visible invisibility and therefore the uncanniness of traumatic memories is the scene about Ant's war accident. As previously indicated, Ant is a homeless man and a drug addict who lost one of his legs when serving as a British soldier in Afghanistan. Such a horrible accident is detailed through the stream-of-consciousness passage which sprawls over seven pages (*ED* 114-20). In this passage, the narrative alternates in a haphazard fashion between the depiction of Ant while being evacuated in a helicopter and the description of the drug trafficking taking place in the nearby poppy fields. This narrative is highly ironic, as it shows how the drugs smuggled from Afghanistan end up being consumed by many a British veteran, including Ant. Such an ironic narrative can be interpreted in two different ways. The first is that it demonstrates how "taking risks on an international scale is not without consequences at home" (Ganteau, "The Powers" 453). Another possible reading of this narrative is that it mimics traumatic memory. This is because the drugs coming from Afghanistan can be seen in the present passage as a metonymy for their producers, namely the Afghan. Being considered as enemies, these people eventually bring death and destruction to the British soldiers through the drugs they produce. Similarly, traumatic memory is usually experienced by the one it impresses as an enemy, and thereby persists as a harbinger of death and destruction. Drawing on what has been shown in terms of the close connection between traumatic memory and the way drug trafficking is depicted in the last excerpt, it can be put forward that such trafficking is a metaphor for the traumatic memories of many a British veteran, including Ant. Accordingly, it can be said that Ant's traumatic memory is latently present in the novel, as it comes to light under different guises, including the drug trafficking in the last passage.

In light of what has been illustrated in this subchapter, it becomes evident that, in McGregor's fiction, traumatic memories are rarely mentioned in a straightforward manner. Instead, they are mostly demonstrated surreptitiously through certain metaphors. By way of these metaphors, the author epitomises that a traumatic memory is not always a replica of the frightening event with which it is originally associated. Rather, it nowise infrequently finds expression in some untraumatic representations, hence the latent character of such a memory, which is only one of many uncanny aspects a traumatic memory assumes. Another uncanny aspect of such a memory is its being contagious.

3. A Contagious Phenomenon

In the present chapter, it has been shown how McGregor's narratives demonstrate two of the uncanny aspects traumatic memories can assume. The first is the paradoxical phenomenality of these memories, and the second is their latency. Another uncanny aspect of such a type of memories is its being contagious, as evidenced by many a traumatised individual whose trauma pertains not to her biography, but to the biography of one of her progenitors. This is corroborated by the two psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok when they introduce the concept of the *phantom*. This concept has moved "the focus of psychoanalytic inquiry beyond the individual being analysed because it postulates that some people unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives" (Abraham 166). Unlike biographical traumas, the onset of the phantom (or transgenerational trauma) is not immediate, but rather occurs belatedly after an incubation period that can extend for several years. This is emphasised by the French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche when he states that:

> 'Afterwardsness' [the belated onset of trauma] is not an *intrapersonal, but rather an interpersonal phenomenon*.[65] That is why this phenomenon is particular, able to inverse and to reverse the 'arrow of time.' Afterwardsness does not primarily belong to the developmental history of an individual. Rather, it is originally the outcome of the *simultaneity of an adult and a child*. The cryptic message of the adult (who is herself unconsciously haunted by this message) represents 'the initial trigger' (*l'avant coup*). This trigger leads to a primary disequilibrium that impels the recipient (the child) to translate belatedly (afterwardsness) and in an always imperfect manner the enigmatic message she unwittingly received.
>
> (Laplanche, *Problématiques* 171, translation mine and emphasis added)

The present thesis goes further than Jean Laplanche, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, since it postulates that traumatic memory is transmissible not only from an adult to a child, but also among adults. This is evidenced by the many cases of *secondary trauma*—cases where individuals of different ages, including psychiatrists, become vicariously traumatised after rubbing shoulders with trauma victims (Boscarino 24–6). In view of this statement, the present subchapter purports to demonstrate how many elements of McGregor's fiction clearly show how traumatic memories are contagious.

Among the elements of the author's narratives that epitomise the transmissibility of traumatic memories is the second narrative thread from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*. In this

[65] Laplanche has translated *'l'après-coup'* into English as *afterwardsness* (Laplanche, "Notes" 264).

narrative strand, the name of the female narrator is kept anonymous, and is revealed to be 'Kate' only in *So Many Ways to Begin*, the author's subsequent novel. As earlier indicated, this young woman has experienced two traumatic events. The first is her being an eyewitness to the car accident of one of her former neighbours' twin sons. As for the second, it is her becoming accidentally pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. Kate is also haunted by another trauma she has never experienced, but has inherited from her mother, Eleanor Campbell, who is traumatised by a Scottish childhood plagued with maternal abuse. Unable to *work through* her childhood trauma, Eleanor has suffered from chronic depression, spending several days in her bed without talking to anybody.[66] Her depressive demeanour has profoundly impacted her only daughter Kate, who depicts her mother during her intermittent periods of depression as "an absent presence" (*INSRT* 183). This statement is highly symbolic, as it arguably implies that Eleanor's traumatic childhood haunts not only her living present, but also of Kate's.

Another instance of the novel that demonstrates how Kate has become vicariously traumatised by her mother's traumatic childhood is her becoming accidentally pregnant. When making reference to her pregnancy, Kate says: "Only then it was a secret that was growing, and there was a becoming place inside me that I hadn't been prepared for" (*INSRT* 110). In this quote, Kate alludes to her pregnancy by the impersonal pronoun 'it.' This can be read as a metaphor for her being haunted by a trauma which, like the pronoun she employs, is impersonal—a trauma that belongs not to her, but rather to her mother. Another aspect of the previous quotation that displays the interrogational nature of Kate's trauma is her description of her pregnancy as 'a secret . . . for which she is not prepared.' The way Kate refers to her pregnancy coincides exactly with the way in which Laplanche conceives of transgenerational trauma as both an untimely and cryptic message that an adult entombs inside a child (Laplanche, "Notes" 266). Accordingly, one can say that Kate's latter statement epitomises her being traumatised by her mother's trauma.

The fact that Kate has become pregnant with twins from a Scottish young man is deeply significant *per se*, as it involves an element that debatably simulates Kate's transgenerational trauma. And this element is the Scottishness of the young man which debatably echoes the

[66] 'Working-through' is a psychoanalytical concept further elaborated by the historian Dominick LaCapra. It is basically used to refer to the psychological process whereby "the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present, and future. To put the point in drastically oversimplified terms: For the victim, this means the ability to say to oneself: 'yes, that happened to me back then. It was distressing, overwhelming, perhaps I can't entirely disengage myself from it, but I'm existing here and now, and this is different from back then'" (LaCapra 144).

Scottishness of the brutal childhood of Kate's mother. In view of this reading, along with the previous others, it becomes obvious that Kate is contaminated by her mother's trauma, which, as already postulated, is one of the uncanny expressions of traumatic memories.

Kate is also haunted by another transgenerational trauma, which is that of her father David Carter. As previously pointed out, David becomes traumatised when he discovers at the age of twenty-two that he was adopted. However, when he was still a child, he showed an unconscious prescience of such a highly distressing discovery. This is displayed by the many scenes about this protagonist's childhood where he is caught while excavating a number of bomb-damaged sites, and collecting the objects he finds, including "A brooch, a set of keys, a bullet, a handful of blank-faced coins, a lumpen twist of rusted shrapnel" (*SMWB* 37). David's childhood fascination with excavation debatably heralds the long journey on which he vainly tries to excavate his own origins. On this consideration, it can be said that David's childhood obsession with excavation is an instance of *synchronicity*. Jung makes use of 'synchronicity' to refer to the few perplexing cases in which an intrapsychic occurrence shows an acausal connection with an external event (Jung, *Man* 211). Take, for example, the case of a man who dreams about the death of his close relative a few days before, or at the very moment when, his relative actually died. This example is an epitome of synchronicity, as it displays a *meaningful coincidence* between the man's dream and the actual death of his relative (Jung, *Man* 306).

Other than being an instance of synchronicity, David's childhood obsession with excavation also exemplifies how traumatic memory can assume a transgenerational dimension. This is clearly illustrated by the scene about Kate, David's only daughter, when she was still a child. In this scene, Kate is "digging in the far corner of the garden with the bucket and spade Dorothy had given her," which is obviously what David, as a child, used to do (*SMWB* 250). Thus, it becomes obvious that both Kate and her father share the same childhood fascination for excavation, which suggests, among other things, that Kate is haunted by her father's inability to excavate his origins. Following from this statement, it can be argued that the last scene epitomises how traumatic memory is transmittable from one generation to another, hence the contagious nature of such a memory.

As has been postulated, traumatic memory can be transmitted not only from an adult to a child, but also among adults. This is evinced by many narrative elements of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* whose hallmark is debatably the 'We,' the choral narrator. The 'We' can be seen as an impersonal 'I': an ego that acts as a mere camera, simply making whatever it captures

"*manifestius* without having to make it sound *credibilius,*" i.e. it only re-presents what it perceives, oblivious to whether or not it makes sense (Casparis 82). This impersonal narrator imposes an authoritative gaze over the whole of the novel which is chiefly about the traumatic life and dehumanising death of a group of vagrant drug addicts. In doing so, it impels the reader, the 'you,' to bear witness to its traumatic narrative and thereby to be a *secondary witness*—a person traumatised by others' traumas (LaCapra 186). Subsequently, the reader becomes a 'We'—an 'I' haunted by the trauma of the 'you,' the novel's characters. Thus, it can be advanced that the 'We' typifies the transmissible nature of traumatic memory, hence the uncanniness of such a memory.

In the same vein, many other elements of the same novel clearly illustrate how traumatic memory is contagious. This involves the passage where Robert and Steve steal beer cans, then go to Robert's place where they confide in each other:

> Didn't take him long to tell anyone that, as it happens. Told Ant before they'd even had their first drink together. Served in the Falklands . . . *Robert got him talking, Steve clocked him round the side of the head, and they both grabbed the cans and ran. Which was them sorted for the day* . . . **Like Robert saying Nine years we were married and she must have hated me for half that time I never knew, I never fucking knew**.
>
> (*ED* 68-70, emphasis and boldface added)

This excerpt is made up of three segments distinct in both time and space. The italicised segment takes place before the two others, and is about Robert and Steve when they snatch the beer cans from a man they come across in the street, and then run away to Robert's place. As regards both the unmarked and boldfaced segments, they are concurrent, and are about the same two protagonists who confide in each other, while drinking the beer they have stolen. It is Steve who starts talking about his traumatic experience when he served as a British soldier during the Falklands War. Steve's trauma has conjured up Robert's trauma, and thereby has impelled Robert to tell Steve about his being deserted by his wife Yvonne and daughter Laura. Robert's reaction is a fair illustration of the *multidirectionality* of traumatic experiences. Rothberg employs this concept to refer to how the trauma of one person evokes the traumas of other individuals, and thereby creates "a psychically and socially relational intimacy among people" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 92).

Apart from being an instance of *multidirectionality*, the unmarked segment has an unusual syntax, as it is made up of three truncated sentences whose common subject (Steve) is

omitted. The reason why these sentences are introduced in this way is arguably to echo the *depersonalisation* from which Steve suffers because of his war experience. As will be detailed in the subsequent chapter, depersonalisation is one of the main symptoms of traumatic neuroses, and it chiefly involves a trauma victim's intermittent loss of her sense of self (American Psychiatric Association 272). Thus, it can be said that the subjectless sentences of the unmarked passage mimic Steve's loss of subjectivity (depersonalisation) when recollecting his trauma.

Likewise, the boldfaced segment is marked by certain unwonted properties. This includes the direct speech about Robert's confession which is without the main speech marker, namely quotation marks. The omission of this marker blurs boundaries between the choral narrator's description and Robert's speech. It also turns Robert's statement into the reader's own, which, according to the English literature professor Ralf Hertel, is typical of narratives where speech markers are deleted (Hertel 96). Following this argumentation, one can conjecture that the omission of quotation marks in the boldfaced segment makes readers internalise Robert's voice. Subsequently, readers vividly experience Robert's pain as if it were their own, which typifies how traumatic memories are contagious.

The boldfaced segment also has an uncommon punctuation, in that it is made up of four sentences unmarked by any full stop. The absence of this sign speeds up the reading pace, which in turn, mimics Robert's psychological state when remembering the traumatic episodes. This is because, as earlier indicated, the recollection of such disturbing events conjures overwhelming emotion, which causes considerable excitement, and eventually leads to abnormal behaviour, including *speech pressure*. Psychologists understand 'speech pressure' to mean the core syndrome of certain intense emotional states in which many a neurotic person produces an unrelenting speech without pauses when reminded of her eerie experiences (Gawlik 7). Thus, it can be said that the absence of full stops in the last segment evokes Robert's speech pressure, namely his propensity to speak with urgency about his trauma because of the intense emotion his recollection of such a painful experience generates.

Rhyming with the boldfaced segment, the italicised segment consists of three sentences set off by commas and not full stops, which speeds up the reading pace. This segment also comprises an unwonted structure, namely a 'Which' clause set off from its main clause by a full stop. This structure is not specific to this segment, but rather punctuates all of the author's

fiction.[67] In the present case, it can be interpreted in two different ways, the first being cinematic. Indeed, the main clause of the complex sentence arguably renders a wide shot of Steve and Robert while stealing the beer cans. The full stop following this clause arguably performs a jump cut, the cinematic technique which, as has been established, is employed to break the continuity of a shot or a scene (Chandler 230). As regards the 'Which' clause, it debatably carries out an extreme wide shot of both Steve and Robert while running away through the city after stealing the man's beer. According to this reading, the boldfaced segment is introduced as a fragmented series of two distinct types of shot. In its fragmentation, this segment debatably simulates traumatic memories, including those of Robert and Steve. This stems from the fact that such memories, as has been indicated, usually manifest themselves to the human consciousness as a series of fragmented flashbacks.

The second possible interpretation of the 'Which' clause is purely psychoanalytic. Being splintered from its main clause, this clause conceivably mimics traumatic memories, including those of Robert and Steve. This is because, as has been indicated, such memories, much like the 'Which' clause, usually endure as splintered entities—mental phenomena that do not fit into the inclusive structure of the ego.

Similar to the 'Which' clause, the narrative structure of the latter passage imitates, among other things, traumatic memory. This is due to the fact that the three segments forming this passage are introduced in an anachronic and therefore inconsistent manner. Thus, the way these segments are introduced arguably simulates the way a traumatic memory manifests itself to the human consciousness as an inconsistent representation of a disconcerting past.

In short, the last passage is marked by many unwonted properties, including its anachrony. Subsequently, readers struggle always belatedly to build up a workable whole from the jumble of the passage's obscure elements, which is perfectly in line with Laplanche's conception of *afterwardsness*—the belated impact of an interpersonal trauma (Laplanche, *Problématiques* 171). Accordingly, it can be advanced that the unusual narrative constituents of the latter passage aim to put readers in the same psychological state as that of victims of

[67] This unwonted syntactic construction is one of the hallmarks of McGregor's fiction, as it peppers all of his writings. It is used once in *If Nobody Speaks* (*INSRT* 253), three times in *So Many Ways* (*SMWB* 27, 195, 309), thirty-four times in *Even the Dogs* (*ED* 23*2, 27, 28*2, 32, 33, 39, 41, 44*2, 45, 58*2, 60, 65, 70, 74, 76, 81, 91, 92, 93, 103, 106, 122, 134, 135*2, 142, 153, 157, 158, 171), thirty-eight time in *This Isn't the Sort of Things* (*TISTHSLY* 48, 82, 83*2, 85, 88, 89, 93, 97, 99*2, 105, 112, 119*2, 120*2, 121*2, 124, 126, 127, 128*4, 160, 164, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171*2, 174, 177, 226, 242), six times in *Reservoir13* (*Reservoir* 5, 11, 34, 73, 196, 231), and three times in *The Reservoir Tapes* (*TRT* 60, 83, 157).

interpersonal traumas, and thereby epitomise how such traumas are contagious, which, as earlier indicated, is one of the uncanny forms traumatic memory assumes.

The fact that trauma can readily be transmitted from one individual to another is also buttressed by McGregor's *Reservoir13*. As already mentioned, this novel centres on the disappearance of the thirteen-year-old girl Rebecca Shaw from an unnamed village in the Peak District. Such an eerie event has disrupted the lives of the village's dwellers, who inadvertently "allow [themselves] to be overcome by a grief which is not [theirs]," as they become vicariously traumatised by the trauma of the girl's parents (*Reservoir* 7). This is evidenced by many of the novel's passages, including the ensuing fragment:

> There was a **guilt** in just walking the hills with the sun blazing down and some people worked harder than others to not let that **guilt** keep them away. It helped to avoid the path past the Hunter place*, was a feeling*. The girl's mother was still there. **She was rarely seen but her presence was felt**.
>
> (*Reservoir* 45-6, emphasis and boldface added)

This excerpt includes three elements that show how the inhabitants of the anonymous village are traumatised by the girl's disappearance, a trauma which is originally not theirs but rather that of the girl's parents. The first element is the dwellers' sense of 'guilt' for the girl's disappearance, which is symptomatic of traumatic neuroses. Indeed, many traumatised individuals are usually haunted by an overwhelming sense of guilt, because they are unable to accept the necessity and unavoidability of what happened to them (Caruth, *Trauma* 87). Thus, the character's feeling of guilt suggests, among other things, that they are contaminated by the trauma of Rebecca's parents.

As regards the second element of the passage that demonstrates the interpersonal nature of the characters' trauma, it is the italicised clause. This clause is not only devoid of a subject, but also lacks a coordinating conjunction showing the causal connection between this clause and the one preceding it. The absence of causality that the italicised clause shows can be rendered in two distinct ways. The first possible reading is that it mimics a traumatic occurrence which, by dint of the cathected memory whereby it presents itself, is always experienced as a simultaneity. This, as already explained, means that such an occurrence remains causally unrelated to a trauma victim's past, and is therefore experienced through recollection as an event that keeps happening, each time as if for the first time. Accordingly, it can be propounded that the italicised clause's lack of causality is a metaphor for the acausal nature of traumas, including that of the novel's characters. This clause can also be imitating the narrative a trauma victim

produces when reminded of her distressful past, as such a narrative is usually infested by non-sequiturs. This is due to the fact that a traumatic event gains an ineffable meaning by the intense emotion it always triggers, and therefore cannot be transmuted into a coherent narrative. Taking this into consideration, it can be advanced that the lack of causality the italicised clause shows reflects the characters' inability to transmute Rebecca's disappearance into a causally determined narrative, which, in turn, mirrors their being traumatised by such an event.

With regard to the third and last element of the latter passage that evinces how the characters are haunted by an interpersonal trauma, it is encapsulated in the boldfaced segment. In this segment, Rebecca's mother is said to be rarely seen, but latently present in the anonymous village. The way in which the mother is described corresponds perfectly to the way in which traumatic memory intermittently persists as a latent mental phenomenon—a mental phenomenon breathing its spirit into many untraumatic experiences, while remaining concealed. In this regard, it can be said that the reason why the mother is described as a latent presence is to make her a metaphor for the traumatic memory her daughter's disappearance has generated, a latent memory that haunts all of the unnamed village's dwellers.

In the same manner, the recurring updates on Rebecca's case that intermittently and abruptly emerge throughout the novel clearly illustrate how Rebecca's disappearance grows into a contagious phenomenon affecting all of the dwellers of the unnamed village. Among these updates, the subsequent fragment features prominently:

> There were dreams about ***her*** walking home**.** Walking beside the motorway, walking across the moor, walking up out of one of the reservoirs, rising from the dark grey water with her hair streaming and her clothes draped with long green weeds.
>
> (*Reservoir* 19, emphasis added)

Both this excerpt's form and content clearly illustrate how the novel's characters are fixated on Rebecca's disappearance. In terms of its content, this excerpt is about the recurrent nightmares the characters have of Rebecca, which is characteristic of traumatic neuroses. This is because, and as has been stated, one of the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses is recurring nightmares of a trauma victim's frightening past experiences. However, in the present case, the characters have nightmares about an event that belongs not to their biographies, but to those of the girl's parents. This, once again, exemplifies how these characters are affected by a trauma which is not theirs, hence the contagious nature of such an event.

In terms of its formal properties, the passage comprises three elements that arguably echo the characters' interpersonal trauma. The first is the third-person objective pronoun ('her') employed to allude to Rebecca, which is typical of trauma narratives. In fact, and as has been highlighted, trauma victims usually avert to their traumas by way of certain circumlocutions, including through the use of pronouns. This is because they usually conceive of their traumas as gruesome events to which no name can be adequately attached. In this respect, it can be said that the reason why the last passage averts to Rebecca by means of an objective pronoun is to suggest that the novel's characters are also traumatised by her disappearance.

The second property of the passage which typifies that the characters of the novel are traumatised by Rebecca's disappearance is the use of the passive voice. Such a syntactic structure can be seen as a metaphor for the passivity of trauma victims before their traumas, as these individuals relive their disconcerting past experiences compulsively and without respite, whether they are awake or asleep. Thus, being in the passive voice, the passage simulates the passivity of the novel's characters before Rebecca's disappearance, and thereby evinces their being traumatised by such an event.

The third and last aspect of the previous passage that mirrors the interpersonal nature of the characters' trauma is the unwonted syntactic structure of the sentence that makes up this passage. The main clause of this sentence is set off from its subordinate clauses by a full stop. One possible interpretation why the subordinate part of this sentence is splintered from its main part is to mimic traumatic memory which usually endures as a splintered psyche that cannot be integrated into the ego. Accordingly, the uncommon syntactic structure of the previous passage exemplifies how Rebecca's disappearance has grown into a splintered mental phenomenon that haunts the novel's characters whether they are awake or asleep.

Akin to the last passage, many short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* are marked by certain unwonted properties. As has been pointed out, most of these short stories have two elements in common. The first is their backdrop, since they are all set in the Fens, while the second is their theme, as they all hinge on the traumatic experiences of their protagonists. Another typical property among many of these short stories is their atypical narrative structure, as they open *in medias res*, and end without a clear resolution. Such a narrative structure is arguably in the service of retaining a sense of the impossibility of any totalising representation, and thereby can be seen as a metaphor for traumatic memories, including those of the

short stories' characters. This is because, and as has been established, such memories, much like this narrative structure, are refractory to any totalising representations.

On account of their aforementioned narrative structure, many short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* resist closure and, as such, force readers to confabulate a workable whole—to imagine how these short stories could have begun and would end. As already indicated, confabulation is among the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses, and it involves a trauma victim's unwitting replacement of gaps in her traumatic memory by falsified details. Accordingly, it can be said that the unconventional narrative structure of many of the author's short stories makes the reader, to some extent, traumatised. This shows, yet again, how traumatic memories are contagious—transmissible, among other things, from a trauma narrative to its reader—hence the uncanny nature of such memories.

Another shared element among some of McGregor's short stories is their second person narratives. This includes "We Wave and Call," a story about a young man who realises, while attempting to swim to the shore, that he is dragged by the current further out to sea (*TISTHSLY* 130-43). This upsetting occurrence is woven through a narrative whose narrator refers to herself in the second person 'you.' The use of such a pronoun lures readers into thinking that they are addressed surreptitiously, commands their active engagement, and thereby impels them to experience the panic the young man feels while struggling for his life. Considering this, it can be advanced that the short story's second person narrative evinces how a trauma narrative can make its readers vicariously experience the eerier experiences it reports, which epitomises the transmissibility of such experiences.

As demonstrated above, McGregor's fiction is peppered with certain unwonted narrative ingredients, including splintered subordinate clauses, direct speech unmarked by speech markers and second person narratives. By means of these elements, the author's narratives epitomise how traumatic memories are contagious, which is one of the uncanny aspects such memories assume. In their uncanniness, these narratives not only demonstrate how traumatic memories are transmissible from one character to another, but also turn readers into secondary witnesses—individuals contaminated by the characters' traumas. Accordingly, it can be said that the author's narratives destabilise the subjectivity of the reader who, faced with narrative and figurative techniques that force a vivid confrontation with traumatic material, becomes unwittingly responsive to the author's traumatised characters—inadvertently suffering for their sufferings—hence the ethical yield of these narratives.

Since this subchapter has tackled the contagious aspect of traumatic memory, it cannot be closed without addressing a similarly contagious phenomenon that has, to some extent, traumatised the entire world—coronavirus. At the moment of writing these words, coronavirus has contracted 2 306 016 people around the world, among whom 158 028 died. It has spared no one, as it has affected individuals of different sex, ages, social classes, ethnicities, and countries. Although microscopic and therefore invisible, the virus has grown into a looming threat—a latent phenomenon which, much like the uncanny aspect of traumatic memory, acts as a harbinger of death. Hopefully, this virus will open people's eyes to their inherent vulnerability, and thereby will make them considerate of other vulnerable beings all over the world. This is corroborated by McGregor's fiction which, as will be illustrated in the sixth chapter, shows how traumatic memories are a form of *excendance*, in Levinas's acceptance of the word, i.e. impulsions towards openness to the alterity of the beings of the world (Levinas, *Cultural* 54).

Chapter 5
The Collapse of Self-identity

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, McGregor's fiction shows three uncanny aspects traumatic memory assumes. The first is paradoxical phenomenality, i.e. the way in which traumatic memory manifests itself to consciousness as both being and not being the eerie event it re-presents. This finds expression in many of McGregor's narratives where the author employs certain unwonted narrative elements, including paratactic sentences and hybrid reported speech, in order to render some cinematic techniques, such as jump cut and superimposition. By way of these techniques, the author shows how traumatic memory takes on an extremely ambiguous conscious form, and thereby hides even while revealing the disquieting past it retains, hence the paradoxical phenomenality of such a mental representation.

Another uncanny aspect of traumatic memory is its latency, since, even when below the threshold of consciousness, such a memory still breathes its eerie content into some seemingly untraumatic conscious forms. This is exemplified by McGregor's fiction where the author scarcely makes any overt mention of his characters' traumas. Instead, these frightening events are mostly demonstrated surreptitiously through certain metaphors, including the number thirteen in McGregor's *Reservoir13*. By way of these metaphors, the author epitomises that a traumatic memory nowise infrequently finds expression in some untraumatic representations, hence the latent character of such a memory.

Alongside its latency, another uncanny property of traumatic memory is its being contagious. This is epitomised by many of the author's unusual narrative elements, notably 'splintered' subordinate clauses and direct speech unmarked by quotation marks. By means of these elements, the narratives not only show how some of their characters become vicariously traumatised by other characters' traumas, but also turn many a reader into a secondary witness—an individual traumatised by the characters' traumas. Accordingly, McGregor's fiction clearly illustrates how traumatic memory is a transmissible mental phenomenon, hence the uncanniness of such a memory.

Given its uncanny character, and as has been specified, traumatic memory remains in excess of consciousness, the interface whereby intrapsychic and physical objects become present to the ego, which is why such a memory remains largely unknown to the ego. And since the unknown evokes emotion, traumatic memory conjures up intense emotion, and thereby turns

into a *double*. As briefly noted, Rank understands the 'double' to mean the way in which traumatic memory endures as an alter ego—another 'I' that persists side by side with the ego. Acting as a double, traumatic memory manifests itself in dreams, among other things, as a *self-replica*, i.e. it takes on the same physical appearance as that of the traumatised individual (Rank, *The Double* 30). In extreme cases, however, traumatic memory grows into a conscious reality—a ubiquitous rival that haunts the affected person even when she is awake (Rank, *The Double* 33).[68] This is clearly illustrated in several fictional works, such as in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Hanns Heinz Ewers's film *The Student of Prague*. In Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the double is embodied in the self-portrait of the novel's protagonist Dorian Gray, and it serves as an omnipresent reminder of the badgering memories and the dark thoughts that Dorian is unable to assimilate or even to repress. Eventually, the double pushes the protagonist into committing suicide. In the same manner, Balduin, the protagonist of Ewers's *The Student of Prague*, ends up killing himself, when attempting to shoot down his irksome double. This stems from the fact that Balduin, like Wilde's Dorian Gray, does not conceive of his double as a splintered part of his own psyche. Instead, he experiences it as a foe—an external other ruining his entire existence. Likewise, and as has been shown, many an uncommon element of McGregor's fiction, including hanging paragraphs and the twins motif in *If Nobody Speaks*, shows how the traumatic memories of the author's characters endure as a double.

Because it persists as a double, traumatic memory ineluctably entails a critical disturbance of the backbone of the ego—its self-identity. As has been demonstrated, self-identity is a mental phenomenon made up of the objects with which the ego either positively or negatively identifies. This mental phenomenon castrates, to some extent, otherness. This, as already illustrated, is because it shapes the ego's conception of the world, and thereby results in the ego having a more or less predetermined and fixed conception of each and every other.

It is worth noting that the ego's perception of the Other determines its perception of itself, as emphasised by French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty when he stated that "man is mirror for man" (Merleau-Ponty 168). Accordingly, it can be advanced that, by fixing the ego's conception of the Other, self-identity also fixes the ego's conception of itself. However, as previously explained, self-identity is not an immutable mental phenomenon, as it is readily

[68] In primitive people as in children, the double stands as a bulwark against the idea of death. "But when this primeval stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect," as it becomes a harbinger of death and destruction (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 235).

unsettled by traumatic memory. Subsequently, such a memory also unsettles the ego's conception of both itself and the Other. The disruptive effect of traumatic memory upon the ego's perception of the Other is called *derealisation*, and it involves the "[p]ersistent or recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings (e.g., the world around the individual is experienced as unreal, dreamlike, distant, or distorted)" (American Psychiatric Association 272). As regards the disruptive effect of traumatic memory upon the ego's perception of itself, it is termed *depersonalisation*, and it consists in "[p]ersistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from, and as if one were an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body (e.g., feeling as though one were in a dream; feeling a sense of unreality of self or body or of time moving slowly)" (American Psychiatric Association 272).

In view of what has been said, it will be shown in the present chapter how many components of McGregor's narratives epitomise derealisation and depersonalisation, the two symptomatic expressions of the critical disturbance traumatic memory causes to the traumatised person's self-identity. This chapter bifurcates into a first part where it will be displayed how McGregor's fiction is rife with certain narrative and figurative techniques, most notably what Genette has defined as *narrative metalepsis*. By means of these techniques, the author's narratives "paradoxically use and abuse the conventions of realism," the artistic movement which is presumed to represent life as it actually is (Hutcheon 53). In doing so, and as will be detailed, these narratives become conducive to derealisation, and thereby reflect how their traumatised characters intermittently lose track of reality. As for the second part of this chapter, it is about other narrative components typical of McGregor's fiction, particularly impersonal narrators. As will be evinced, these elements are debatably employed in order to show how traumatic memory engenders depersonalisation which, along with derealisation, is the outcome of traumatic memory's disruption of the traumatised person's self-identity.

1. Derealisation: Conflation of Fiction and Reality

Many critics, including David Wiegand and Julie Myerson, conceive of McGregor's fiction as a celebration of the ordinary, which is also the key characteristic of realism. Writers associated with this artistic flow produce narratives which, albeit apparently distinct, still have common properties, including psychological motivation (*motivation psychologique*) (Hamon 136). The French essayist and literary critic Philippe Hamon understands this to mean the way in which the demeanour of characters from realist fiction appears to be true to life

(Hamon 136).[69] Alongside psychological motivation, Hamon lists fourteen other properties by virtue of which realist narratives are presented as readable discourses (*discours lisible*)—coherent discourses that presumably duplicate reality (Hamon 135-81).

As will be illustrated in the present subchapter, many of the properties Hamon identifies as particular to realist discourses are also specific to McGregor's narratives. That is why these narratives seem *prima facie* in line with realism, which is actually far from being the case. This is because, although McGregor's narratives dwell on ordinary details of reality and therefore tie in with realist discourses, they do not give readable and therefore transparent representations of these details. Instead, and as illustrated in the first part of the thesis, the author's fiction presents the mundane details of everyday life as extramundane phenomena. This is underscored by the author himself when he stated in an interview while commenting on *Even the Dogs*: "This is a realist story told from a nonrealist perspective" (Alexander 740).

In light of what has been said, it becomes apparent that McGregor's narratives dissolve the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary, and to some extent between reality and fiction. In doing so, these narratives tap into postmodern culture whose hallmark is, as *per* the Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon, the blurring of the borders between fiction and reality in order to challenge partisans of realism who claim that reality is transparent and therefore duplicable (Hutcheon 37-56). Although McGregor's fiction fits in many ways into the postmodernist tradition, it is still distinguished by the author's idiosyncratic narrative and figurative techniques which evoke, among other things, derealisation—the overwhelming feeling of the unreality of surroundings many a trauma victim intermittently endures. Relying on this statement, it will be demonstrated in this subchapter how, owing to certain of its distinctive elements, McGregor's narratives obliterate the borders between fiction and reality, and thereby transgress realist conventions of transparency. In doing so, these narratives favour derealisation which, as already postulated, is the symptomatic outcome of traumatic memory's disruption of the traumatised person's self-identity.

Among McGregor's narratives that conflate fiction and reality is the first narrative thread from *If Nobody Speaks* which hinges on the collective trauma of the dwellers of an unnamed street whose lives are abruptly disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of

[69] According to Hamon, the fifteen properties he lists are an approximate characterisation of realistic discourses. This is because none of them is really necessary, nor together are they quite sufficient to account for a specific discourse as realist (Hamon 166).

their neighbour's twin sons. In the same breath with McGregor's other narratives, this narrative strand has many properties particular to realist discourses, especially mega History (*mega Histoire*). Hamon understands this to mean the many references to elements of reality which permeate realist discourses, including the names of popular places and/or individuals (Hamon 136-7). According to Hamon, these elements enhance the realistic aspect of realist discourses, and thereby make them appear to be transparent representations of reality. Following suit with realist discourses, the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* is dotted with allusions to leading figures, including the three renowned Pakistani cricketers Wasim Akram, Mohammad Younis Khan and Imran Khan (*INSRT* 146). Likewise, the street where the events of the narrative take place respects the criteria of realist discourse. This is because, although this street is kept unnamed, the way in which it is depicted makes it map neatly onto the actual cityscape of one of England's metropolitan cities.

Even though permeated with many realist properties, the present narrative strand is far from being mediated through a realistic discourse. This is made manifest by the passage where the young couple from number twenty-one and the father of the twins from number nineteen watch one of Anthea Turner's television programmes:

> Outside, down in the street, a dog barks, a door slams, the tricycle clatters along the cracked paving slabs. A cup of tea and two pieces of toast sorry? he says, and she smiles and claps her hands and says oh yes please how nice of you to offer. He smiles sarcastically at her, dropping the tissues in the bin, pulling on a pair of jeans and leaving the room.
>
> *She picks the remote control off the floor and flicks on the TV, sitting up in bed and watching someone stirring scrambled eggs and saying now back to you Anthea.*
>
> **In the darkened front room of number nineteen, Anthea looks out into the sleepy eyes of a short hairless man with a very round belly.**
>
> (*INSRT* 99, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

The passage opens with an establishing shot made up of a series of narrative snapshots (paratactic sentences) about the unnamed street from outside. The establishing shot is abruptly followed by a close-up of '[a] cup of tea and two pieces of toast,' and a direct speech unmarked by speech markers (underlined). The lack of coherence between the close-up shot and those preceding it makes readers lose their bearings. This is further exacerbated by the direct speech ('sorry?') which, on account of its lack of speech markers, lures readers into thinking that they are addressed surreptitiously. Subsequently, readers abruptly feel that they become part of the fictitious world of the novel.

The rest of the passage does not give any solace to readers who are whisked between two alternating shots, each capturing one of the young couple while addressing the other. The last of these narrative shots (italicised) involves a *metadiegesis*, as it brings in a television program presented by the famous English presenter Anthea Turner.[70] By alluding to this renowned television presenter, the italicised segment imbues the passage in which it is embedded with some realistic aura.

However, and to the reader's consternation, Anthea is reintroduced in the boldfaced segment as an intradiegetic character, looking 'into the sleepy eyes of a short hairless man' from number nineteen. Subsequently, this segment produces a *narrative metalepsis*, understood by Genette to mean "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse" (*Narrative Discourse* 235). According to Genette, what is most troubling about metalepsis is "this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic, and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative" (*Narrative Discourse* 236). Following from Genette's statement, it can be assumed that the metaleptic twist produced by the boldfaced segment evokes a deep sense of alienation, as it makes the reader experience reality as *provisional*—easily susceptible to merge with fiction.

Another remarkable feature of the last passage is its typography, including the typography of the italicised segment which is set as an independent paragraph with negative indentation. One plausible interpretation of this segment's typography can be to signal a short jump cut. The same, presumably, goes for the boldfaced segment, as it is set as an independent paragraph demarcated by double spacing, and therefore performs, among other things, a long jump cut. Accordingly, it can be propounded that the latter passage is introduced as a fragmented series of disparate shots, and thereby gives an incoherent version of the scenes it reports, which is at odds with realist conventions.

In short, the previous passage is sprinkled with elements of the real world, including ordinary characters, which is a key element of realist discourse. However, this passage employs these realistic components only to transgress the conventions on which realism rests, since it is chiefly peppered with unconventional narrative ingredients, including uneven typography, reported speech unmarked by speech markers and narrative metalepsis. By way of these

[70] Genette understands 'metadiegesis' to mean "a narrative in the second degree," i.e. a narrative within the main narrative (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 228).

techniques, the passage infringes realist conventions of transparency, merges fiction and reality, and therefore presents reality as provisional—readily susceptible to conflate with fantasy. Faced with such narrative and figurative techniques, readers inadvertently lose track of reality, and thereby disputably experience a feeling of derealisation—the deep sense of the unreality of surroundings which, as already indicated, is a symptomatic manifestation of traumatic memory's unhinging of the traumatised individual's self-identity. Accordingly, it can be advanced that the unwonted elements of the passage elicit derealisation, and therefore make readers experience the same feeling as to the unreality of surroundings that the characters of this passage, along with the other inhabitants of the unnamed street, supposedly go through when witnessing the car accident.

In the same vein, the opening scene of the same narrative strand arguably favours derealisation. In this scene, the incorporeal narrator describes the unnamed city in the early hours of the day when the traumatic car accident takes place:

> If **you** li**s**ten, **you** can hear it.
> The **c**ity, it **s**ings.
> . . .
> The low **s**oothing hum of air-conditioners, fanning out the heat and the **s**mells of shops and cafes and offi**c**e**s** acro**ss** the **c**ity, winding up and winding down, *long breaths layered upon each other*, a lullaby hum for tired **s**treet**s**.
> . . .
> **And** all the alarms, *calling for help*, each di**s**trict and quarter, each **s**treet and e**s**tate, each every way you turn has alarms going off, coming on, going off, coming on . . . *crying* their needs to the night like an under**s**taffed orphanage, *babies waawaa-ing* in darkened wards.
>
> (*INSRT* 1-2, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

Much like the rest of the narrative in which it is embedded, this scene primarily dwells on the minutiae of the anonymous city. In doing so, it squares with realist discourses which, as *per* Hamon, mainly focuses on concrete rather than fantastic details in order to enhance the reader's illusion of being directly confronted with some part of reality (Hamon 162-6). Nevertheless, and unlike realist discourses, the last scene personifies the trifling details of everyday life (italicised), in that it depicts them as breathing, 'calling for help' and 'crying' like 'babies waawaaing.' Subsequently, these inanimate phenomena appear to be *actants*, in Bennett's acceptance of the term, i.e. living beings which have "efficacy, can do things, have sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events" (Bennett viii). What also makes the city's phenomena look like actants are the verbal forms employed to depict them (underlined). Being all action verbs in the active voice, these verbal forms suggest, among other

things, that the city's minutiae are as active as any human being, which does not correspond to the reader's conception of the physical world where inanimate objects are mostly governed by mechanical laws of physics, and are therefore not so much extraordinary as ordinary. That is why it can be postulated that the reason why the last scene presents mundane phenomena as lively is to reflect the way the novel's traumatised protagonists perceive reality because of their collective traumatic memory. Indeed, and as indicated in the first part of the thesis, such a memory generates intense emotion which, in turn, transmutes many an ordinary conscious representation into an extraordinary phenomenon. In this regard, it can be concluded that the way in which the inanimate phenomena in the previous scene are portrayed as vibrant mimics the psychological reality of the novel's characters who, under the thrall of their cathected traumatic memories, inadvertently project upon non-living entities of their city the anguish they experience on account of the traumatic car accident they have witnessed. Eventually, these characters end up perceiving these lifeless entities as lively: 'crying' and 'calling for help' as if they were human beings. In light of this interpretation, it can be put forward that the latter scene verges on the fiction of modernist writers, notably Woolf and Joyce. This is because it presents the human conception of reality, much like these writers do, as chiefly subjective—governed not so much by objective laws as by the psychological state of each individual.

Alongside its personification of the unnamed city's minutiae, the last scene is marked by both its alliteration and consonance on the /s/ sound (underlined and boldfaced), which accounts for the musicality of such a scene. As underlined in the first part of the thesis, musicality ineluctably evokes emotion which, in turn, imbues objects with *numinosity*, in Jung's understanding of the word, i.e. paramount psychological value (Jung, *Man* 96). Accordingly, it can be advanced that the alliteration on /s/ in the latter scene makes the cacophonous sounds emitted by many of the city's phenomena sound musical to the reader's ears. Subsequently, these phenomena conjure up emotion, gain numinosity, and eventually look extraordinary. In this respect, it can be said that the fashion in which the trivial details of the anonymous city are portrayed unhinges the reader's preconception of the world, and therefore evokes derealisation, which is usually typical of the disruptive effect traumatic memory causes to the trauma victim's self-identity.

Other constituents of the previous scene which contestably elicit derealisation are its uncommon textual and paratextual properties. This includes the Left Dislocation Construction ('The city, it sings'), the coordinating conjunction 'And' at the beginning of a paragraph

(boldfaced), and paratactic and verbal clauses superimposed upon one another. These uncommon elements are arguably defamiliarising techniques by means of which the last scene leaves the reader estranged from any clear sense of reality, which is what trauma victims usually experience when reminded of their disconcerting accidents.

The reader's alienation is further exacerbated by the use of the second-person pronoun, as such a pronoun tempts readers into thinking that they themselves are furtively addressed, and therefore lures them into feeling part of the fictive world of the novel. Thus, it can be suggested that the way this pronoun is employed in the last scene abolishes the borders between fiction and reality.

In light of what has been demonstrated concerning the opening scene of the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, it becomes evident that this passage dwells on the minutiae of everyday life, which is also the mainstay of realism. However, and in contradiction to realist discourses, this scene employs many a narrative technique, so as to make the ordinary details of everyday life look extraordinary. In doing so, the scene does not simply subvert the realist conception of reality as tantamount to the mundane—that which can be readily duplicated. Rather, it also estranges readers from any clear sense of reality, and eventually makes them lose their bearings. The effect the scene has upon readers is usually particular to traumatic memory which, as has been established, disrupts the traumatised person's self-identity, and therefore eventuates in a deep sense of derealisation.

After the fashion of the last scene, many other passages from the second narrative thread of the same novel are debatably conducive to derealisation. As already indicated, this narrative strand is related by the girl from number twenty-two, a former inhabitant of the anonymous street who accidentally falls pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. Her accidental pregnancy has evoked many memories associated with her past trauma when she witnessed the car accident of one of her former neighbours' twin sons. Among these memories is her vivid recollection of the experience she had when Simon, one of her former neighbours in the anonymous street, calls her in order to show her the moon:

> I remembered the time Simon had called me through to his room, saying look out of the window, a dark night and the moon was bright and crisp away to the left, a thin crescent like a clipped fingernail. And he'd said no but check this out, look over there, look over that way.
> *Pointing away to the right, to a second moon as bright and crisp as the first.*

> I'd looked at him, and he'd giggled and said how mad is that. I'd looked at the two moons, each as clean and thin and new as each other, the same size, like twins of each other.
>
> (*INSRT* 25-6, emphasis added).

This excerpt comprises four elements which are arguably employed as a metaphor for the girl's accidental pregnancy. The first is the typography of the excerpt which, akin to the rest of the girl's narrative thread, is made up of hanging paragraphs. As already postulated, each of these paragraphs has its first line protruding from the main body of the text, and therefore debatably emulates the girl's protruding stomach because of her pregnancy.

The second element of the passage that simulates the girl's pregnancy is debatably the splintered subordinate clause (italicised). This uncommon syntactic structure can be interpreted in two distinct ways. The first is purely psychological, as this splintered structure can be seen as a metaphor for traumatic memory, including that of the girl, which usually persists as a splintered psyche. The second interpretation is cinematic, as the reason why the subordinate clause is severed from its main clause can be to signal a jump cut. Based on this reading, it can be said that the splintered subordinate clause and its main clause are presented as an interrupted and therefore incoherent series of two shots. Thus, these two clauses can simulate traumatic memory, including the girl's traumatic pregnancy; as such a memory is unusually reexperienced through recollection as a fragmented and therefore incoherent series of flashbacks (van der Kolk, "Dissociation" 518).

As regards the third element of the passage that imitates the girl's accidental pregnancy, it is its lack of one of the main speech markers—quotation marks. Being devoid of this punctuation, the passage not only dissolves the borders between description and speech, but also between characters and readers. This is because, and as previously mentioned, the omission of speech markers turns "the voice of the protagonists into the reader's own, inner voices" (Hertel 209). Thus, readers abruptly feel part of the fictive world of the novel, which debatably generates a feeling of derealisation, the very feeling the girl presumably endures when remembering her accidental pregnancy.

Eventually, the fourth element of this passage that can be regarded as figuring out the girl's pregnancy is the motif of the 'twin' moons. The 'second moon' in this excerpt turns out to be the reflection of the moon on Simon's window. However, this does not demystify the passage, as the twin moons can be seen as a highly symbolic motif. Notable is the fact that, in

many traditions, including Hinduism, the moon symbolises, among other things, motherhood (Akujobi 1). In this regard, it can be advanced that the 'twin' moons in the last passage are an omen portending the girl's pregnancy with twins three years before that actually happens. Accordingly, one can postulate that the twin moons motif evokes *the law of participation*, understood by the French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl to mean the superstitious conception of the world common among the primitives (Lévy-Bruhl 69-104). Relying on this reading, it is fair to propound that the twin moons motif makes the reader experience a pang of superstition, and thereby favours derealisation, which is supposedly what the girl feels when reminded of her pregnancy.

In light of what has been illustrated in the last passage, it becomes evident that this passage comprises four unwonted elements: hanging paragraphs, a splintered subordinate clause, direct speech unmarked by quotation marks and the twin moons motif. Each of these elements stands as a metaphor for the girl's pregnancy, and therefore epitomises how her accidental pregnancy endures as a *present absent*—a latent phenomenon that shines through certain untraumatic forms. As has been illustrated, the latency of traumatic memory is one of the modalities of the creation and manifestation of the uncanny. By persisting as a latent phenomenon, the girl's pregnancy effaces the borders between the present and the absent, and thereby arguably makes readers experience a sense of derealisation which, as has been specified, is usually the outcome of traumatic memory's critical disturbance of the traumatised individual's self-identity.

Derealisation is also triggered by many components of McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, including its setting. As already mentioned, the backdrop of this collection of short stories is the Fenlands, the rural areas that extend across Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire in the east of England. Such a realistic setting at first gives the impression that McGregor's short stories are in line with realist discourses. However, this is not the case, as the way in which the Fens are described throughout the short stories makes them appear as a liminal space between earth, sky and water. This is emphasised by the English professor of history and creative writing Ailsa Cox when she states that the Fens, as portrayed in McGregor's short stories, emerge as "mysterious and indefinite in the permeable boundaries between water, earth and sky" (Cox 225). In their characteristic liminality, the Fens debatably imitates traumatic memories, including those of the short stories' characters. This is because such memories, much like the Fens, are liminal, since they belong neither to the conscious nor to the unconscious. Instead,

they are stored in the *subconscious*, the 'liminal' zone of the mind between consciousness and unconsciousness (Janet, "Histoire" 139). On top of this, the way in which McGregor's short stories present the Fens as liminal does not correspond to readers' preconception of the world, and therefore can be seen as promoting derealisation.

Alongside their common setting, many other elements of these short stories are arguably conducive to derealisation. This is most clearly evident in "New York," whose title immediately creates the wrong impression that the short story is set in the American city of New York (*TISTHSLY* 107-12). In fact, when reading the short story, one realises that the New York in question is a hamlet in the Fens. Thus, although the setting of the author's story is a real place and therefore ties in with realism, it still creates confusion and thereby diverts from realist conventions of transparency.

In short, "New York" revolves around two Polish migrant labourers who lost one of their friends in a tragic fire, and it opens as follows:

> Okay. So there are these guys, these two guys, and they're standing by the side of the road, waiting for something. What are they waiting for? We don't know. What they're waiting for? Not yet. That's part of the suspense, okay? Okay.
> (*TISTHSLY* 107)

In this scene, the narrative appears *prima facie* to be an extradiegetic account of an unnamed narrator, who probably recounts a film she watched. When wading further into the short story, however, readers abruptly become aware that the narrative is an intradiegetic account about a film director showing actors how to play the scenes of a film she supervises. This ineluctably produces a narrative metalepsis which, as previously indicated, involves the sudden shift of the narrator and/or one of her narrative's characters from one diegetic level to another (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 235-6).

The confusion the short story generates goes beyond the metaleptic twist it produces, as the way in which the film director describes the two actors gives the impression that they are talking to one another. At the end of the short story, however, the whole of the actors' dialogue turns out to be a voice-over of their thoughts. This, once again, baffles the reader, and can be said to disturb her self-identity—the mental phenomenon whereby one feels "at home with oneself," i.e. in a readily recognisable world (Levinas, *Totality* 39). Accordingly, the short story leads to derealisation, and thereby makes the reader lose her bearings.

On a similar note, many other short stories from the same collection arguably elicit de-realisation. Among these stories is "If It Keeps on Raining," which is about an unnamed man who is haunted by a traumatic accident when he witnessed the death of two children during a football stadium disaster (*TISTHSLY* 57-74). Upon such a traumatic experience, the protagonist develops an apparently insane fascination with an impending cataclysmic flood reminiscent of that of the biblical story of Noah. In preparation for a flood of such epic proportion, he starts the construction of a tree-house and a raft. Although his obsession with the epic flood is ostensibly irrelevant to his trauma, it is in reality a metaphoric expression of such a highly disturbing past. This is because the cataclysmic water surge, much like the football stadium stampede that traumatises this character, produces an unstoppable momentum that sweeps away everything in its path. Accordingly, it becomes evident that the epic water surge in the short story is an *apocalyptic archetype* in which the protagonist's trauma finds expression.

According to Jung, an archetype is a mental form which is not particular to a specific person, and is by no means the intentional creation of the ego. Instead, it is "an aboriginal, innate, and inherited shape of the human mind" which pertains to the archaic history of the entire human race rather than to the biography of a particular person (Jung, *Man* 67).[71] It is likewise worth noting that an archetype is not simply a sign with an obvious and immediate significance. Instead, it is a *symbol*, in Jung's acceptance of the term, i.e. a form that hints at a vague and unknown meaning (Jung, *Man* 20-1).

Relying on Jung's concept of the archetype, it can be advanced that the protagonist's fascination with an impending cataclysmic flood redolent of that of the biblical story of Noah is an archetypal manifestation of his trauma. The reason why such an eerie past finds expression in the archetypal image of Noah's apocalypse is arguably because it has grown into a mental phenomenon so gruesome that it cannot fit in with any mental representation of the protagonist's past, including his mental representation of the traumatic event itself. Thus, the manner in which this short story introduces trauma suggests that the only way to re-present such a deeply disconcerting type of event is through grotesque forms which annul the possibility of representation—which exceed the ability of the human consciousness for representation. In this respect, the present short story combines perfectly with *traumatic realism*, understood by Rothberg to mean "an aesthetic and cognitive solution to the conflicting demands inherent in

[71] This is confirmed by Freud when he states that some dream symbols are not "the dreamer's personal creation" (Rand, *Questions* 16). Instead, these dream symbols pertain to *man's archaic heritage* (Freud, "On Dreams" 5: 549).

representing and understanding genocide. Traumatic realism mediates between the realist and antirealist positions in Holocaust studies and marks the necessity of considering how the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of genocide intersect and coexist" (Rothberg, *Traumatic* 9). Tapping into Rothberg's traumatic realism, one can conjecture that the reason why the protagonist's trauma is re-presented as a conflation of fiction and reality is because it is the most appropriate way to put forward such a horrible and therefore unrepresentable past in representation. Accordingly, one can say that the story's apocalyptic archetype is a paradoxical representation of the protagonist's trauma—a representation that merges fiction and reality, and that thereby does not so much clarify as evoke the deep sense of derealisation such a protagonist endures when remembering his frightening experience.

Just as "If It Keeps on Raining" conjures up derealisation, so does McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*. As earlier mentioned, this novel centres on David Carter, a curator at Coventry museum who is traumatised by accidentally discovering that he was adopted. The very theme of this novel, which is the untraceability of the protagonist's biological past, is at cross purposes with one of the main tenets of realism—heredity (*hérédité*) (Hamon 135-6). Among the many instances of heredity are flashbacks whereby realist writers refer to the ancestral past of their protagonists. According to Hamon, such flashbacks make characters from realist narratives appear to be true to life, and thereby enhance the reader's illusion of being confronted with some part of reality. Nevertheless, and unlike realist discourses, *So Many Ways to Begin* is not dotted with flashbacks, but rather with *imaginary scenarios*. This is most clearly evident in the scene where David tries to imagine his birth mother while giving birth to him:

> A young woman, too young, fifteen or sixteen, *crying* it's no use, I can't do it; one of the nurses *turning* to her, *brushing* her hot damp hair away from her eyes and *saying* yes you can . . . *Covering* her face with her hands and *crying* louder to block them out. **Or** not even *thinking* of giving up . . . *Calling out* for her mother, **or** her eldest sister, **or** her father . . . **Or** perhaps even in the middle of it all *managing* to keep such a thing to herself.
>
> (*SMWB* 97-8, emphasis and boldface added)

Much like the rest of McGregor's narratives, this scene is without quotation marks, and therefore does not merely obliterate the borders between description and speech. Rather, and as has been indicated, the omission of these punctuation marks also minimises the distance between readers and the voices in the text, and subsequently makes readers internalise these voices. Another possible interpretation of the author's deletion of quotation marks is that it is another instance of his tendency to subvert realism. In fact, the reason why the use of these punctuation

marks has been standardised is due to the drive of certain eighteenth-century writers towards realism.[72] These writers, including Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson, intended to eschew paraphrased reported speech filtered through a narrator (Houston 202). They therefore used quotation marks in order to present readers with their characters' unvarnished words, and thereby to enhance readers' illusion of being confronted with reality (Houston 203). Relying on this historical account of quotation marks, it can be argued that the reason why the author leaves out this punctuation in his entire narratives is to transgress conventional realism, to make readers internalise his characters' voices, and thereby to eliminate the boundaries between fiction and reality. In doing so, he uses Modernist techniques, and thereby edges towards a poetics where the human conception of reality is usually portrayed as a conflation of the objective and the subjective—the factual and the imaginary.

Another remarkable feature of the last scene is its being devoid of any verb showing time, as it is entirely made up of phrases whose verbs are in the present participle (italicised). One plausible rendering of the scene's tenseless clauses is to suggest that such a scene exists outside of time, which is characteristic of traumatic memory. Indeed, and as has been demonstrated in the second chapter of the thesis, traumatic memory is an atemporal phenomenon—a mental representation that cannot be temporalised by the one it affects. Accordingly, it can be propounded that the previous scene's tenseless clauses echo David's traumatic memory which defies his chronological logic, and which therefore remains excised from the ongoing flow of time.

Besides its tenseless clauses, the scene is also distinguished by the use of polysyndeton based on the multiplication of the conjunction 'or' (boldfaced). Such a stylistic device can reflect David's biological origin which remains an unsolved mystery until the end of the novel, and which therefore has not let a beginning germinate. Instead, David is left with 'So Many Ways to Begin'—so many possible origins, hence the use of polysyndeton 'or.' Since one's origin is debatably the cornerstone of one's self identity, it can be argued that David's inability to trace back his origin ineluctably disrupts his self-identity—the mental phenomenon which allows the ego to have a firmly grounded sense of self. As has been demonstrated, the disruption of one's self-identity ineluctably leads to derealisation—the involuntary blurring of fiction and reality, hence David's imaginary scenarios in the last scene.

[72] It is worth noting that the standardised use of quotation marks originated in the eighteenth century's newest form of literature—the novel (Houston 202).

Another plausible rendition of David's imaginary scenarios is that they challenge "the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation" (Hutcheon 92). Accordingly, David's fictionalisation of his biological past belies the historicity of any historical account, as it suggests that such an account is essentially an imaginative reconstruction of the past—a combination of facts and fiction. In this regard, it can be said that any historical account is inadequate for a firmly grounded sense of self. In short, the last scene comprises three unusual components: absence of quotation marks, lack of any verb showing time and the use of polysyndeton. By way of these components, the scene shows how David suffers from the disruption of his self-identity—the mainstay of one's self. This, in turn, explains why David falls back on derealisation whereby he compensates for his inability to trace back his biological past by imaginary scenarios.

Akin to the previous scene, many other passages from the novel typify David's identity crisis, including the sixteenth chapter about the day David discovers the truth about his parentage (*SMWB* 89-104). In this chapter, David no longer recognises his foster mother Dorothy, who suddenly looks "smaller than he'd always thought of her as being, and much older" (*SMWB* 93). As will be illustrated in the subsequent chapter, one's mother is the nucleus of one's self-identity, as she is the first person with whom any individual identifies. Thus, David's warped perception of Dorothy after discovering that she is not his birth mother can be seen as reflecting his warped self-identity.

Much like Dorothy, the entire world around David seems abruptly weird, as epitomised by the following narrative fragment from the same chapter: "He had a sudden feeling of the walls of the house being pulled down, and of everyone he knew standing there behind the settling clouds of masonry dust, sniggering and smirking behind their hands" (*SMWB* 94). For most people, one's childhood house usually represents a haven where, as a child, one used to feel safe from the external world. Similarly, and as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, self-identity amounts to a haven which provides any individual with a deep sense of security. Relying on the parallel drawn between self-identity and a childhood house, it can be advanced that the way in which David perceives his childhood house as falling apart is a conscious expression of his self-identity which is similarly falling apart upon his discovering the truth about his parentage. With his self-identity torn apart, David suddenly feels extremely vulnerable, readily susceptible to being hurt. This would explain why, in the last narrative fragment,

David feels that the masons in the building site next to his childhood home are scoffing at him, 'sniggering and smirking behind their hands.'

Relying on the previous narrative fragment, it becomes evident that David suffers from a disruption of his self-identity, which inevitably engenders derealisation. This is underscored by the novel's entire narrative which is structured around certain dated items that David has archived in order to use them in the reconstruction of his biological past. Each of these items, including 'Handwritten list of household items, c.1947' and 'Local map, Whitechapel district, London, annotated, c.1950,' is the fulcrum of one of the novel's chapters. Depicted vividly through hypotyposis, these items seem to have more reality, more depth and authenticity than David himself. This, in turn, can be seen as a metaphor for David's traumatised psyche, as it suggests, among other thing, how this protagonist craves for a firm sense of self-identity, so much so that he unwittingly projects his craving upon inanimate objects, thus imbuing them with an authentic identity. In view of this interpretation, it can be said that the way in which the dated items are portrayed in the novel reflects David's inadvertent conflation between the subjective and the objective—himself and these items. This, in turn, is contestably an instance of David's derealisation because of his traumatic memory—his inability to trace back his biological origin.

The systematic relationship between trauma and derealisation is also corroborated by McGregor's *Reservoir13* which, as aforementioned, hinges on the unsolved disappearance of the thirteen-year-old Rebecca Shaw from an unnamed village in the Peak District. In this novel, Rebecca has grown into a ubiquitous presence, as she becomes the obsession of many of the anonymous village's dwellers, who have recurrent dreams about her coming back safe and sound. This is typical, as many trauma victims cannot assimilate their traumas. That is why they usually fall back on confabulation—the unconscious defence mechanism whereby "the memory of traumatic events is often confabulated with unconscious fantasies, making it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction and making the trauma worse" (Kalsched 71). Accordingly, it can be propounded that, since the dwellers of the village have failed to find the missing girl, they spontaneously resort to confabulation, which is debatably an instance of derealisation.

Like McGregor's other narratives, *Even the Dogs* is punctuated with many references to elements of the real world, including its allusion to the Canadian rock singer Neil Young (*ED* 150). It also appeals to common scientific and judiciary procedures, as epitomised by the scenes about Robert's autopsy and the coroner's inquest into Robert's death. That is why this

novel seems to respect realist conventions, to a certain extent. Nevertheless, and like McGregor's other writings, *Even the Dogs* uses properties of realist narratives only to abuse them, as typified by the very ontological status of its narrator—the 'We.' Indeed, this narrator has a latent presence throughout the novel—it appears to be a *present absent*. The 'We' appears to be present as it rubs shoulders with all of the novel's characters, and has knowledge of both the past and the present of the novel's protagonists. Nevertheless, the choral narrator is also absent, as nobody sees it. In its spectral presence, the 'We' breaks the borders between presence and absence, and therefore defies the reader's spatiotemporal logic, which favours derealisation.

On a par with the 'We,' many uncommon properties of the novel can be said to evoke derealisation. This is made manifest by the novel's second chapter which is made up of two narrative threads (*ED* 17-55). The first is about the choral narrator's simultaneous narration of the scene where Robert's corpse is carried away in an ambulance to the morgue. As for the second narrative strand, it involves the choral narrator's subsequent narration of the scene where Danny, one of Robert's fellow drug addicts and homeless friends, discovers Robert's rotting corpse. The choral narrator moves in deliberate non-sequiturs back and forth between these two narrative strands, and thereby makes them appear to be simultaneous or consecutive, despite the fact that they are days apart. What also makes the narrative strands seem contemporaneous is the choral narrator's exclusive use of the present tense. Accordingly, the narrator abolishes the boundaries between distinct temporal modalities, and thereby "break[s] the contract with the reader, rejecting conventions about how people speak about and experience the world in 'naturalist' narrative forms, like realism" (Scrivenor 3).

The ambiguity of the second chapter is further heightened by the very narrative structure of its second narrative strand which alternates in a haphazard fashion between two synchronous scenes. As already mentioned, the first scene is about Danny who, shocked after discovering Robert's corpse, strides aimlessly across the unnamed city, while vainly trying to figure out how he should act. As for the second scene, it appears, at first glance, to be at the same diegetic level as the first, and is about Danny being investigated by the police about Robert's death. When wading further into the short story, however, readers suddenly become aware that the investigation scene is a metadiegesis about Danny who, scared to tell the police about Robert's death for fear of being wrongly suspected, lapses into a rambling monologue about an imagined

police interrogation. By intertwining two distinct narrative levels, the second narrative thread of the novel's second chapter creates a metaleptic twist, and thereby obfuscates the reader.

The confusion the second chapter generates goes beyond the metaleptic twist it produces, as it is dotted with five unwonted textual and paratextual elements, including solecistic sentences such as "but knew it *weren't nothing* like that" and "he didn't say *nothing*" (*ED* 17, emphasis added). The chapter is also made up of paragraphs ending with aposiopeses, "the figure of syntactical break and silence used when emotion becomes too heavy to spell out, when it is impossible to give voice to painful desperation or remorse" (Ganteau, "Vulnerable" 91). Thus, these aposiopetic paragraphs simulate, among other things, Danny's overwhelming distress upon discovering Robert's corpse. The chapter is also punctuated with splintered subordinate clauses—'Which' clauses severed from their main clauses (*ED* 23*2, 27, 28*2, 32, 33, 39, 41, 44*2, 45). It is also distinguished by its typographical disruption and its truncated sentences whose common subject (Danny) is omitted. These five uncommon formal elements are expressionistic devices which reflect Danny's troubled psyche upon his traumatic experience, as they epitomise this character's incapacity to render his trauma into any translucent verbal account. This is typical of many a trauma victim whose "testimony does not offer a completed statement, a totalizable account of her trauma" (Caruth, *Trauma* 16). Other than reflecting Danny's traumatised psyche, the five mentioned elements make the sense of coherence which readers expect from a narrative in order to make sense of the world absent. Accordingly, readers lose track of reality, which debatably evokes a deep sense derealisation—the very feeling Danny supposedly endures when discovering his friend's decomposing corpse.

In view of what has been demonstrated in the present subchapter, it becomes evident that the author's fiction uses and abuses conventional realism. It uses realism, since it is sprinkled with many elements specific to realist discourses, such as down-to-earth characters. McGregor's fiction also abuses realism, as it is peppered with certain 'antirealist' ingredients, including narrative metalepsis and personification. By means of these narrative elements, the author presents reality in a way typical of Rothberg's conception of traumatic realism—a weird combination of the ordinary and the extraordinary. Subsequently, the author's narratives disrupt the reader's self-identity—the mental phenomenon whereby the ego perceives each and every other as a readily recognisable and therefore mundane phenomenon. This, in turn, evokes a deep sense of derealisation, on account of which reality appears to be provisional—easily susceptible to merge with fiction.

2. Depersonalisation : The Conception of Oneself as Another

In the last subchapter, it has been illustrated how McGregor's fiction is distinguished by the author's hyperbolic use of certain narrative ingredients, including narrative metalepsis and imagined scenarios. By way of these elements, the author's narratives divert from conventions about how individuals experience the world in 'naturalist' narrative forms, like realism. Subsequently, these narratives become conducive to derealisation—the feeling of being in an unreal world, which is usually symptomatic of the critical disturbance traumatic memory causes to the trauma victim's self-identity.

Another symptomatic manifestation of traumatic memory is depersonalisation which, unlike derealisation, does not involve a deep sense of estrangement from the world. Instead, it consists in the traumatised subject's intermittent feeling of alienation from many elements of her self-identity, including her own body (American Psychiatric Association 272). This is exemplified by several constituents of McGregor's fiction, most notably its narrators. Indeed, and as will be shown in the present subchapter, many a narrator intermittently experiences some elements of her self-identity as alien others, which is characteristic of depersonalisation.

Among the author's narratives that demonstrate depersonalisation is the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*. As previously indicated, this narrative thread centres on the collective trauma of an unnamed street's dwellers, who witness the car accident of one of their neighbours' twin sons. Among the most troubling elements of the present narrative thread is its narrator, who is not only kept unnamed, rather she also appears as an impersonal entity, as she reports the traumatic experience of the anonymous street's inhabitants, while also retreating into anonymity. That is why this narrator can be regarded as a depersonalised individual—an individual who, overwhelmed by the traumatic material she communicates, is reduced to a mere *camera-eye*. According to Casparis, a camera-eye is an impersonal eye, "quite passive, recording and not thinking" (Casparis 51). Acting as a camera eye, the narrator only makes the phenomenologically given "*manifestius* without having to make it sound *credibilius*," i.e. she only re-presents what she perceives without transmuting it into a coherent account (Casparis 82). This is evinced by her entire narrative which is fragmented and punctuated with non-sequiturs. Among the reasons why the narrator is unable to communicate her narrative in a consistent way is because she is unable to benchmark herself against the traumatic event she focalises. In view of this consideration, it can be advanced that the incoherence of the narrator's narrative reflects the disruption of her self-identity—the mental phenomenon by means of

which any subject is able to situate herself in relation to the objects of the world. As previously indicated, the disruption of one's self-identity upon a traumatic experience unavoidably engenders depersonalisation—the feeling of being detached from many elements of one's self-identity, including one's name and one's body. Accordingly, it can be propounded that the prime cause why the narrator is presented as both nameless and bodiless is to reflect the deep sense of depersonalisation she undergoes when communicating the traumatic event she has perceived.

Another example from this narrative strand which reflects the narrator's depersonalisation is the anonymous way in which this narrator refers to the dwellers of the unnamed street. Indeed, nowhere in her description does the narrator name them, or even allude to their ethnicity or skin colour (Upstone 61-2). Instead, the novel's characters are identified either by their house numbers or through close-ups of some of their physical attributes, e.g. "the boy with the sore eyes" (*INSRT* 55). Subsequently, these characters remain impersonal—devoid of many human traits, including ethnicity and skin colour. And since "man is mirror for man," the impersonal way in which the narrator alludes to her characters can be considered to reflect the impersonal way in which she conceives of herself (Merleau-Ponty 168). This explains why the narrator cannot refer to herself as 'I' throughout her entire narrative, which mirrors her sense of depersonalisation because of the trauma to which she bears witness.

Depersonalisation is also demonstrated by the scene where the impersonal narrator describes the young man from number eighteen while dying alone in his apartment of a heart attack after being shocked by the young boy's car accident:

> In his room, the young man with the dry eyes hammers at his chest with a weak fist. *Suddenly, almost silently, he is dying,* ***and*** *he stands* ***and*** *thrashes around the room to escape it, pulling down curtains, spilling his box of packed possessions, knocking a small clay figure to the floor.*
>
> (*INSRT* 273, emphasis and boldface added)

The italicised segment of this scene involves the anaphoric use of the coordinating conjunction 'and' (boldfaced), the absence of full stops and the exclusive utilisation of the present tense, which can be interpreted in two distinct ways. The first is that these three formal elements echo the narrator's intense emotion, because of which this narrator experiences the scene she describes as a barrage of vivid details she cannot bring to a halt. The second interpretation is cinematic, as the narrator's use of commas instead of full stops can be regarded as rendering a continuity editing, the filmic technique which creates the illusion of continuity among successive shots and scenes. As regards the anaphoric 'and,' it contestably performs a cross-fade, "the

transition between two shots in which the first gradually fades out as the second is fading in" (Chandler 82). Concerning the use of the present tense, it is conceivably a metaphor for cinema as well as other visual media whereby the audience can only perceive the present—the phenomenologically given. Accordingly, the young man's death scene is introduced as a series of shots that interpenetrate as they succeed one another, which gives an obfuscating rather than a lucid representation of the young man in his last moments. One plausible rendition of such a confusing scene is to echo its narrator's bewilderment while reporting the young man's solitary and untimely death.

There is another component of the previous scene which at first glance looks trivial—'the clay figure' the young man unwittingly knocks to the floor just before dying. This figure is obviously a *Jizo statue*, as highlighted by the narrator when she describes it as "a replica of a Japanese ceremonial idol . . . [which] comes from a place somewhere south of Tokyo, a place where mothers go when they have lost young children" (*INSRT* 73). In Japan, many bereaved mothers find comfort in Jizo statues which:

> . . . line temples and cemeteries across the country. The statues are believed to be protectors of children and unborn babies in traditional Japanese Buddhist teachings. It is believed that as the babies did not have the chance to build up good karma on earth, Jizo helps smuggle the children into the afterlife in the sleeves of his robe. The statues are often dressed in warm clothes in the hope that they will do the same for their unborn child.
>
> (Blair n.p.)

Such a ritual practice obviously has a profoundly psychological significance which accounts for its positive effect upon bereaved mothers. Indeed, it most likely allows these mothers to reify their loss—to give tangible forms to their miscarried children, which can be considered as facilitating *the mourning process*. According to Freud, this process involves the gradual reinvestment of libidinal drives originally associated with a beloved object into another object which is, in the present case, the Jizo statue (Freud, "Mourning" 14: 243). Thus, it can be said that this statue enables Japanese mothers to mourn their unborn babies, and thereby allows them to feel again at one with themselves. In view of this consideration, it can be propounded that the broken Jizo statue in the last scene suggests the end of any prospect of mourning, which entails the breakdown of self-identity—the very mental phenomenon whereby one conceives of oneself as a harmonious whole. The disruption of one's self-identity is contestably a psychological death—a psychotic state where one loses contact with reality, including her own reality as a single human being distinct from the Other. Such a psychological death can be viewed as

symbolically expressed in the previous scene by the young man's physical death. In short, one can advance that the broken Jizo statue in the latter scene emblematises the fragmentation of one's self-identity upon a traumatic accident, which ineluctably degenerates into depersonalisation.

Just as many instances from the aforementioned narrative strand exemplify depersonalisation, so do many short stories from the author's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*. Among these short stories is "In Winter the Sky" which, as previously indicated, is about George and his wife Joanna, two farmers living in the Fenlands along with George's paralysed father (*TISTHSLY* 5-35). This short story switches in a haphazard fashion between two narrative strands. The first is an anachronic rendering of George's life, a life blighted by the knowledge of how he killed a pedestrian whilst driving his father's car and then buried his body in the Fens. As regards the second narrative thread, it involves excerpts from Joanna's notebook where this protagonist shows a morbid fixation on the Fens, which contestably mirrors her fixation on what is buried in the Fens—the corpse of the man her husband killed. Another remarkable feature of Joanna's notebook is her *interpolated narration*, understood by Genette to mean the kind of narration specific to epistolary novels where "the letter is at the same time both a medium of the narrative and an element in the plot" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 217). Genette also resorts to 'interpolated narration' to refer to a specific type of subsequent narration where the narrator alludes to herself in a furtive way, so much so that she gives the impression that she talks about somebody else (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 217-8). This is most clearly evident in the way Joanna refers to herself throughout her notebook by mostly using either the second or third-person singular pronoun. In doing so, this protagonist debatably demonstrates depersonalisation—the trauma symptom on account of which the traumatised subject experiences herself as another.

Likewise, many other short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* bear the earmarks of depersonalisation. This includes "The Remains" which, as has been pointed out, revolves around a police search for 'The Remains' of a missing girl (*TISTHSLY* 188-90). What is most troubling about this short story is its narrative structure, as it proceeds through descriptive sentences in the passive voice, e.g. "Are believed to still be intact. Are understood to be within an area of approximately seventeen square miles. Are believed to have been concealed" (*TISTHSLY* 188). Such sentences can be viewed as imitating the passivity of its narrator, who does not install herself in the narrative she relates. Instead, she is reduced to the inhuman condition of the observing consciousness: she passively re-presents whatever her

consciousness captures, heedless of whether or not it makes sense. Taking into consideration this interpretation, it can be advanced that the reason why the narrator appears to be an impersonal consciousness is due to the disruption of her self-identity—the mental phenomenon which allows any subject to find her bearings, thus to make sense of what she perceives.

Another unconventional feature of the narrator's narrative is her truncated sentences, e.g. "Are of course still a concern to everyone in the department. May be intact" (*TISTHSLY* 188). These two sentences, like the rest of the narrator's narrative, have a common but omitted subject which is only found outside the actual body of the text, namely in the title: 'The Remains.' This title obviously alludes to the young girl's remains which have not yet been discovered. Instead, and in the narrator's anaphoric expression, the remains "Have yet to be found" (*TISTHSLY* 189-90). In this regard, it can be said that the reason why the narrator leaves out her sentences' common subject ('The Remains') is because she has not yet identified the object to which this subject refers—the girl's remains. Also notable is the fact that only "Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*" (Buber 28, emphasis in original). Tapping into this statement, it can be concluded that the incapacity of the narrator to identify the Thou—the remains—also means that she is unable to identify herself as an 'I.' This, in turn, evinces the narrator' estrangement from her own self because of the trauma she reports, which debatably echoes her sense of depersonalisation.

On a par with "The Remains," McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* yields a fine-grained account of just how traumatic memory unhinges the trauma victim's self-identity, and therefore leads to depersonalisation. This is clearly illustrated by the novel's italicised prologue which, roughly speaking, involves a heterodiegetic narrator's subsequent narration of the journey the Irish girl Mary Friel takes to London in order to work as a maid for a wealthy family. This prologue comprises a highly troubling narrative fragment: "*Here we are* ***now****. Nearly there. Just to the bottom of the hill and then* ***we'll sit down***" (*SMWB* 1, emphasis in original and boldface added). Unlike the rest of her narrative, the narrator appears in this excerpt to be simultaneously narrating events in which she takes part. The narrator's abrupt shift from subsequent to simultaneous narration while relating the same story dissolves the boundaries between past and present. This is further exacerbated by the narrator's brisk shift from being a heterodiegetic to being a homodiegetic narrator. In doing so, the narrator creates a metaleptic twist, and therefore obfuscates the reader. The narrator's metaleptic turn also reflects her incapacity to identify

herself as an insider or outsider to the narrative she recounts, which contestably bears the earmarks of depersonalisation—one of the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses.

Following suit with the narrator, the protagonist of this novel, David Carter, also demonstrates depersonalisation. This is most clearly evident in the sixteenth chapter about the day David learns that he was adopted when the dementia of his aunt Julia causes her to let slip the truth of his parentage (*SMWB* 89-104). This chapter opens on a cryptic scene describing in detail the moment when the news of David's adoption is brutally broken to him. What is striking about this scene is its syntactic disruption, as it is made up of paratactic noun phrases, which contestably simulates the disruption of David's self-identity. Another remarkable feature of the scene is "the pronominal hesitation between 'he' and 'I'," which likewise can reflect the breakdown of David's self-identity, and which thereby can justifiably be regarded as evoking his deep sense of depersonalisation (Ganteau, "Espousing" 62).

After the fashion of the previous scene, the closing passage of the eighteenth chapter arguably epitomises David's self-identity crisis:

> **What he had would be enough to at least say**, *here, these are a few of the things which have happened to* ***me****, while* ***you*** *weren't there. This is a small part of how it's been.* ***You*** *don't need to guess any longer,* ***you*** *don't need to imagine or wonder or dream. This is a small part of the truth.*
> (*SMWB* 130, boldface, emphasis and boldface added)

This excerpt is about David's inner speech, and it mirrors the protagonist's eagerness for a way to begin—a biological origin upon which he can found his self-identity. The protagonist's yearning for a biological past is expressed through an unwonted reported speech which opens as free indirect speech (boldfaced), then abruptly turns into free direct speech (italicised). Subsequently, this reported speech obliterates the boundaries between the internal and the external, i.e. between thinking and speaking. Eventually, it makes David's inner speech appear to be a soliloquy. Such an uncommon reported speech can be a metaphor for David's trauma, on account of which this protagonist becomes unable to differentiate between fiction and reality. This is epitomised by many passages from the novel where David offsets his failure to find his birth mother by imaginary scenarios through which he fantasises 'So Many Ways to Begin'—so many possible origins.

Another unusual characteristic of the last narrative fragment is its pronominal fluctuation between 'I' and 'You' (boldfaced and italicised), with each of these two pronouns

debatably alluding to a distinct ontogenetic stage of David's life. The 'I' can refer to David as a new born child given over to adoption. As for the 'You,' it can allude to David as a young man who only belatedly discovers that he was adopted. Taking into account this interpretation, it can be postulated that the passage's pronominal wavering between the first and second-person singular pronoun epitomises how David does not feel at one with himself anymore. As earlier demonstrated, self-identity is the mental phenomenon whereby the ego is able to experience itself as a unitary and therefore harmonious whole. Accordingly, the disruption of this mental phenomenon leaves a fragmented sense of the self, hence David's alternation between 'I' and 'You' in the last passage.

Another instance showing how David's accidental discovery of his adoption wreaks havoc on his self-identity is the nineteenth chapter of the novel (*SMWB* 131-5). In short, this chapter is about David, whose wild goose chase for his birth mother leads him to Ireland. The chapter involves many a passage which evokes David's sense of depersonalisation, including the following scene: "It could have been the south-west of England, ***or*** Wales, ***or*** Northumberland, except for the hard-edged accents of the other people on the bus, or the union flags which hung limply from every other telegraph pole along the road" (*SMWB* 231, emphasis added). In this scene, David is in a state of utter confusion upon his arrival to Ireland, his biological mother's native country. Indeed, he becomes unsure whether the landscape he perceives is that of Ireland, as highlighted by his use of polysyndeton: 'or' (boldfaced). This, among other things, reflects his sense of statelessness, since he is torn between the Englishness of his foster parents and Irishness of his birth mother (Keller-Privat, "Along" 139-41). Bearing in mind that one's nationality is among the mainstays of one's self-identity, it can be advanced that David's feeling of statelessness typifies the disruption of his self-identity because of his trauma, and therefore echoes his sense of depersonalisation.

Following suit with David, Mike, one of the main protagonists of McGregor's *Even the Dogs* and a veteran of the Falklands War, shows throughout the novel an acute sense of statelessness, as highlighted by his reiterative expression: "My country lied to me" (*ED* 68, 69*2, 70, 102, 128*3). Indeed, upon his return from war, Mike was forsaken by his government, and therefore had to face his war trauma alone. Unable to overcome his frightening past, he resorts to drugs and alcoholism, thus making his trauma worse. This is evidenced by many a passage from the novel where this protagonist displays, among other things, depersonalisation. This is clearly illustrated by the following scene: "Mike and Danny and Ben all waiting for a delivery

by the phoneboxes over the road. Ben going How come you don't use your mobile Mike, how come we have to get to a phonebox, and Mike looking at him going Aint got no credit pal aint never got no credit" (*ED* 99-100). The reason why Ben asks Mike to call the drug dealer is because he always sees him while chattering away on his mobile phone. However, in reality, Mike has been talking to nobody, but has always been engaged in a self-talk, as suggested by his statement: 'aint never got no credit.' This shows how Mike nowise infrequently conceives of himself as another, which, as has been indicated, is typical of depersonalisation.

Another component of the previous scene which evinces Mike's depersonalisation is his utterance which is made up of two truncated sentences: 'Aint got no credit pal aint never got no credit.' These sentences are not an exception, as this protagonist mostly utters sentences wherein he leaves out the first-person singular pronoun—'I.' This, among other things, reveals Mike's incapacity to conceive of himself as an autonomous subject distinct from the Other, which, as earlier indicated, is characteristic of depersonalisation.

Like Mike, the 'We,' the choral narrator of the novel, demonstrates depersonalisation. As previously noted, this narrator chiefly focalises the traumatic life and dehumanising death of a group of vagrant drug addicts. Such a deeply disconcerting content can be argued to have disrupted the narrator's self-identity. As has been mentioned, self-identity is the mental phenomenon by virtue of which the ego is able to distinguish itself from the Other. Upon experiencing a trauma, however, this mental phenomenon falls apart, which blurs the boundaries between subject and object—I and you—hence the 'We' in the novel.

The collapse of self-identity following a traumatic experience conceivably reduces the traumatised subject to the impersonal condition of the observing consciousness. This means that a traumatic occurrence turns the trauma victim into a mere shadow of her consciousness—passively reporting what her consciousness captures, while also being unable to make sense of what she reports. Subsequently, the trauma victim cannot transmute her trauma into a coherent narrative, as emphasised by Caruth when she states that the traumatised subject's testimony is usually "composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition" (Caruth, *Trauma* 16). Drawing on what has been said in this paragraph, it can be propounded that the collapse of the choral narrator's self-identity resulting from the traumatic material she focalises makes her experience herself as an impersonal being—an entity devoid of many elements of self-identity, including a body. This

explains why she appears to most readers as a ghost. Being stripped of her self-identity, the narrator becomes a shadow of her consciousness—passively communicating what her consciousness captures. This is highlighted by her entire narrative where she seems unable to act decisively and of her own accord. Instead, she idly reports what she perceives, while repeatedly asking questions like: "What do we do now. Where do we go," "What else can we do" (164,173). As has been postulated, the breakdown of self-identity makes the traumatised subject unable to make sense of what she perceives, which, in turn, accounts for the trauma victim's incapacity to render objects of her perception into a translucent account. This is evinced by the choral narrator's narrative which is marked by its typographical and syntactic disruption.

In view of what has been illustrated in the present subchapter, it becomes clear that McGregor's narratives are peppered with certain unusual ingredients. This includes self-effaced narrators—narrators who bring tales, but do not install themselves in them. Such narrators, along with several other components of the author's narratives, typify how traumatic memory unhinges the trauma victim's self-identity—the very mental phenomenon whereby a subject is able to benchmark herself against whatever she perceives. The disruption of this mental phenomenon inevitably leads to depersonalisation—the feeling of being detached from many elements of one's self-identity, including one's body. This is epitomised by many a narrator from McGregor's fiction who experiences several components of her self-identity, including her name and body, as another.

In light of what has been shown in this chapter, traumatic memory wreaks havoc on the self-identity of the one it impacts, and therefore looks, at first glance, detrimental. However, and as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter, this mental phenomenon is profoundly positive, as epitomised by McGregor's fiction where traumatic memory is presented as a form of *excendance*, in Levinas's acceptance of the term, i.e. an impulsion of openness to the irreducible alterity of the Other (Levinas, *Cultural* 49-73).

Chapter 6
Excendance

As has been elucidated in the former chapter, McGregor's fiction epitomises how traumatic memory causes a critical disturbance of the ego's self-identity—the mental phenomenon whereby the ego is able to find its bearings in the world. Among the many repercussions of such a critical disturbance is *derealisation*, namely the overwhelming feeling of the unreality of surroundings many a trauma victim intermittently endures. This is made manifest by McGregor's narratives which, at first glance, seem mediated through a realistic discourse, as they include many elements usually specific to conventional realism, including mundane characters. However, and as has been illustrated, these narratives use realistic components only to abuse the conventions upon which traditional realism rests, as they are also peppered with antirealist ingredients, including narrative metalepsis. By means of these antirealist elements, the author's narratives unhinge the reader's self-identity. This, in turn, evokes a deep sense of derealisation, by dint of which reality appears to be provisional—easily susceptible to merge with fiction.

In addition to being conducive to derealisation, McGregor's narratives also show how traumatic memory elicits *depersonalisation*—one of the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses which involves the intermittent alienation of a trauma victim from many a constituent of her self-identity. Among the many manifestations of depersonalisation in McGregor's narratives are the author's predominantly self-effaced narrators—narrators who are not only kept unnamed, but who also appear to be bodiless. As previously indicated, one's name and one's body are among the cornerstones of any individual's self-identity. Accordingly, and as has been specified, the self-effaced narrators in McGregor's fiction typify how a trauma victim intermittently experiences depersonalisation, and therefore becomes estranged from many constituents of her self-identity, including her name and body.

On this showing, it becomes clear that traumatic memory wreaks havoc on the self-identity of the one it impresses, and therefore appears, *prima facie*, to be essentially destructive. As earlier evinced, self-identity castrates otherness, as it conditions the ego's conception of each and every other, and thereby does not allow the ego to open up to the otherness of the world. Accordingly, the disruptive effect that traumatic memory has upon the ego's self-identity

is deeply ethical: it impels the ego to go beyond its self-identity, and thereby allows it to open up to alterity.

Self-identity is contestably a prenatal phenomenon, as it originally develops when a foetus identifies with its mother's womb. When forced during parturition to abandon its mother's uterus, a neonate experiences a deep feeling of fright which, as *per* Rank, amounts to *the birth trauma*—the primal traumatic experience any human being suffers (*The Trauma* 11-45). The pain such an experience generates reflects the strong attachment each baby has to its mother's womb. This stems from the fact that the mother's womb amounts to a carnal shield: It keeps the foetus from harm, and thereby provides it with a sense of *invulnerability* (Rank, *The Trauma* 106-16).

Upon birth, however, a baby is severed from its mother's protective womb, and subsequently experiences an abrupt sense of vulnerability, hence its repetitive cries. Growing up, any human being unconsciously substitutes her mother's womb with certain objects, including her mental representations of her parents (Rank, *The Trauma* 74-105). These objects subsequently become surrogate wombs: they allow individuals to eschew their vulnerability, while also shaping their perception of the world. Thus, individuals do not experience the world in its unforeseeable singularity, but rather unconsciously reduce each and every object of the world to the terms of their surrogate wombs.

However, individuals cannot always maintain their identity with their surrogate wombs, as is clearly illustrated when they are faced with traumatic memories which, as earlier demonstrated, unhinge each and every form of identity. Subsequently, traumatised individuals experience a deep feeling of vulnerability, reminiscent of that which a baby experiences when severed from its mother's womb. Such an experience, albeit painful, amounts to an awakening during which individuals, having been severed from their surrogate wombs, have their eyes opened to the irreducible alterity of the world.

In a nutshell, self-identity is mostly an unconscious mental phenomenon whereby a subject loses her individuality to one or several objects. This mental phenomenon is originally produced by the mother's uterus. It is then reproduced after birth by certain objects which, acting like a womb, shape the subject's perception of the world, while also providing her with a sense of invulnerability. Nevertheless, self-identity is not an irrevocable mental state. This is epitomised when individuals are confronted with traumatic memories. However painful, these

memories unhinge individuals' self-identity, and thereby amount to *excendance*, in Levinas's acceptance of the term, i.e. "the need to get out of oneself, that is, *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]*" (Levinas, *Cultural* 54 emphasis in original). Such an impulsion does not entail the effacement of the ego. Nor does it allow the ego to persist in its self-identity. Instead, excendance impels the ego to be *otherwise than being*, understood by Levinas to mean an unadulterated ego—an ego unbiased by any preconceptions of the world, and therefore open to the irreducibility of the Other (Levinas, *Otherwise* 3).

Using an approach informed by the foregoing theoretical framework, it will be shown in the present chapter how the author taps into traumatic memory's destabilisation of the ego's self-identity in order to challenge throughout his writings many stereotypes, which evinces how such a memory amounts to excendance. Among these stereotypes is the stigmatisation of individuals whose collective identities, including their ethnicities, do not align with the prevailing identity of their society.[73] Many a collective identity, such as nationality, is a key constituent of the ego's self-identity, and contestably accounts for the ego's unresponsiveness to those who are not members of its identity group. In this respect, it will be demonstrated in the first and second subchapters how McGregor's narratives draw on traumatic memory's unhinging of the ego's self-identity so as to abuse many stereotypes rooted in certain collective identities upon which the ego's self-identity rests. In doing so, these narratives illustrate how traumatic memory is a form of excendance—an impulsion or openness to other individuals with radically different identities. Another evidence of the ethical yield of traumatic memory, as will be demonstrated in the third subchapter, is the author's use of this memory's acute disturbance of self-identity in order to challenge the common belief in human superiority over non-humans.

1. Nationality, Ethnicity and Racial Identity

The previous chapter shows how McGregor's fiction draws heavily on the disruptive effects traumatic memory causes to the self-identity of the one it impacts. One possible reason for this is to challenge stereotypes ingrained in three forms of collective identity upon which the ego's self-identity is based: nationality, ethnicity and racial identity. Like all collective identity, these three constituents of the ego's self-identity are essentially exclusionary, as they identify "self by denying the other, demarcate inside from outside, stretch a distance between 'us'

[73] Collective identity develops through "the process of collective identification with a common object which is accompanied by identification of individuals with each other" (Easthope 22).

and 'them'" (Easthope 220). One can contestably postulate that individuals can overstep their collective identities and thereby welcome the stranger only when they themselves go through an experience of estrangement, most notably a trauma. In view of this consideration, it can be advanced that traumatic occurrences are highly ethical: they alienate the ego from many constituents of its self-identity, including those of a collective nature, and thereby force it to open up to the stranger—she who is usually rejected by the ego's identity groups.

As has been indicated in the general introduction, the author's fiction amounts to an unflinching criticism of neoliberal individualism which has become a stronger element of Englishness—the English national identity—since the introduction of Thatcherite policies in the 1980s (Horton 1-2). In short, neoliberal individualism promotes a solipsistic model of citizenship chiefly characterised by self-reliance and responsibility only to oneself (Lea, *Contemporary* 176). The identification with neoliberal ideals is an instance of collective identity which ineluctably entails the rejection of precarious individuals, including homeless drug addicts who are usually stereotyped as indolent and hedonistic.

In order to challenge many a reader's possibly biased attitude towards the homeless, McGregor's *Even the Dogs* shows several unwonted narrative elements, most notably its first-person plural narrative where an incorporeal narrator refers to a group of vagrant drug addicts as 'We.' By way of these elements, as has been shown in the previous chapter, the novel makes readers lose track of reality, and thereby conjures up *derealisation*—one of the core symptoms of traumatic neuroses that evinces how traumatic memory destabilises the self-identity of the one it impresses. Thus, the derealisation many readers experience reflects the disruption of several constituents of her self-identity, including her national identity. Subsequently, the reader is impelled to overstep the stereotypes upon which her national identity possibly rests, such as the denigration of the homeless in neoliberal societies. This, in turn, makes readers welcome the novel's inverted expectation regarding the orientation of 'We' and 'They.' Indeed, what is usually conceived as 'We,' namely 'regular' society, comes to occupy the margins of the novel's narrative (Korte, "Literary" 75-6). Meanwhile, the 'They,' the homeless drug addicts who are commonly relegated to the fringes of society, are designated as 'We.' Accordingly, the novel's uncommon use of the first-person plural is both provocative and disconcerting, as it subverts the neoliberal ideals upon which many a reader's national identity possibly rests, and thereby undermines biases about vagrant drug addicts. Thus, it becomes obvious that McGregor's *Even the Dogs* favours certain trauma symptoms, especially derealisation, so as to make the reader

overstep her national identity which, when shaped by neoliberal ideals, is likely to promote biases about the homeless. Subsequently, the reader is urged to consider these precarious beings as 'We,' i.e. as inalienable members of her society.

Among the many elements shaping the national identity of a country is its geography, as highlighted by the British journalist, Jeremy Paxman, when he states that "geography matters; it makes people who they are" (Paxman 3). By way of example, one of the defining aspects of England's national identity is its *insularity* (Paxman 35).[74] Such a geographical property has promoted a powerful sense of impregnability among many English citizens, who believe that "their greatest security is behind the thousands of miles of irregular coastline around their island home" (Paxman 32). One can debatably advance that when a human being feels immune to injury, she becomes oblivious to precarious individuals. Accordingly, it can be postulated that the deep sense of security fostered by England's *insularity* is one of the constituents of the country's national identity on account of which many an English citizen is heedless of people who suffer in other parts of the world.

In order to undermine the indifference of many of his compatriots to international humanitarian crises, the author introduces in *Even the Dogs* a group of homeless drug addicts, most of whom are English veterans whose war experiences abroad have ruined their lives as well as the lives of people close to them. Among these characters is Ant, a former English soldier who lost one of his legs in Afghanistan when a homemade bomb blew up his Land Rover. While relating this accident, the choral narrator flits in a haphazard fashion between the depiction of Ant while being evacuated in a helicopter and the description of the drug trafficking taking place in the nearby poppy fields (*ED* 114-20). This narrative is deeply ironic, as it shows how the drugs smuggled from Afghanistan end up being consumed by many English citizens, including Ant. This, in turn, and as Jean-Michel Ganteau put it, demonstrates how "taking risks on an international scale is not without consequences at home" ("The Powers" 453). Accordingly, it can be postulated that McGregor's *Even the Dogs* hinges on its characters' war traumas, so as to undermine an informant principle of Englishness—the sense of security nurtured by England's insularity. In doing so, this novel opens many an English reader's eyes to how people

[74] Another key constituent of Englishness, as *per* Paxman, is *privacy*: "Because the English dream is privacy without loneliness, everyone wants a house. Given a choice between their own back garden and life in a communal living project where they might share the benefits of a common swimming pool or playground, most will choose their own plot of ground" (Paxman 118).

around the world are deeply interconnected: whatever affects anyone of them affects the others in so many ways.

On top of its insularity, another constitutive element of England's national identity is its national history which is mainly glorified because it reminds many a native English of the time when England was the world's greatest power with colonies on each of the seven continents. This is underlined by Paxman when he states that "the English have found themselves walking backwards into the future, their eyes fixed on a point some time at the turn of the twentieth century" (Paxman 234). The exaltation of one's origins is an instance of collective identity which disputably entails the stereotyping of those from other origins as inferior. In response to such a form of collective identity, the author structures *So Many Ways to Begin* around the disconcerting premise that the historical, including one's ancestral past, is forever absent from its very presence: it always takes on superficial and equivocal manifestations, and cannot therefore be transmuted into an exhaustive account (Levinas, *Totality* 65). As earlier noted, the story proper belongs to David Carter, a curator at Coventry Museum who only accidentally discovers at the age of twenty-two that he was adopted. When he was still a child, David dreamed of curating his own museum where he would lay bare in polished cabinets a history that cannot be altered (Atherton n.p.). His staunch belief in the inalterability of the past is highlighted by one of his childhood experiences when he discovered that a Viking boat put on display in a museum was a replica. He was then extremely frustrated, so much so that he wanted to "kick the whole thing to pieces" (*SMWB* 42).

Upon finding out about his adoption, David tries at first to trace back his biological past. However, and as his quest to find his birth mother has proved fruitless, he eventually loses faith in his long-held conviction that, through a painstaking effort, he can work his way towards an exhaustive knowledge of the past. Since one's origins are arguably among the forms of collective identity upon which the ego's self-identity rests, David's incapacity to retrace his biological past accounts for the intermittent disruption of his self-identity. This is evinced by several scenes in the novel where, as has been shown in the last chapter, David loses his sense of self-identity, experiences derealisation, and thereby conflates fiction and reality. Although deeply painful, David's many experiences of derealisation have awakened him to the fact that historical accounts can never be free from rhetorical and discursive construction, and are therefore necessarily a mixture of fact and fiction. In view of this consideration, it can be assumed that McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* fits in many ways into *historiographic metafiction*,

understood by Hutcheon to mean the kind of postmodern novel which displays "a theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" (Hutcheon 5).

In light of what has been said concerning McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin*, one can advance that this novel insists on how its protagonist's trauma has unhinged his self-identity, so as to show how "historical facts, narrativisation and the *writing* of history are each, in different ways, acts of construction" (Easthope 151, emphasis in original). In doing so, this novel awakens many readers to how their national histories through which they stigmatise people from other origins is a mere social construct. Subsequently, readers, including some of the author's compatriots who overpraise their imperial past, are impelled to overstep their exclusionist conception of their national history, and thereby welcome those who have radically distinct national histories.

Thus far, it has been shown how McGregor's narratives tap into traumatic memory's destabilisation of self-identity in order to undermine stereotypes ingrained in certain constituents of national identity upon which self-identity is based. Thus, these narratives evince how traumatic memory leads to excendance—the ethical impulsion towards openness to the Other (Levinas, *Cultural* 54). In what follows, it will be illustrated how, by being conducive to some trauma symptoms, McGregor's narratives defy not only prejudices ingrained in national identity, but also those rooted in another form of collective identity—ethnicity. This is most clearly evident in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* which, as has been substantiated by the previous chapter, is marked by certain uncommon narrative components, particularly narrative metalepses. On account of these elements, the reader loses her sense of self-identity, and thereby becomes engrossed by the characters' traumas, so much so that she suffers from their sufferings.

What furthers the reader's responsiveness to the novel's characters is the ethnically unmarked way in which these characters are depicted. This is epitomised by the opening scene of the novel's first narrative strand which chiefly involves close-ups of unnamed bodies, e.g. "Hundreds of feet," "hundreds of pairs of eyes," and "sparkling eyes" (*INSRT* 4). In the rest of the narrative, close-ups turn into full shots showing the entire bodies of the novel's characters, who become traumatised when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbour's twin sons. However, as Sara Upstone has aptly noted, "the body that readers encounter is not an [ethnically] marked body, but rather a sacred abstract" (Upstone 61). In fact, the impersonal narrator does not allude to the ethnicity or race of the anonymous street's inhabitants. Instead, these characters are referred to only by the number of the house in which they live and/or by

one of their physical traits, e.g. “the young man from number eighteen” and “the girl with the short blonde hair and the small square glasses” (*INSRT* 265, 87). By keeping its characters unnamed, the incorporeal narrator can be said to have “deindividualise[d] them, producing a flattening effect which is at odds with the depths of feeling through which so many of them struggle” (Lea, “Jon” 207). However, paradoxical as it may sound, one can also argue that the anonymous way in which the unnamed street’s dwellers are designated individualises them. Indeed, by leaving these protagonists unnamed, the incorporeal narrator keeps them beyond the many ethnic stereotypes their names would otherwise have evoked. Some readers may object to this interpretation, as the novel is intermittently punctuated with references to the characters’ ethnicity, notably certain Arabic words like “allahu akbar” and “inshaallah” (*INSRT* 147, 272). However, these words are not italicised, as if they were not foreign words, which arguably makes them go unnoticed. This, in turn, keeps characters untainted with prejudices commonly associated with their ethnic identity as Muslims.

At the end of the novel, however, the ethnicity of most of the anonymous street’s inhabitants is unveiled, as highlighted by the scene immediately following the traumatic event when the man with the burnt hands whispers to himself in a tautological fashion the name of the young boy hit by a car: “Shahid Mohammed, Shahid Nawaz . . . Shahid Mohammed, Shahid Nawaz” (*INSRT* 271). This can be extremely upsetting to readers who have a biased attitude towards these characters’ ethnic identity, as they abruptly become aware that their prejudices have blinded them to how individuals from such an ethnic group are not so much unlike as like them: they are susceptible to injury, they suffer, and are then worthy of empathy.

In view of what has been said concerning the ethnically unmarked way in which the incorporeal narrator alludes to its narrative’s protagonists, it becomes obvious that ethnic identity, like all collective identity, is among the constituents of the ego’s self-identity which accounts for the ego’s unresponsiveness to the Other. One can justifiably conjecture that the ego can overstep the many prejudices it holds against strangers, including those who do not appertain to its ethnic group, only when it undergoes an experience of self-estrangement. This is suggested by the French philosopher, Guillaume Le Blanc, when he states that “knowing whether we can live with *our others* and knowing whether we can live with *others* are thus two deeply dependent things” (Le Blanc 216, translation mine and emphasis added).

Among the experiences which alienate individuals from their self-identities and which thereby compel them to be hospitable to the ‘alien’ other are traumatic occurrences. This is

exemplified by "the man with the burnt hands" from number sixteen, one of the characters of the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* (*INSRT* 146). As has been indicated, this man had his hands burnt, when he tried in vain to save his wife from their burning house. And so ever since, each time this widower looks at his scarred hands, he spontaneously relives his trauma, suffers from depersonalisation, and thereby experiences many a constituent of his self-identity as a stranger other. This is most clearly evident in the scene about this protagonist while bathing his scarred hands with iodine:

> *He follows the contours of each scar under the water, pressing lightly, pressing as hard as he can bear, trying to soften and ease the skin, trying to massage the flesh back into shape*. He watches the colour changing as the heat of the water soaks through, flushing and fading under the pressure of his ***printless fingers*** . . . He lifts his hands up into the air, the inky water dripping off them into the sink, and his hands are clean but **they are not healed. They are still ruined and useless** . . . He reaches up to put the bottle of iodine back into the cabinet. As he closes the cabinet door, a mirror swings into sight and flings him an unwanted glimpse of his face, the sagging **mask** of it, the familiar wrinkles and twists which mark the face that is not his face.
>
> (*INSRT* 102-3, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

In the first sentence (italicised), the anaphoric use of the verbs 'press' and 'try' in the present participle form underscores the widower's incessant efforts to have his hands healed, which can be regarded as a metaphor for his 'pressing' need to overcome what his damaged hands remind him of—his inability to save his wife. However, the character's persistent attempts are always doomed to failure, as evinced by the boldfaced segment. This, in turn, can reflect the character's failure to mourn his wife, whose memory haunts him compulsively and without respite.

As he fails to overcome his trauma, the widower intermittently endures depersonalisation—the trauma symptom which illustrates how a trauma victim every so often becomes estranged from many elements of her self-identity. This is most evident in the way in which the man with burnt hands envisions his own face as that of another (underlined). What also shows the man's sense of depersonalisation and thereby evinces the disruption of his self-identity is disputably the depiction of his fingers as 'printless' (boldfaced and italicised). Fingerprints are among the physical properties which distinguish human beings from one another, and which thereby promote a feeling of separateness rather than one of interconnectedness. Likewise, self-identity makes the ego conceive of itself as a sovereign being, independent of each and every other. In view of this consideration, it can be propounded that the character's printless fingers echo the effacement of his self-identity each time he remembers his trauma, which is typical of depersonalisation.

The widower's printless fingers can also have an ethical dimension, as they remind him of what humans share—their bodily vulnerability. Thus, it can be said that the character's burnt hands have awakened him to the fact that "human beings are ordinarily far more alike than they are unalike, including the self-evident sameness of suffering humankind" (Michael 55). This interpretation explains the openness of this character to other beings of the world, as highlighted by the novel's eponymous passage where he tells his only daughter: "there are remarkable things all the time, right in front of us, but our eyes have like the clouds over the sun and our lives are paler and poorer if we do not see them for what they are. He says, *if nobody speaks of remarkable things*, *how can they be called remarkable?*" (*INSRT* 239, emphasis added). The widower's statement, including his rhetorical question, shows that he has developed consideration for everything, including the minutiae of everyday life. This, among other things and as already posited, is the outcome of his traumatic memory which impels him to own up to his vulnerability.

Another possible ethical yield of the widower's removed skin is that it has impelled him to question the common conception of bodily identities as essentially marked with race. This is underlined by the way in which this character conceives of his own face as a mere 'mark' (underlined and boldfaced)—a cultural construction obscuring the psychological as well as physical sameness among human beings. Drawing on this consideration, it becomes apparent how, under the sway of her traumatic memories, many a trauma victim is compelled to overstep stereotypes rooted in several constituents of her self-identity, including those of a collective nature. Subsequently, the traumatised subject spontaneously welcomes those usually discarded by her identity groups, including her racial group. It can therefore be propounded that traumatic memory is a form of excendance, in Levinas's acceptance of the term, i.e. a spontaneous and immediate urge which pushes individuals to transcend many stereotypes rooted in their collective identities, and which thereby impels them to be open to others, like those from different racial groups (Levinas, *Cultural* 49-73).

Just as the first narrative thread from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* taps into traumatic memory's disturbance of the ego's self-identity in order to challenge racial stereotyping, so does the second strand from the same novel. As previously mentioned, this narrative thread is related by a young woman haunted by three traumatic memories. The first is transgenerational in nature, and is about her being unconsciously traumatised by her mother's brutal childhood. The second is of a collective nature, and is about the fatal car accident this female narrator,

along with her former neighbours, witnessed. As regards the narrator's third trauma, it consists of her being accidentally pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. Under the dominant influence of her traumatic memories, the young woman can no longer be "self-sufficient—a characteristic highly valued by both her culture and her mother, the latter having lectured her 'about taking what you're given and making the most of it'" (Michael 50). Indeed, and as evinced by her entire narrative, the female narrator ends up perceiving herself as inherently vulnerable. Since "the acknowledgment of one's inherent vulnerability is the key step in developing consideration for the other vulnerable beings," the narrator's awakening to her being essentially vulnerable has allowed her to be considerate of precarious individuals who are rejected, among other things, due to their racial identity (Pelluchon 112, translation mine). This is exemplified by the scene where the narrator visits an exhibition of six-inch red clay figures:

> It was in one room, a large room with long skylights, and we stood by the doorway and looked in at it, at them, looking over them, thousands and thousands of six-inch red clay figures, as roughly made as playschool plasticine men, a pair of finger-sized sockets for eyes, heads tilted up from formless bodies. Each one *almost identical*, each one *unique*.
>
> (*INSRT* 230-1, emphasis added)

In this scene, the clay figures contestably simulate human beings, who are 'unique,' in that each one of them is distinguished, among other things, by her racial and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, human beings, much like these figures, are also 'almost identical,' since they are essentially vulnerable, and therefore always need one another's help. This interpretation is underscored by the punctuation of the scene which almost exclusively involves commas. Such punctuation is commonly employed to suggest both syntactic and semantic interdependency between different constituents of one or several sentences. In this regard, the scene's punctuation mimics the very meaning this scene conveys: the fundamental interdependence of human beings, regardless of their race, ethnicity and national identity. Relying on this reading, it can be propounded that the female narrator's traumas have compelled her to acknowledge her intrinsic vulnerability as a human being, and have thereby made her considerate of other vulnerable beings, including those who are relegated to the margins of their societies because of their racial identity.

In a nutshell and as illustrated by the examples scrutinised in this subchapter, certain motifs running through some of McGregor's novels, like the burnt hands of the man from number twenty in *If Nobody Speaks*, evidence how, under the thrall of their traumas, the characters are forced to transcend their ethnic and racial identities. Subsequently, and as has been demonstrated, these characters spontaneously overstep stereotypes entrenched in these two forms of

collective identity. The author's narratives are also peppered with certain unwonted narrative ingredients, like the 'We' in *Even the Dogs*. As has been shown, these elements challenge the reader's nationality—the collective form of identity which is one of the cornerstones of any individual's self-identity. The reader is thereupon impelled to go beyond prejudices ingrained in her nationality, such as the denigration of the homeless in neoliberal societies. Drawing on these considerations, it can be advanced that the author's fiction evinces how anything undermining collective forms of identity upon which the ego's self-identity relies, like a trauma or even a fictional work, engenders excendance—the ethical urge towards openness to other human beings (Levinas, *Cultural* 49-73).

2. Gender

The previous subchapter illustrates how the author taps into his characters' traumas in order to subvert stereotypes rooted in three forms of collective identity: nationality, ethnicity and race. In the present subchapter, it will be shown how McGregor's fiction uses trauma as a means to defy prejudices entrenched in another form of collective identity upon which many an individual's self-identity is based—gender. According to Butler, gender is essentially *performative*, i.e. it is not "a singular 'act' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms" (Butler, "Bodies" 241). In many cultures, gender's performative character sustains a form of society bound by "the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, *Gender* 180).

In order to subvert such a performative construction of gender, the author centres *Reservoir13* around the young Rebecca Shaw who, before disappearing from an unnamed village in the Peak District, subverts gender clichés of this village by showing character traits commonly perceived as masculine. Rebecca's rebellious character is epitomised by certain short stories from McGregor's *The Reservoir Tapes*, notably "Liam" and "Ginny" (*TRT* 47-56, 129-45). In these short stories, Rebecca appears as a "livewire," in that she leaps into a flooded quarry, smears dirt onto a young boy's face, and steals an apple from an old lady's garden (*TRT* 20). Doing so, she challenges the stereotypical way in which dwellers of the village commonly associate femininity with submissiveness and motherliness.[75] Rebecca's ultimate and utmost rebellious act is debatably her mysterious disappearance, following which she becomes

[75] Most women in the anonymous village are submissive and motherly. This includes Maisie, who spends most of her life caring for her five sons and then for her grandchildren; and Miriam Pearson, who always stands down from the parish council election in order to be replaced by husband.

a ubiquitous spectre haunting the village's inhabitants whether they are awake or asleep, despite the fact that she is a tourist, thus barely known to most of them. One possible explanation why Rebecca's disappearance has turned into the villagers' collective trauma is that she has become the uncanny incorporation of something they have long tried to reduce to submission—their *anima*.

Jung understands 'anima' to mean one of the archetypes of the human mind (Jung, *The Basic* 158-82).[76] The anima basically has two features which distinguish it from other archetypes. The first is that it does not stand for a specific unconscious element, but embodies the unconscious in its entirety. As for the second property, it is that the anima, unlike other archetypes, is not characteristic of both men and women. Instead, it is typical of men's unconscious, as emphasised by Jung when he states that "the anima is a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches and receptiveness to the irrational and capacity for personal love and feeling for nature" (Jung, *Man* 177). When a man welcomes these feminine tendencies, his anima manifests itself in his dreams as a benevolent mother, a priestess or even as the Virgin Mary (Jung, *Man* 185). Conversely, when a man represses feminine aspects, his anima assumes a malefic character, as it comes in his dreams under the guise of uncanny figures, like a witch or a trickster (Jung, *Man* 175).[77]

In the present subchapter, and in contradistinction to Jung, it will be conjectured that the anima, like other archetypes, is specific to both men and women. Furthermore, it will be propounded that such an archetype is not the incarnation of feminine tendencies, as Jung assumes. Instead, it is debatably the gendered incorporation of femininity, i.e. the incorporation of sociocultural constructions of womanliness. Tapping into this conception of the anima, it can be assumed that the Rebecca which haunts the villagers of both sexes is the personification of their anima. Having conceived of all the traits which they associate with femininity as an epitome of submission, these villagers end up haunted by their anima incarnated in the rebellious figure of Rebecca. Accordingly, it can be postulated that Rebecca's traumatic disappearance has a highly

[76] See detailed definition of 'archetype' on p.172.

[77] The anima, according to Jung, basically forms around the character of the mother. It may then go through four main stages of development. The first and least developed stage is best epitomized by "the figure of Eve, which represents purely instinctual and biological relations. The second can be seen in Faust's Helen: She personifies a romantic and aesthetic level that is, however, still characterized by sexual elements. The third is represented, for instance, by the Virgin Mary a figure who raises love (*eros*) to the heights of spiritual devotion. The fourth stage is symbolized by Sapientia, wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure" (Jung, *Man* 185).

ethical import: it incorporates the villagers' anima, and thereby unhinges their performative deprecation of whatever they conceive as feminine. The villagers are thereupon pushed to overstep their biased conception of femininity, which typifies how their collective trauma is a form of excendance—the ethical drive towards openness to each and every other, including anyone of the opposite sex.

The strong link between trauma and the subversion of gender prejudices is also highlighted by two short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, the first being "Years of This, Now" (*TISTHSLY* 182-7). In short, this story is about a woman, Catherine, sitting in a hospital room next to her husband Michael, who enters a coma after a massive stroke. Little is said about the couple's relationship in the present story, as they have already been introduced in another short story—"Which Reminded Her, Later" (*TISTHSLY* 82-101). The fulcrum of this story is a gallingly manipulative stranger that Michael hosts in the vicarage where he lives with his wife. The whole story shows how Michael has little regard for his wife, as typified by the subsequent snatch of free indirect speech: "There was a word for this, for the way he was being about this whole thing—superior? Supercilious? And there was a word for women like her who put up with this kind of behaviour for as long as she had—a word like what, weak?" (*TISTHSLY* 92). Michael devotes himself to his work as a vicar, so much so that he has a stroke which, as previously indicated, is the trigger of "Years of This, Now." What has been alluded throughout this short story is that Catherine decides to leave her husband, which may appear for many a reader as "the most selfish thing" (*TISTHSLY* 187). However, Catherine's decision may be seen as ethical, as it typifies how her husband's stroke, which is obviously a traumatic occurrence, has opened her eyes to the fact that her marital life is demeaning to her as a woman. This reading ties in with Ricœur's conception of an experience of otherness.

Unlike Levinas, Ricœur does not reduce otherness to a *pure exteriority*, a form of responsiveness essentially triggered by a radically external other (Levinas, *Otherwise* xxii).[78] Nor does he uphold the Cartesian cogito according to which the self is an *ultimate foundation*, a monolithic structure that acts as a single and uniform whole (Ricœur 310). Instead, Ricœur postulates that the self is a composite structure of disparate elements. Some of these elements, including one's conscience, maintain a dialectical relationship with the self (Ricœur 302-19). This is epitomised by the variety of experiences of passivity whereby the self becomes

[78] According to Levinas, there is "no interior difference, no fundamental and autochthonous alterity within the ego," which evidences how he reduces alterity to a sheer exteriority (Derrida, "Violence" 136).

powerless before some of its own elements, notably 'its own' conscience (Ricœur 275-318). These experiences of passivity, in turn, attest to the *otherness of the self*, understood by Ricœur to mean the inherent receptiveness and even, at times, submissiveness of the self before some of its own elements (Ricœur 325). In a nutshell, Ricœur, unlike Levinas, brings otherness into the very structure of the self, which is not a monolithic foundation, but rather a labile structure of dialectical elements.[79] Relying on Ricœur's conception of otherness, it can be concluded that Catherine's decision following her husband's stroke typifies how such a traumatic experience is profoundly ethical, as it has allowed her to open up to her otherness as an autonomous woman.

Just as "Years of This, Now" epitomises how traumatic happenings undermine the gendered stereotyping of women as dependent on men, so does another short story from the same collection—"Wires" (*TISTHSLY* 160-75). As already mentioned, this short story centres on the traumatic experience of a young motorist, Emily Wilkinson, who is driving on a motorway when a sugar beet crashes through her windscreen. Emily's account of such a frightening accident is intercut with her memories and reflections, mostly regarding her relationship with her boyfriend Marcus. Emily first met Marcus as his student at the University of Hull. When she moves to live with him, and to her consternation, Emily discovers that Marcus is radically different from the open-minded Marcus she knew as a teacher, since he turns out to be an overbearing man: he always tells her what she could wear and who she could meet, and does not hesitate to deprecate her or even to hold her responsible for his failures. Upon her traumatic experience, however, Emily decides to finish with Marcus, as highlighted by the following passage:

> **She would talk to Marcus at the weekend**. *He'd understand, when it came down to it. Once he gave her a chance to explain*. She'd say something like although they'd been good together at times and she was still very fond of him she just couldn't see where things were going for them. **She didn't like the way he made her feel about herself**. **She needed some time to find out who she was and what she needed from a relationship**. **Something like that.**
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 173, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

[79] Ricœur does not, however, reduce otherness to the inherent responsiveness of the self to its own elements, notably its own conscience. Rather, he postulates that the self is also, in essence, open to the exterior others, without whom "the self would lack cohesiveness, self-confidence, self-esteem—in short, it would lack true 'narcissism'" (Ricœur 332). Thus Ricœur, unlike Levinas, does not conceive of the self as a solipsistic totality "always closed up at home with itself," ignorant of the external other (Levinas, *Otherwise* 217). Nor does he uphold the Levinasian conception of otherness as a submission to an "injunction" imposed upon the self by an external other (Ricœur 338). Instead, Ricœur conceives of otherness as "*benevolent spontaneity,*" an inherent openness of the self to the other, whether it be an external or internal other (190, emphasis in original).

This passage, in free indirect speech, presents the reader with the different thoughts crossing Emily's mind just after her accident, and it typifies how such a traumatic experience has liberated her from Marcus's domination. This is corroborated by the author himself, as he says in a blogpost while commenting on this short story: "[Emily] has, in that moment, crossed the border between young and old," i.e. she has learnt how to be an autonomous woman (McGregor, "On Learning" n.p.). The excerpt's content is arguably echoed by the italicised sentence whose subordinate clause is severed from its main clause, in that such an unwonted syntactic structure can be a metaphorical expression of Emily's release from her subordination to Marcus. The same goes for the other sentences which are either paratactic independent clauses (boldfaced) or long syntactic structures without punctuation (underlined). The paratactic sentences are, among other things, an emblem of separateness, while the underlined sentence can symbolise interconnectedness, as its constituents are not set off by any punctuation. Following from this interpretation, it can be conjectured that these sentences evoke both separateness and its self-generated opposite—relatedness, in the sense that they represent a sort of tender rejection, more specifically Emily's peaceful renunciation to her relationship with Marcus. Drawing on this reading, it can be said that Emily's trauma has triggered *individuation*.

Jung understands 'individuation' to mean the psychological process of differentiation whereby individuals gradually distance themselves from any form of identity that ineluctably promotes conformity (Jung, *The Basic* 259). Indeed, the purpose of the psychological process of individuation is to bolster the development of the individuality of each human being. This mainly involves the development of values which are specific to each individual, rather than pertaining to an entire group of people. For this reason, individuation consistently finds itself more or less in opposition to collective norms. However, this opposition is only apparent, inasmuch as, on closer inspection, individuation begets values that are "*differently* oriented, but not *antagonistic* to the collective norm" (Jung, *The Basic* 260, emphasis in original).

Tapping into what has been said about the last excerpt, it can be concluded that both this excerpt's content and syntactic structures typify how Emily's trauma conjures up individuation, pushes her to transgress her boyfriend's gendered perception of her as a subservient woman, and thereby allows her to assert herself as an independent being. This shows, yet again, how trauma evokes excendance—the ethical drive towards openness to the Other, including to one's self as another.

One way to wind up this subchapter is with a possible answer to Butler's following question: "If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?" (Butler, *Gender* 42). One plausible reply to this question is any overwhelming experience that disrupts the collective norms upon which the ego's self-identity hinges, most notably a trauma. This is underscored by certain of McGregor's narratives which, as has been demonstrated in this subchapter, are distinguished by certain thematic and syntactic properties, such as the spectral presence of Rebecca in *Reservoir13*. By dint of these elements, the narratives typify how their characters are haunted by their traumas compulsively and without respite. Although seemingly destructive, such frightening happenings have prompted the characters to transcend one of the mainstays of their self-identities—their gendered conception of women as subordinate to men. This shows, once again, how trauma instigates excendance—the ethical urge towards openness to alterity.

3. Human Superiority over Non-Humans

What has been illustrated in the last two subchapters is that McGregor's fiction clearly demonstrates how a trauma urges the one it impacts to go beyond prejudices and norms entrenched in various manifestations of her collective identities, notably her nationality, ethnicity and racial identity. In the present chapter, it will be displayed how the narratives exemplify how traumatic occurrences push traumatised individuals to overstep biases rooted in a form of identity of universal rather than collective nature—human superiority over non-humans. Thus, and as one shall attempt to demonstrate, these narratives epitomise how traumatic happenings favour excendance, and thereby impel traumatised individuals to open up to living beings as well as to non-living things.

Among the several of the author's narratives challenging the universal belief in human election upon which many a human being's self-identity relies is *Even the Dogs*. In the novel, the presence of dogs from the title onwards is an ethical index, and more specifically an index of relationality (Ganteau, *The Ethics* 144). This is epitomised by the 'We,' the novel's choral narrator, which arguably alludes to the iconic image of the homeless, including the novel's protagonists, who are always with their dogs. The human-animal hybrid that the 'We' contestably represents subverts many a reader's conception of animals which are commonly perceived as 'They'—creatures from which the human being has always exempted herself in order to maintain her belief in human exceptionalism (Derrida, *The Animal* 62).

Just as the 'We' defies human exceptionalism, so do many scenes from the novel. This includes the scene where Einstein, Danny's dog, breaks its legs while trying to protect its 'master' from two gangsters (*ED* 40). This scene, like many others, exemplifies how Danny's dog is worthy of the name Einstein, as it shows throughout the novel a humane wit that many a human being lacks.

Another example of how the novel challenges the stereotype of human election is the eponymous scene where a soldier tells Steve upon his arrival to the Bosnian borders: "There is nothing for you there. There, *even the dogs* are dead" (*ED* 113, emphasis added). For many people, animals do not die, in the sense that they are not *grievable* beings, i.e. beings whose loss does not matter (Butler, *Frames* 15). Animals do not die also because their slaughter is not considered a murder (Derrida, *The Animal* 111). In view of these considerations, the soldier's statement is highly subversive to human election, as it asserts that animals die, which makes them grievable beings, much like humans. Following from this interpretation, it can be said that the Bosnian War in the last narrative fragment is used for ethical purpose: It has disrupted the myth of human election upon which the soldier's self-identity supposedly hinges, and thereby has awakened him to the fact that animals are not so much unlike as like human beings: they are susceptible to injury, they die, and are therefore worthy of consideration.

Rhyming with *Even the Dogs*, McGregor's *Reservoir13* taps into its characters' traumas so as to challenge the myth of human exceptionalism upon which many a human being's self-identity hinges. The novel's triggering event is the traumatic disappearance of the thirteen-year-old girl, Rebecca Shaw, on New Year's Eve from an unnamed village in the Peak District. However, as already underlined, the novel's disembodied narrator brings little new information about Rebecca's case that suddenly emerges every fifty pages or so. Instead, it mainly dwells on the anonymous village's natural and cultural phenomena, the following narrative segment being a fair illustration:

> *On the television there were pictures of an overturned ship, helicopters hovering, life jackets floating in the water*. **In the fields south of the church there were wild pheasants feeding, their dashed brown feathers muddled in amongst the tall dead grass**. A line of parsnips were lifted at the allotments, the creamy heft of them shrugging free of the frost-black soil.
>
> (*Reservoir* 159-60, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

The excerpt opens on a metadiegetic insert about the television broadcast of a catastrophe happening outside the unnamed village (italicised). This is not an exception, as the novel is

punctuated with eleven metadiegetic passages opening with the same expression: 'On the television there were pictures.' Among these, nine are about catastrophes, including explosions, fires and famines, which are obviously the sort of things that can readily happen to anyone (*Reservoir* 37, 69, 137, 159, 161, 210, 255, 269, 309). Accordingly, it can be argued that most of the metadiegetic inserts in the novel are remarkable eye-openers, as they awaken readers to how they are susceptible to traumatic experiences which can unravel their lives in a split second. Readers are thereupon urged to concede to their common vulnerability of which no one is immune, and thereby become thoughtful of people suffering in disparate parts of the world.

In the rest of the excerpt, the narrative flits in acausal fashion from a thorough depiction of a wild pheasant (boldfaced) to a detailed description of the parsnip crop in the unnamed village (underlined), which is typical of the novel's entire narrative. Indeed, and as earlier highlighted, the impersonal narrator of the novel proceeds through monoliths of prose where it shifts back and forth in deliberate non-sequiturs between the delineation of the village's traditions and the portrayal of local wildlife. In doing so, it puts culture on a par with nature, and thereby equates human beings with other natural phenomena, which is at loggerheads with the stereotype of human supremacy. Drawing on this interpretation, it can be concluded that McGregor's *Reservoir13* taps into its characters' collective trauma in order to challenge the belief of human superiority upon which many a human subject's self-identity rests. In this regard, this novel testifies to the ethical end to which the author puts his use of trauma, which, in turn, evinces the ethical potential of such a disquieting experience.

In the same vein as *Reservoir13*, McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* is set in a rural area—the Fenlands. Most short stories from this collection centre on their protagonists' traumas which are scarcely expressed in a straightforward fashion. Instead, these frightening occurrences nowise infrequently undergo *displacement*, as they are mostly expressed surreptitiously through certain natural phenomena.[80] This is highlighted by the protagonist of "If It Keeps on Raining" whose fascination with a flood of epic proportions, as has been demonstrated, is the conscious expression of his unconscious obsession with his trauma, namely the football stadium stampede he witnessed (*TISTHSLY* 57-74). One possible reason why the traumatic accident of this character is displaced with an apocalyptic natural phenomenon is to centre "events with object or landscape rather than subject at the core. This can be seen as a radical repositioning

[80] Freud understands 'displacement' to mean the unconscious process whereby repressed memories find expression in other conscious representations (Freud, "Project" 1:350).

of the human within the story, but also a profoundly ecological way of thinking, in which human superiority is undermined" (Upstone 76).

In *If Nobody Speaks*, like in *This Isn't the Sort of Thing*, the narrative uses its characters' traumas as a means to challenge the idea of human election. This is typified by the second narrative thread of the novel which is related by a female narrator, who is traumatised, among other things, because she becomes accidentally pregnant with twins after a one-night stand. When asked about how she experiences her pregnancy, the narrator answers that:

> . . . *she felt like a damn elephant, a whale,* huge and stately and balloon-like but also she meant not like a human at all, like an animal, locked into a process much bigger than herself, more than one human being, she meant that she felt part of a species, part of something that nature was doing and she had no control of.
>
> (*INSRT* 227, emphasis added)

What is important in this passage is the female narrator's loss of agency on account of her accidental pregnancy, as she feels 'locked into a process much bigger than herself'—a natural process which acts upon her on the same level as other species, and which thereby awakens her to how humans, much like other living beings, are essentially vulnerable. Upon such an awakening, the narrator likens herself to mammals (emphasised), which shows how she has become aware that "We [human beings] have never been human," i.e. We have never been exceptional creatures independent of other living beings (Haraway, *When* 165). Rather, humans are essentially "bodies in braided, ontic, and antic relatings" (Haraway, *When* 165). In view of this reading, it can be postulated that the female narrator's traumatising pregnancy has subverted the deep-seated stereotype of human exceptionalism upon which her self-identity rests. The narrator is thereupon urged to acknowledge *species interdependence*, understood by Donna Haraway, the American Professor in the History of Consciousness, to mean "the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect" (Haraway, *When* 19).

Like the last excerpt, certain scenes from *Even the Dogs* show how a traumatic experience unsettles the stereotype of human election. This includes the scene of Ant's traumatic accident in Afghanistan when a homemade bomb blew up his Land Rover:

> The flower heads look*ing* down at him where he lies . . . the poppy heads, nodd*ing* and bow*ing* in the breeze . . . the farmers com*ing* to inspect their crops, walk*ing* slowly through the planted lines, tread*ing* on fallen petals, check*ing* the curl*ing* crowns of the ripen*ing* pods.
>
> (*ED* 114-5, emphasis added)

In this narrative fragment, like many others from the scene of Ant's war accident, the choral narrator displays an extraordinary attention to the natural scenery rather than to the scene's triggering event. This is strongly reminiscent of the literature of the romantic period which is mainly distinguished by its heightened interest in nature. Another remarkable feature of this passage corroborating its affinity with romanticism is its poetical character, as it is rife with assonance (italicised). Nevertheless, such an affinity is only apparent, in that the excerpt does not promote human superiority as romanticists do. Conversely, it hinges on Ant's war accident which evokes human vulnerability, as such a traumatic happening typifies how humans, like other species, are susceptible to overwhelming occurrences which can undo their lives in a blink of an eye. Thus, it can be said that Ant's trauma is mediated through a narrative which shows certain properties of romanticism only to abuse one of the main tenets of this artistic flow—human exceptionalism. This can suggest that the character's trauma is similarly subversive to human election, which underlines how such a frightening occurrence generates excendance: it pushes the traumatised character to transgress several stereotypes upon which his self-identity hinges, notably human superiority over non-humans, and thereby urges him to welcome his kinship with other living beings.

Thus far, it has been illustrated how the author uses his characters' traumas as a means to abuse the stereotype of human supremacy over other creatures, which attests to how such disconcerting events favour excendance. In what follows, it will be shown how the author goes even further to challenge human supremacy over artificial objects. This is typified by McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* which, as has been established, centres on David, a curator at Coventry museum who is traumatised by accidentally discovering that he was adopted. Most of this novel's chapters are structured around certain dated items that David has archived in order to use them in the reconstruction of his biological past, e.g. 'Local map, Whitechapel district, London, annotated, c.1950' and 'Tobacco tin, cigarettes, Christmas card, c.1914.' Each of these artefacts is depicted vividly through hypotyposis, so much so that it appears to have more depth and authenticity than David whose origins he fails to retrace. Thus, the vivid way in which these relics are described evinces their inherent *vibrancy*, i.e. "a liveliness intrinsic to the materiality of the thing formerly known as an object" (Bennett xvi). Drawing on this reading, it can be conjectured that the novel is mediated through its protagonist's trauma in order to chasten the fantasy of human mastery over inanimate objects which subsequently appear as vivid as any human beings, and which thereby call for attentiveness, or even respect.

On a similar note, and in the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, artefacts appear to be as lively as any human being. As already noted, the fulcrum of this narrative strand is the collective trauma of an anonymous street's inhabitants, whose lives are abruptly disrupted when they witness the car accident of one of their neighbour's twin sons, the seven-year-old "Shahid Mohammed Nawaz" (*INSRT* 269). While recounting the day this traumatic event takes place, the impersonal narrator describes some of the machines in the protagonists' city as 'breathing,' 'calling for help' and 'crying' like 'babies waawaa-ing' (*INSRT* 2). The anthropomorphic way in which these devices are depicted corresponds to a large extent to what Haraway calls *cyborg*, i.e. a being half-organic, half-machine (Haraway, "Manifesto" 1-42). According to Haraway, the organism-machine hybrid which the cyborg represents applies to each and every modern human whose life has become entirely dependent upon machines, so much so that it becomes "unclear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine" (Haraway 33). Thus, the present cyborg world, as *per* Haraway, has made "thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway 5, "Manifesto"). Tapping into Haraway's conception of cyborg, it can be posited that the animistic way in which the incorporeal narrator portrays many machines from the anonymous city defies the stereotype of human domination over machines, a stereotype which debatably represents one of the cornerstones of many a human being's self-identity. Following from this conclusion, it can be advanced that the author relies on his characters' collective trauma to evoke the reader's cyborg age. In doing so, he blurs boundaries between the human and the mechanical, disrupts the stereotypes of human supremacy upon which the reader's self-identity rests, and thereby forces the reader to welcome her joint kinship with machines.

Another possible reading of the impersonal narrator's personification of machines is that it demonstrates how such devices are made up of the same lively substance out of which any human being arises. This substance is *materiality*, understood by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost to mean "more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable" (Coole 9). Put otherwise, materiality is the vital energy inherent in all animate as well as inanimate entities, and it accounts for their ability to evolve in unforeseeable ways. Tapping into this definition, it can be advanced that the narrator's animistic depiction of machines unveils their inherent materiality. Thus, such a narrative fits in many ways into New Materialism which is:

> . . . an interdisciplinary, theoretical, and politically committed field of inquiry, emerging roughly at the millennium as part of what may be termed the post-constructionist, ontological, or material turn . . . Reworking received notions of matter as a uniform, inert substance or a socially constructed fact, new materialism foregrounds novel accounts of its agentic thrust, processual nature, formative impetus, and self-organizing capacities, whereby matter as an active force is not only sculpted by, but also co-productive in conditioning and enabling social worlds and expression, human life and experience.
>
> (Sencindiver n.p.)

As epitomised by this quotation, New Materialism undermines human supremacy, in that it evidences how materiality is the vital force which governs humans as well as non-humans. In this regard, it can be posited that the reason why the characters' collective trauma is imparted through a narrative showing many properties of New Materialism is to imply that such an apparently disquieting event, much like this interdisciplinary field, subverts human election. According, it can be concluded that the characters' collective trauma is employed for ethical purposes: it defies human election, and thereby urges for openness to the Other, be it a human being, an animal or even a machine.

What further highlights the new materialist orientation of the first narrative strand from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* is contestably the Jizo statue that the boy from number eighteen owns. As earlier indicated, this character is obsessed with the trifling matters of his urban environment, as evinced by his painstaking collection, which involves, amongst other things, used syringes, broken glass and photographs of each one of his neighbours. This collection amounts to a ritualistic shaping of reality whereby the young man tries "to control the world and reduce it from one incomprehensible mess to a structure which can be documented and understood" (Lea, "Jon" 209). There is, however, one object that the young man fails to fit into his collection: the Jizo statue. That is why he places it aside, while examining it compulsively and without respite: "[He] looks at it, runs his fingers over its smooth lines and rough texture. The small figure is [also] the reason he started working on the dissertation subject he did" (*INSRT* 73). This figure comes from Japan where Jizo statues line temples and cemeteries across the country, in that they are believed to be "protectors of unborn babies in traditional Japanese Buddhist teachings" (Blair n.p.). As has been postulated, these clay figures favour mourning, since they allow bereaved mothers to reify their loss—to give tangible forms to their miscarried children. Thus, such a ritual object clearly evidences human dependence upon supposedly inanimate objects which consequently appear to be as lively as any human being. This reading can account for the young man's obsession with the Jizo figure which debatably awakens him to the materiality of what he commonly perceives as inert objects without any agency. In this regard, it can

be posited that the Jizo figure, in McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, betokens the materiality of inert objects which subsequently become worthy of consideration and even respect. Thus, this figure acts throughout the novel as a motif which puts, to some extent, objects on a par with human beings, and which subsequently undermines the myth of human election. One reason for the use of such a motif throughout a narrative whose linchpin is the collective trauma of an unnamed street's dwellers is to intimate that such a frightening happening is likewise subversive of human superiority.

To conclude, the protagonists' traumatic accidents are communicated through narratives abounding, among other things, with the personification of inanimate objects and unwonted elements, like the 'We' in *Even the Dogs*. By way of these elements, the author challenges one of the mainstays of many a human being's self-identity—human hegemony over non-humans, including natural species and machines. Thus, such narratives testify to the ethical end to which the author puts his use of trauma which subsequently appears to be conducive to excendance—the ethical drive towards openness to each and every other.

Conclusion

What distinguishes traumatic memory from other types of memories is arguably the intense emotion it generates. This is epitomised by Freud when he states that memories are "intensely cathected," i.e. highly charged with emotion ("Inhibition" 20: 137). On account of its ample emotion, traumatic memory takes on an *uncanny* character, understood by Freud to mean the inherent strangeness of such a memory (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 224). This is typified by McGregor's fiction which, as has been demonstrated in the fourth chapter, shows three of the uncanny aspects that traumatic memories assume. The first is the *paradoxical phenomenality* of these memories, namely their being a peculiar commingling of the known and the unknown (Royle 140). This finds expression in certain of McGregor's narratives through which the author employs, among other things, unwonted syntactic structures to perform certain cinematic techniques, like jump cuts. By dint of these techniques, the author presents traumatic memory as a paradoxical phenomenality: a mental phenomenon partly accessible but mostly inaccessible to the human consciousness. The second uncanny aspect of traumatic memory displayed by McGregor's narrative is its latency. Indeed, even when under the threshold of consciousness, such a memory still breathes its spirit into some non-traumatic experiences. This is exemplified by many a narrative from the author's fiction in which characters' traumas are scarcely mentioned in a straightforward manner. Instead, such frightening events are mostly demonstrated surreptitiously through certain metaphors. By means of these metaphors, the author evinces how a traumatic memory is not always a replica of the eerie event with which it is originally associated. Rather, it mostly finds expression in some untraumatic representations, hence the latent character of such a memory. The third and last uncanny character of traumatic memory demonstrated by the author's narratives lies in its contagiousness. Indeed, and as evidenced by many psychologists such as Laplanche, traumatic memories are transmittable from one individual to another, including from an adult to a child. This is clearly illustrated by the author's fiction which is peppered with certain unwonted narrative ingredients, including splintered subordinate clauses, direct speech unmarked by speech markers and second person narratives. By way of these elements, the author's narratives epitomise how traumatic memories are not only intrapersonal but also interpersonal phenomena—mental representations communicable from one individual to another, hence their uncanniness.

On account of its uncanny character, traumatic memory disrupts the ego's superstructures—the different elements which constitute the ego's self-identity, and which shape its

perception of itself as well as of the world around it. This is evidenced by McGregor's fiction which, as has been illustrated in the fifth chapter, demonstrates how trauma memories engender both derealisation and depersonalisation, the two symptomatic expressions of the critical disturbance traumatic memory causes to the traumatised person's self-identity. As has been indicated, derealisation involves the experience of unreality of surroundings that traumatised individuals intermittently suffer (American Psychiatric Association 272). This is exemplified by the author's narratives which abound with certain narrative and figurative devices, most notably what Genette has defined as *narrative metalepsis*. By dint of these figures, the author's narratives favour derealisation, and thereby unhinge many a reader's self-identity. These narratives are also rife with other narrative ingredients, such as self-effaced narrators—narrators who bring tales, but do not install themselves in them. Such narrators, along with several other components of the author's narratives, typify how traumatic memory degenerates into depersonalisation—the trauma symptom which demonstrates how traumatic memory disrupts the ego's self-identity, and thereby makes the ego experience many constituents of its self-identity, including its body, as that of another (American Psychiatric Association 272).

Because it wreaks havoc on the self-identity of the one it impacts, traumatic memory appears, *prima facie*, to be detrimental. However, and as has been shown in the sixth chapter, this mental phenomenon is conducive to a form of excendance, in Levinas's acceptance of the word, a drive of openness to the alterity of the beings of the world (Levinas, *Cultural* 54). This is underlined by McGregor's fiction which relies upon traumatic memory's destabilisation of the ego's self-identity, so as to subvert many negative stereotypes upon which the ego's self-identity rests. Among these stereotypes is the denigration of individuals whose collective identities, including their ethnicities, do not align with the prevailing identity of their society. Many a collective identity, such as nationality, is a key constituent of the ego's self-identity, and contestably accounts for the ego's unresponsiveness to those who are not members of its identity group. Thus, by disrupting the ego's self-identity, traumatic memory impels the ego to transcend its various collective identities upon which its self-identity rests, and thereby makes the ego go beyond the negative stereotypes rooted in these collective forms of identity. This is corroborated by McGregor's narratives which tap into the disruptive effect of traumatic memory upon their traumatised characters' self-identities, so as to subvert stereotypes entrenched in four forms of collective identity upon which these characters' self-identities rest: nationality, ethnicity, race and gender. In doing so, these narratives underline how traumatic memory is a form of excendance. Another ethical yield of traumatic memory is arguably its

acute disturbance of a stereotype upon which many a human being's self-identity is based: human superiority over non-humans. This is highlighted by McGregor's fiction which is dotted with unwonted narrative elements, including the 'We' in *Even the Dogs*. By way of this element, along with several others, the author's narratives demonstrate how traumatic memory unhinges the myth of human hegemony over non-humans, a myth upon which many a human's self-identity relies. Thus, these narratives epitomise, yet again, how trauma triggers excendance—the ethical drive whereby the ego is forced to go beyond both its cognition and self-identity, and thereby opens to the Other in her irreducible alterity.

However, and since traumatic memory alienated the ego from its self-identity, it generates, as has been demonstrated, a deep sense of insecurity reminiscent of the *birth trauma*, i.e. the primal trauma any human being experiences when severed during parturition from her mother's womb (Rank, *The Trauma* 11-45). That is why many a trauma victim falls back on her self-identity—the set of her protective superstructures, and thereby becomes unresponsive to the Other. This is evidenced by several constituents of McGregor's fiction which, as will be shown in the following part, evidences how, in response to their overwhelming traumatic memories, several trauma victims close in on themselves, and subsequently display a cognitive demeanour reminiscent of the Piagetian egocentrism.

Part III

Traumatic Memory and Egocentrism

Introduction

In the first part of the thesis, it has been demonstrated how McGregor's fiction is marked by certain narrative properties, including the hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life, an unhinged chronology and a disrupted linguistic representation of the characters' traumatic experiences. These narrative ingredients typify how, due to its intense emotion, traumatic memory surpasses human cognitive capacities for assimilation. On account of its abundant emotion, traumatic memory also assumes an uncanny character, i.e. an overwhelming ambiguity beyond the ego's self-identity. This is illustrated by the second part of the thesis where it has been shown how McGregor's fiction is dotted, among other things, with unconventional syntactic structures, narrative metalepsis and self-effaced narrators. By dint of these elements, along with several others, the author's narratives display how, as a result of its uncanny character, traumatic memory leads to a critical disturbance of the ego's self-identity. As has been postulated, self-identity is a mixed blessing, in that it provides the ego with a sense of security, while also conditioning the ego's perception of itself as well as of the world around it. Thus, by unhinging the ego's self-identity, trauma engenders a deep sense of insecurity, while it also opens the ego's eye to the irreducible alterity of other beings. This is epitomised by McGregor's narratives which are peppered with certain narrative ingredients, such as the personification of inanimate objects. By way of these elements, the author's fiction exemplifies how, under the influence of its trauma, the ego is forced to go beyond stereotypes ingrained in certain constituents of its self-identity, which testify to how such an experience is conducive to excendance: the ethical impetus towards otherness.

Although it favours excendance, and as has been propounded, traumatic memory also conjures up a great sense of insecurity, and thus of vulnerability. That is why trauma victims, at least at first, do not show any tendency towards openness to otherness. "Ashamed of their own vulnerability and often enraged about their lack of help from outside, many victims lose faith in the possibility of meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 154). They thereupon turn in on themselves, and thereby become unresponsive to the Other. Meanwhile, they demonstrate an unusual cognitive demeanour, as they no longer accommodate their prior knowledge to the demands of the external world. This is buttressed by van der Kolk who, while referring to traumatised children, states that: "When the system is overloaded because of unassimilated fear and pain, the child loses the ability to shift easily

through sets of previously assimilated signs and symbols. He has lost the function of ***accommodation***" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 96, emphasis and boldface added).

By 'accommodation,' van der Kolk alludes to one of the twin mental processors that Piaget introduces in his theory of human cognitive development: assimilation and accommodation. According to Piaget, accommodation is the mental phenomenon which allows for "the modification of internal schemes to fit reality" (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6).[81] In contradistinction to accommodation, assimilation, as *per* Piaget, is the mental processor which permits "the filtering or modification of the input" (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6). These two processors are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Indeed, any new life experience usually leads to the revision of one or several preexisting schemes (accommodation). Once remodelled, these schemes are treated in such a way as to fit in with other schemes of the human mind (assimilation) (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 5).

However, and as evidenced by van der Kolk, traumatised individuals no longer demonstrate any propensity for the reshaping of their preexisting schemes. Instead, they close in on themselves, while showing a cognitive behaviour typical of *egocentrism*. Piaget understands this to mean "A cognitive state in which the cogniser sees the world from a single point of view only, his own, but without knowledge of the existence of viewpoints or perspectives and *a fortiori*, without awareness that he is a prisoner of his own (viewpoint)" (Flavell 60, condensed from Piaget's *The Construction of Reality in the Child*).

Egocentrism, for Piaget, is not limited to a specific stage of human cognitive development, but rather reoccurs "at the beginning of the sensorimotor stage [ages birth-2 years], at the beginning of the preoperational stage of development [ages 2-7 years], at the beginning of the concrete operations stage [ages 7-11 years] and, as discovered later on, at the beginning of the formal-operational stage [ages 11-15 years]" (Kesselring 332). In each of these four stages, egocentrism takes on distinct forms. In the sensorimotor stage, for instance, it manifests itself in *adualism*—the inability of the neonate to conceive of itself as a discrete subject, separate from the other objects of the world (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 22). Such a form of egocentrism is overcome when the child of two differentiates and coordinates between her sensorimotor schemes. This amounts to a *Copernican revolution*, as the child becomes aware of

[81] See detailed definition of 'scheme' on p.19.

her being “an object among others in a universe that is made of permanent objects” (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 13).

In contrast to the sensorimotor stage, egocentrism in the preoperatory stage is made manifest in the inability of the child of two to recognize the multiperspective nature of the external world (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 128-9). Although a child at this age begins “to take a greater interest in the objects and people around him, he sees them from only one point of view: his own” (Singer 21). At the end of the preoperatory stage, a child becomes aware of the multiperspective nature of each object of the external world, and, as such, acquires *relativity*, namely the ability to “differentiate and coordinate multiple perspectives” (Kalyan-Masih 37).

Unlike a child in the preoperatory stage, the concrete operations child is able to recognise the multiperspective nature of the world. However, she can only reason about concrete objects, as her mind is still conditioned by the empirical reality: “the perceptual ‘givens’ of the here-and-now” (Kalyan-Masih 37). This is epitomised by the fact that the concrete operations child, for example, does not conceive of natural numbers as abstract entities. Instead, she considers each one of them to be a set of concrete objects (Kesselring 341). As a result, a concrete operations child cannot understand purely theoretical concepts, such as proportionality (Kesselring 341).

At variance with a child in the concrete operations stage, the formal operatory adolescent is not limited by the empirical reality, as she develops metacognitive abilities by virtue of which she can understand and analyse purely theoretical concepts (Elkind 1029). Nevertheless, the formal operatory adolescent still demonstrates some forms of egocentrism. This is typified by her tendency towards overvaluing her own significance, as she usually behaves like “a messianist, thereby displaying a behaviour that is typical of an egocentric attitude. Thereafter, she enthusiastically promotes socially important goals, such as justice, protection of the environment, etc.” (Kesselring 342). Under the influence of such a messianic zeal, the formal operatory teenager believes that other people are always preoccupied with her appearance and behaviour. Subsequently, she nowise infrequently tries to anticipate: “the reactions of other people to himself. These anticipations, however, are based on the premise that others are as admiring or as critical of him as he is of himself. In a sense, then, the adolescent is continually constructing, or reacting to, an *imaginary audience*” (Elkind 1030, emphasis in original). Thus, it becomes clear that the adolescent has a predilection for the conflation of fiction and reality. This, among

other things, stems from the desire of many an adolescent to reshape reality according to her whims.

To put it succinctly, egocentrism, according to Piaget, is a cognitive state recapitulated under different forms at the beginning of each of the four stages of human cognitive development. However, and in contradistinction to Piaget, it will be assumed in the present thesis that egocentrism is not only specific to children and adolescents. Rather, it also appears in many adults who, in the face of extreme events like traumas, usually turn in on themselves. This is highlighted by Freud when he compares an individual's reaction to stimuli evoking strong displeasure to "a psychic system shut off from the stimuli of the external world, and able to satisfy even its nutritional requirements autistically" (Freud, "Formulations" 12:220). By withdrawing into one's self, a trauma victim could not go "beyond seeing himself at the centre of the universe. He finds it hard to shift sets, not only with physical objects but with self/other categories" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 100). As has been indicated, this cognitive demeanour is one of the hallmarks of egocentrism, which underscores how many a trauma victim backslides into such a cognitive state.

Using an approach informed by the foregoing theoretical apparatus, it will be illustrated in this third part how, in response to their traumas, many of McGregor's characters fall back on what Piaget has defined as egocentrism, which leads to the deterioration of their psychological state. In order to evidence this statement, it will be shown in the seventh chapter how the peculiar language of certain passages from McGregor's trauma-laden narratives is, in many ways, typical of what Piaget calls *egocentric language*. Since language, as underlined by the renowned American linguist Noam Chomsky, is a *mirror of mind*, the egocentric language whereby many traumatic occurrences of the author's characters are mediated arguably reflects the egocentric mental state of these characters (Chomsky 4). This claim is further corroborated by the way in which time and space are presented through certain narrative fragments from McGregor's fiction. In terms of time, many are the extracts which sabotage the reader's chronological logic. Characterised by a jagged chronology, along with several other narrative features, these excerpts not only conflate distinct temporalities, but also give the impression that time is plastic—speeding up, slowing down, and even stopping—which largely corresponds to what Piaget terms *egocentric time*. Accordingly, and as will be exemplified in the eighth chapter, such narrative fragments debatably evidence the propensity of several of the author's traumatised characters for an egocentric conception of time. As earlier specified,

egocentrism is an overarching cognitive feature covering not only the egocentric agent's conception of time and her use of language, but also the way in which she perceives space. As far as an egocentric individual is concerned, the world is not multiperspectival, i.e. people, differently situated in space, do not have different perspectives. Instead, an egocentric subject, particularly a child under seven years, spontaneously reduces the world to one perspective—her own, hence Piaget's concept of *egocentric space*. As will be shown in the ninth chapter, many traumatised characters tend towards such a self-centred conception of the world. This is displayed by several narratives from McGregor's fiction which are marked by certain properties, including their reflectors who impose an authoritative gaze over most of the events that fall within their remit. These narrative elements, along with several others, attest to how traumatised characters relapse into a cognitive behaviour in line with egocentrism, which, as will be shown, explains why many of these characters' psychological faculties, including especially their capacity to access others' interiority, become significantly impaired.

Chapter 7

Egocentric Language

In the last pages, it has been advanced that the human mind is not exclusively evolutive, but also resilient, i.e. it can regress back to former stages of cognitive development. This is clearly observed in numerous psychopathologies when a considerable number of people backslide into a mental condition reminiscent of that of a child and primitive human subject (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 240). Among these pathologies are traumatic neuroses which cannot be readily surmounted, as trauma victims usually waver between *perversion* and *surrender* (Ghent 108-36). By 'surrender,' the American psychoanalyst Emmanuel Ghent means "a quality of liberation and expansion of the self-corollary to the letting down of defensive barriers," with defensive barriers being, as earlier advanced, the very constitutive elements of the ego's self-identity (Ghent 108). Accordingly, to surrender means to waive one's self-identity, the very mental phenomenon which enables the ego to conceive of itself as an 'I' and which thereby provides the ego with a sense of security. Driven by the wish to surrender and opposed by the threat it implies, many a trauma victim resorts to *perversion*, i.e. to different forms of protection against "anxiety, shame, guilt, anger [which] are, in a way, all deceptions, whether they take the form of denial, splitting, repression, rationalizations, evasions" (Ghent 110). In perversion, and as earlier propounded, several traumatised individuals revert back to a conception of the world typical of egocentric phases of human cognitive development.

As previously suggested, Piaget does not employ 'egocentric' to refer to a personality trait, as emphasised by his following statement: "I said egocentrism whilst at the same time specifying that this was a matter of intellectual, cognitive and unconscious egocentrism with no relation at all to what in ordinary language is called *egocentrism* (hypertrophy of self-consciousness)" (Piaget, "Commentary" 244). Thus, egocentrism, according to Piaget, is to be taken in an intellectual not in an ethical sense, and is chiefly defined by *adualism*, in Piaget's acceptance of the term, i.e. the inability to differentiate between aspects of self and those of the physical and social environment (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 22-4).[82]

As has been postulated, egocentrism is most clearly evident in the way in which an egocentric individual uses language which, as *per* Piaget, takes on two distinct forms: the

[82] According to Piaget, an egocentric child overcomes her egocentrism when she develops *decentration*, the mental schema (or action-structure) whereby she becomes able to compare her actions "to other possible actions and particularly to those of other people" (Piaget, "Commentary" 253).

socialised and the *egocentric* (Piaget, *The Language* 9). By 'socialised language,' Piaget refers to the common use of language as a means whereby a subject exchanges her thoughts with others (Piaget, *The Language* 9). Contrariwise, egocentric language does not serve any social function, but is rather a sort of soliloquy whereby a subject does not bother to know "to whom he is speaking nor whether he is being listened to. He talks either for himself or for the pleasure of associating anyone who happens to be there" (Piaget, *The Language* 9).

Although she employs both socialised and egocentric forms of language, an egocentric agent demonstrates a significantly greater tendency to use egocentric language which, according to Piaget, may be divided into three categories: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. Echolalia involves the tendency of an egocentric person, especially a child, to repeat other people's words for the mere pleasure of talking. From the point of view of personality and from the social point of view, "echolalia would seem to be, as Janet and Baldwin maintain, a confusion between the I and the not-I, between the activity of one's own body and that of other people's bodies" (Piaget, *The Language* 11). Like echolalia, monologue has no social function, as the general characteristic of such a type of egocentric language is that the egocentric subject, mainly a child, talks "to himself as though he were thinking aloud. He does not address anyone" (Piaget, *The Language* 9). At variance with both monologue and echolalia, collective monologue is, for Piaget, the most social variety of egocentric language, "since to the pleasure of talking it adds that of *soliloquizing* before others and of interesting, or thinking to interest, them in one's own actions and one's own thoughts" (Piaget, *The Language* 18, emphasis added).[83]

However distinct, the three categories of egocentric language still have two common features: syncretism and juxtaposition. The difference between these two is synthesised by Piaget's following statement:

> In verbal intelligence juxtaposition is the absence of relations between the various terms of a sentence; syncretism is the all-round understanding which makes the sentence into a whole. In logic juxtaposition leads to an absence of implication and reciprocal justification between the successive judgments; syncretism creates a tendency to bind everything together and to justify by means of the most ingenious or the most facetious devices.
>
> (Piaget, *Judgement* 59)

[83] Unlike the way in which they are used in literary studies, Piaget uses 'monologue' and 'soliloquy' interchangeably to mean the tendency of an egocentric agent to talk to herself, whether she is alone or accompanied.

Simply stated, juxtaposition and syncretism are two antithetical aspects of egocentric thinking. Juxtaposition involves the egocentric subject's tendency to focus on details at the expense of the whole, which accounts for the fragmentation of many of her utterances. Conversely, syncretism is the outcome of the egocentric individual's concentration on the whole to the detriment of details. This is made manifest by many of an egocentric subject's utterances which are a jumble of incongruent elements.

Using an approach rooted in Piaget's understanding of egocentric language, it will be illustrated in the present chapter how certain traumatic happenings of McGregor's characters are communicated through a language much in line with that of an egocentric subject, which debatably reflects the tendency of these characters towards egocentrism. To this end, it will be exemplified in the first subchapter how some narrative fragments from the author's fiction display one, two or even the three categories of egocentric language: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. In the second subchapter, it will be demonstrated how many traumatic accidents of McGregor's traumatised protagonists are imparted through inconsistent monoliths of prose broadly typical of syncretism in egocentric individuals. Eventually, it will be evinced how the fragmented nature of some excerpts about the traumas of the characters is, in many ways, in agreement with what Piaget identifies as juxtaposition in egocentric subjects, which arguably mirrors the propensity of these characters for egocentrism.

1. Echolalia, Monologue and Collective Monologue

In the introduction to this subchapter, it has been indicated that, for Piaget, the main aspect of egocentric language is that it has no social function, since it is basically a self-talk. It has also been pointed out that, according to Piaget, egocentric language takes on three distinct forms: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. Interestingly enough, these egocentric forms of language punctuate many passages from McGregor's fiction, especially those about the characters' traumas. This is made evident by the scene from McGregor's *So Many Ways* where Julia spontaneously remembers her short-lived marriage to Major Pearson, while teaching David, who was still then a young child, ballroom dancing:

> In the ballroom, the dance floor less crowded than it had been a few moments before, *one of the tail-coated medical students and his partner danced alongside William and Julia . . . the student looking at Julia with interest*. *She glanced across at him nervously, and he* ***said*** *excuse me, I'm sorry, may I? reaching his hand out to her stomach, slipping a stethoscope from his inside pocket and looping its end inside her dress*. . . **Julia leant forward to** ***whisper***

> **in [William's] ear: My darling William stop Pregnant stop Surprised but happy be careful I love you stop** . . . [And] <u>almost while he was still speaking the blue sky of the ballroom ceiling was covered over with smoke and oily clouds . . . the officers of William's party, clambering under a table which offered no protection when the mortar shells came raining down through the stained-glass skylight, tumbling and exploding directly amongst them, scattering shrapnel and mess tins and glassware and limbs.</u>
>
> (*SMWB* 54-5, italics, boldface, underlining and brackets added)

As previously indicated, this scene is about Julia's recollection of four events that have profoundly marked her life. The first (unmarked) is about her marriage ceremony to Major Pearson. The second (italicised) takes place months later, and is about the doctor who informs Julia that she is pregnant. The third (boldfaced) is contemporaneous with the second, and is made up of some fragments from Julia's telegraph correspondence with her husband when he was on the frontlines fighting the Nazis. And the fourth event (underlined) is Major Pearson's death, along with other British soldiers, when Nazi mortar shells exploded directly among them. Although distant in both time and space, these four events are presented as if they were happening simultaneously during Julia's marriage ceremony. Such an anachronistic account can be explained in two different ways. The first is that it shows how Julia, much like many a trauma victim, cannot give any chronological account of her traumatic past. Instead, as soon as she remembers anything from such a disquieting past, she spontaneously and instantaneously remembers the rest of it in one fell swoop. That is why her recollection gives the impression that the main events constituting her traumatic past are synchronous. The second possible rendering of Julia's chronologically distorted reminiscence is that it is typical of *syncretism* in egocentric subjects. As will be specified in the subsequent subchapter, Piaget understands 'syncretism' to mean the propensity of an egocentric person for an undifferentiated combination of the most varied impressions (Piaget, *The Language* 46). In this respect, it can be advanced that Julia's jumbled recollection of her traumatic past shows how, in response to such an eerie past, she falls back on a syncretistic way of thinking usually common among adolescents and children when they are still at the egocentric phases of their cognitive development.

Another evidence of Julia's egocentrism is contestably the unwonted use of the coordinating conjunction 'and' (bracketed). Usually such a conjunction is employed to relate simultaneous or successive events. However, it is used in the passage to connect Julia's correspondence with her husband and his death scene, which are two distant events. Such an uncommon use of conjunctions largely squares with what Piaget identifies as *transductive reasoning* in egocentric agents, namely the form of reasoning "which, through the agency of syncretism,

leads from one particular to another, heedless both of logical necessity and of general laws" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 167). Thus, it can be conjectured that the unusual use of the coordinating 'and' in the last scene signals Julia's propensity for transductive reasoning, which likely reflects her proclivity to think in a way much like that of an egocentric subject.

What further demonstrates Julia's egocentric demeanour in the previous scene are debatably the different segments in reported speech. Although preceded by introductory verbs (italicised, boldfaced and underlined), these segments are unmarked by quotation marks, and are thereby presented as a hybrid combination of direct and free direct discourse. Usually direct discourse reports a verbal exchange between two or more individuals, while free direct speech is commonly about a first-person internal monologue. Being an undifferentiated blend of these two forms of reported discourse, the way Julia's reminiscence is presented contestably implies that what is communicated is an externalised internal monologue. More specifically, it is a soliloquy delivered by Julia who, oblivious to David, spontaneously recites the words she exchanged with her husband in their correspondence, as well as the words of the doctor when he informed her that she was pregnant. Relying on this reading, Julia's behaviour closely matches two forms of egocentric language: *collective monologue* and *echolalia*. By 'collective monologue,' Piaget means the type of self-talk in egocentric individuals where the audience is there simply as a stimulus (Piaget, *The Language* 18-9). Concerning 'echolalia,' it is employed by Piaget to refer to the egocentric subject's repetition of certain words, especially those of other people (Piaget, *The Language* 11-13). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the unusual reported speech in the last scene reveals how, as she recalls her traumatic past, Julia falls back on a kind of self-talk typical of the egocentric phases of human cognitive development.

Much like Julia, the entire narrative whose trigger is David's trauma demonstrates several properties of egocentric language. Indeed, this narrative is, among other things, interspersed with repeated expressions, or some close variants of them, such is the case of the following expression: "These things, the way they fall into place" (*SMWB* 66, 69*2, 97). What is meant by 'these things' in this sentence is most probably traumatic accidents, including David's traumatic discovery of his adoption. In this regard, the reiteration of this statement has an ethical import, as it repeatedly reminds readers that traumatic happenings can readily happen to them. Subsequently, readers have their eyes opened to their intrinsic vulnerability, which is, as *per* Pelluchon, the key step in developing an ethic of consideration (Pelluchon 112). Paradoxical as

it may sound, the reiterated expression can be an epitome of egocentrism, since it has two aspects particular to egocentric language. The first is that it mentions an unspecified referent—'these things'—which is one of the main characteristics of language in egocentric subjects, who designate mostly everything by allusion (Piaget, *The Language* 40). The second remarkable feature of the anaphoric expression is that it is replicated almost identically several times throughout the narrative in an acausal fashion. Noncausal repetition of words and/or discourses is also the key characteristic of one of the three categories of egocentric language—echolalia. Accordingly, it can be argued that the reason behind communicating David's trauma through a narrative displaying certain features of egocentric language is to imply that, by dint of such an eerie incident, David has relapsed back into an egocentric use of language.

In the same vein as McGregor's *So Many Ways*, the narrative of *Reservoir13* shows many properties particular to the language of an egocentric subject. One of these properties involves the tendency of the narrator to repeat several times the same expressions. This includes the restatement of the following sentence, or a close variant of it, at the beginning of most of the thirteen chapters of the novel: "At midnight when the year turned" (*Reservoir* 31, 59, 85, 109, 135, 159, 185, 213, 239, 263, 287, 309). The same goes for this expression, "The missing girl's name was Rebecca, or Becky, or Bex," which is repeated nearly identically throughout the narrative (*Reservoir* 29, 56, 106, 182, 260, 323). Similarly, the very structure of the entire narrative is circular, based on the reiterated depiction of the same cultural and natural phenomena in the anonymous village where the novel's triggering event, namely Rebecca's traumatic disappearance, takes place. As earlier indicated, the uttering of the same expression is, according to Piaget, the characteristic feature of one of the three categories of egocentric language—echolalia. Thus, it can be posited that the novel's inclination to restate the same structures and themes in a way much similar to echolalia in egocentric agents intimates, among other things, that traumatic events, such as Rebecca's disappearance, can result in the traumatised subject's regression into an egocentric utilisation of language.

Besides its compulsion to repeat some themes and structures, the narrative is distinguished by the many passages imparted in unconventional reported speech. In this narrative, as well as in McGregor's other writings, most fragments in reported speech are presented as a hybrid mix of direct and free direct speech, in that they are introduced by reporting verbs, while being unmarked by quotation marks. As has been conjectured, such an unusual form of reported discourse can suggest that what is being communicated is a self-talk, which is the common

aspect among the three forms of egocentric language. This interpretation can explain why the narrator of *Reservoir13* appears to be an impersonal entity, "a cold camera-eye, or the eye of a hawk circling above the village" (Hadley n.p.). Indeed, because her entire narrative is supposedly a self-talk, the narrator is not actively engaged with the novel's characters. Subsequently, she cannot be identified as an 'I,' since only "Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*," i.e. only when actively engaged with the 'you,' an individual can be seen as an 'I' (Buber 28, emphasis in original).

To conclude what has been said concerning McGregor's *Reservoir13,* this novel is marked by certain uncommon elements, especially the reiteration of the same themes and structures. Likewise, egocentric forms of language, most notably echolalia, are basically distinguished by the tendency of an egocentric subject to talk to herself, while uttering the same expressions or discourses. Remarkably enough, egocentric forms of language, including echolalia, are frequent among many an individual suffering from certain psychopathologies. This is evidenced by the case of Ms. D., one of van der Kolk's traumatised patients who intermittently spends hours speaking to herself (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 175). In this respect, it can be conjectured that the aforementioned narrative ingredients from *Reservoir13* typify how, in response to their traumas, many traumatised individuals, including the novel's protagonists, backslide into a verbal behaviour usually particular to egocentric phases of human cognitive development.

Just as *Reservoir13* demonstrates several forms of egocentric language, so does *Even the Dogs*. This is evinced by the way in which many of the novel's protagonists, especially Steve, use language. Traumatised by his experience as a British soldier during the Falklands War and often enraged about his lack of help from his compatriots, Steve repeats compulsively and without respite the same statement in an acausal fashion: "My country lied to me" (*ED* 68, 69*2, 70, 102, 128*3). As already mentioned, the noncausal reiteration of the same statements is among the main features of one of three categories of egocentric language—echolalia. Thus, it can be conjectured that David's restatement of the last quoted sentence shows how, due to his trauma, he has reverted back to an egocentric use of language.

What further underlines how Steve employs language egocentrically are the many scenes where he is caught while apparently talking to somebody on the phone. Indeed, it turns out that he has always been speaking to himself, as evidenced when his friend Ben asked to use his mobile, and Steve's answer was: "Aint got no credit pal aint never got no credit" (*ED* 100).

Thus, his reply shows how he has always been indulging in a soliloquy, whether he is alone or accompanied. His demeanour largely corresponds to two categories of egocentric language: monologue and collective monologue. The difference between these two forms of egocentric language is that monologue is a solitary self-talk, while collective monologue is about soliloquising in other people's presence. In this respect, it can be posited that Steve's soliloquy when on the phone exemplifies how, on account of his trauma, he has regressed into egocentric forms of speech.

As already noted, each of the three categories of egocentric language is primarily a self-talk in which an egocentric subject is both addresser and addressee, both an 'I' and a 'you,' in other words, a 'We.' Thus, it can be posited that the 'We,' the novel's choral narrator, is actually an 'I' engaged throughout her narrative in a self-talk similar to that of an egocentric agent. This claim is underscored by several excerpts from the novel, especially the last chapter which is made up of two narrative threads. The first is about the choral narrator's simultaneous narration whereby she depicts herself while sitting in a court of law, waiting for the coroner's verdict on the exact circumstances of Robert's death. As for the second narrative, it takes place several days before the first, and is about the narrator sitting next to a hospital morgue, and waiting for Robert's corpse to be carried to the crematorium. Both these narrative strands are intercut with the narrator's commentaries about the novel's characters, as exemplified by the subsequent passage:

> Did she go back. Did she see him again. Did she climb in through the window one more time and ***say*** *Dad I'm back but I didn't bring nothing I aint got nothing for you* . . . Did he look up at her and plead with her and ***say*** *Laura, what the bloody hell is wrong with you I need you to help me*. Did she what. Did she look at him for as long as she could bear and ***say*** *Dad I needed you for a long time didn't I and where were you* . . . [Is she glad now she didn't] . . . Did she climb back out the window while he still ***said*** *Laura don't go what you doing*. Was that the last thing she ever saw ever heard him say. Is that it. Can she get that out of her mind now. Can she ever get that out of her.
>
> (*ED* 167-8, emphasis, boldface and brackets added)

This extract, mostly in free direct speech, communicates the different questions over which the narrator broods. Interestingly enough, these questions are imparted through a narrative which displays four properties common among the three types of egocentric language. The first property is illustrated by the narrative's promiscuous mixing of direct and free direct speech (italicised). As already advanced, such an unwonted discourse arguably signals that what is

being reported is a self-talk, with self-talk being the general characteristic of the three forms of egocentric language.

Another joint feature of egocentric speech is syncretism, namely the propensity of an egocentric subject to join together in an inconsistent way heterogeneous clauses without realising that she is doing anything artificial (Piaget, *The Language* 140). This is made manifest by the way in which the narrative of the last passage moves in deliberate non-sequiturs from one clause to another, without the signposting of paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions. Thus, this narrative contestably shows how the narrator falls back on a syncretistic way of thinking, which possibly reflects her egocentric mental state.

Another remarkable property of egocentric speech is that it frequently involves *questions for the air*. Piaget understands this to mean the many remarks made by egocentric agents "in interrogative form without being in any way questions addressed to anyone. The proof of this is that the egocentric agent does not listen to the answer, and does not even expect it" (Piaget, *The Language* 29). The same debatably goes for the narrator's series of questions which are distinguished by an uncommon punctuation. Indeed, they end with a full stop instead of a question mark, which can be interpreted in two distinct ways. The first is that these questions are essentially rhetorical whereby the choral narrator implicitly blames Laura and even the whole of her society for Robert's death. As rhetorical questions are meant to make a point rather than to elicit an answer, the narrator is not waiting for an answer, hence the absence of question marks. Another possible rendition of the narrator's uncommonly punctuated questions is that they are questions for the air: questions addressed to nobody, and making no point. Tapping into this interpretation, it can be postulated that such questions evince the narrator's egocentric use of language.

Besides being probably questions for the air, some of the narrator's series of interrogative utterances (bracketed) end with ellipses, which most likely signals an abrupt breaking-off in speech. Such a verbal behaviour is frequent among egocentric individuals. Indeed, their speech is mainly characterised by its elliptical style, which demonstrates, according to Piaget, the fact that, when indulging in self-talk, the egocentric agent is actually thinking aloud, and does not therefore feel the need to end her aposiopetic utterances (Piaget, *The Language* 125).

In a nutshell, the choral narrator's discourse in the previous excerpt shows four aspects specific to the three forms of egocentric language. The first is that this discourse is probably a

self-talk. The second is that it is rendered in a style much in line with syncretism in egocentric speech. The third is that it most likely involves questions for the air. And the fourth is that it is punctuated with intermittent and unexplained ellipses largely in agreement with an egocentric subject's elliptical style. All of these features disputably typify how, on account of the traumas she communicates throughout her narrative, the choral narrator becomes a secondary witness, namely an individual traumatised by the protagonists' traumas. Subsequently, and in a way to ward off her vicarious traumas, she backslides into an egocentric mental state, and thereby employs language in a way much similar to that of an egocentric agent.

In tandem with the previous excerpt from *Even the Dogs*, many passages from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* display several joint features of the three categories of egocentric language. This is made manifest by the opening scene of one of the novel's unnumbered chapters where Michael, the twin brother of the young man from number eighteen, asks Kate whether she thinks about the man who made her pregnant with twins after a one-night stand:

> **[He] says don't you ever wonder about him?**
> **I say who, [he] says that guy, in Scotland, don't you ever wonder?**
> **I say well no, not really**.
> *I think about it, about him and that night, and an image passes through my mind, all skin and teeth and hands, snagging my stomach like a dress caught in a door, closing my eyes.*
> …
> *I imagine bemusement on his face, delight, embarrassment.*
> *I imagine him standing with one hand on the door and the other on the frame, his body wedged in between, his uncertainty like a pensioner's doorchain.*
> ….
> **I say well no, you know, <u>it was just a thing</u>.**
> **It wasn't anything else I say, it was just a thing that happened.**
> (*INSRT* 151, brackets, boldface, italics and underlining added)

This excerpt begins *in medias res* with an indefinite referent 'he' (bracketed). Only when wading further into the chapter does the reader understand that by 'he' Kate means Michael. This example is not, however, the exception, as most of the novel's characters are referred to with pronouns or through antonomasia, such as "the young man at number eighteen, with the dry eyes," "the old man from number twenty-five," "the boy with the white shirt from number seventeen" and "the girl at number twenty-two" (*INSRT* 27, 12, 14, 32). This characteristic feature of the novel's poetics can be translated in two different ways. The first is that it is an unflinching criticism of the contemporary urban life, where neighbours, including the novel's characters, barely know one another. The second possible rendering of the anonymising way in which characters are designated can be that it is typical of language in an egocentric subject. In

fact, egocentric agents often make remarks in which "everything is indicated by allusion, by pronouns and demonstrative articles—'he, she, they, mine, him, etc.'—which can mean anything in turn, regardless of the demands of clarity or even of intelligibility" (Piaget, *The Language* 40). Thus, it can be conjectured that Kate's use of an indeterminate referent reflects how, when reminded of her accidental pregnancy, she resorts to a form of language much in line with that of an egocentric individual.

Besides her use of an indefinite referent, Kate's tendency to employ an egocentric language is illustrated by three more elements of the previous narrative fragment. The first is her inconsistent narration, as she moves in deliberate non-sequiturs back and forth between free direct speech (italicised) and an unconventional direct speech (boldfaced). Her verbal demeanour tallies closely with that of an egocentric subject, who frequently falls back on *transductive reasoning*. Piaget understands this to mean that an egocentric agent's thoughts proceed "neither by an amplifying induction nor by an appeal to general propositions which are designed to prove particular propositions, but that it moves from particular to particular by means of a reasoning process which never bears the character of logical necessity" (Piaget, *Judgement* 233). Tapping into this definition, it can be advanced that the acausal character of Kate's narration results from her transductive way of thinking, on account of which she produces a narrative quite similar to that commonly communicated by egocentric children and adolescents.

The second element illustrating Kate's propensity for an egocentric use of language is conceivably the passage's unwonted typography. Presented as a set of superimposed sentences, such a passage can be a metaphorical expression of what Piaget identifies as *juxtaposition* in egocentric subjects. As will be detailed, Piaget employs 'juxtaposition' to designate the incongruous and fragmented nature of egocentric language. This is most clearly evident in his following statement: "childish idioms display a discontinuous and chaotic character in contrast to the deductive style of the adult, logical relations being omitted or taken for granted. In a word, there will be 'juxtaposition' and not relating of propositions" (Piaget, *Judgement* 3).

The third and last constituent of the passage typifying Kate's egocentric use of language is arguably the underlined segment which is repeated several times throughout the novel: 'it was just a thing' (*INSRT* 151*2, 234*2). In this statement, Kate alludes to her accidental pregnancy which, like any other traumatic accident, is "just a thing that happen[s]": it is something that always happens to people all over the world. Thus, the restatement of this clause throughout the narrative has deeply ethical implications, as it reminds readers of their ontological

vulnerability, namely their susceptibility to traumatic events that can destroy their lives in a split second. Paradoxical as it may seem, the reiterated expression can be an epitome of egocentrism, as the repetition of the same expressions is a verbal behaviour particular to many an egocentric agent, who often resorts to echolalia. On this showing, one can contestably argue that the repeated expression typifies how, as soon as Kate remembers her trauma, namely her accidental pregnancy, she regresses into an egocentric way of thinking. Subsequently, she resorts to echolalia, thus producing a narrative usually particular to children and adolescents in their egocentric phases of mental development.

In light of the passages scrutinised in this subchapter, it becomes clear how many trauma occurrences of McGregor's characters are imparted through narratives showing unconventional features, such as unwonted reported speech, hyperbolic repetition of the same expressions, questions for the air and indefinite referents. As has been demonstrated, all of these narrative ingredients are characteristic properties of the three forms of egocentric language: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the reason why the characters' traumas are mediated through narratives displaying many aspects of egocentric language is to suggest that, on account of such eerie events, trauma victims can readily regress into egocentric phases of cognitive development, and can thereby spontaneously use language in way similar to that of an egocentric child or adolescent.

2. Syncretism

The last subchapter shows how many an element of McGregor's narratives reflects that, on account of their traumas, several of the author's characters backslide into the use of the three forms of egocentric language: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. According to Piaget, egocentric language results from two modes of thinking: *syncretism* and *juxtaposition*. Drawing on the work of the eminent Swiss psychologist Eugen Bleuler, Piaget distinguishes between these two modes of thinking and *directed thought*. For Piaget, as well as for Bleuler, directed thought is "conscious, i.e. it pursues an aim which is present to the mind of the thinker; it is intelligent, which means that it is adapted to reality . . . and [that] it can be communicated by language" (Piaget, *The Language* 43). Concerning both syncretism and juxtaposition, they are, as *per* Piaget, tantamount to what Bleuler terms *autistic thought*, namely the subconscious way of thinking which is "not adapted to reality . . . and [which] remains strictly individual and incommunicable as such by means of [a fathomable form of] language" (Piaget, *The Language* 43).

The present subchapter dwells on syncretism, one of the two modes of autistic thinking which is, according to Piaget, prevalent among egocentric individuals. The main purpose of this subchapter is to evince how McGregor's traumatised characters intermittently communicate in a language which tallies closely with that of an egocentric subject when she spontaneously resorts to syncretistic thinking. As previously indicated, Piaget understands syncretism to mean the involuntary tendency of an egocentric agent to focus on the whole to the detriment of its parts (Piaget, *The Language* 140). Such a way of thinking is displayed by an egocentric individual's many discourses which are a medley of incongruent elements (Piaget, *The Language* 132). This is clearly evident in the way in which the impersonal narrator of McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* reports the traumatic car accident of the seven-year-old Shahid:

> He looks up, he sees the car, and he doesn't move. **He can see** the road stretching out behind the car, the still-wet surface gleaming darkly**, he can see** the houses on either side . . . **He can see** people in the street looking at him . . . **, he can see** the funny man at number eighteen . . . **, he can see** the small boy on his tricycle . . . **,** and **he can see** somebody on the flat roof of the shop.
> (*INSRT* 252, boldface and underlining added)

In this passage, the bodiless narrator's depiction is marked by certain elements, on account of which the young boy's car accident is presented as an indiscriminate heap of narrative short cuts. Among these elements is the expression 'he can see' (boldfaced) which is used to introduce each of the many visual fragments about what Shahid sees in the split second before being hit by a car. The anaphoric use of this expression makes the listed visual segments appear to be even more numerous than they actually are, and thereby does not so much elucidate as obfuscate the scene of Shahid's accident. The ambiguity of the scene is further exacerbated by the passage's typography and punctuation, in that the visual segments about the traumatic happening, apart from two instances, are not presented as independent sentences, set off by full stops. Instead, they are introduced as a single narrative block, whose constituents are merely demarcated by commas (boldfaced and underlined). The obscuring way in which the traumatic accident is portrayed can have an ethical import. Indeed, it makes readers lose their bearings, and thereby compels them to experience some of the profound sense of confusion that the young boy endures just before being run over by a car. Subsequently, readers are forced to feel sympathy for Shahid, hence the ethical yield of the passage's unusual formal and structural properties.

Besides its ethical outcome, the last passage largely corresponds to several of the utterances that an egocentric subject produces when she resorts to syncretism. Indeed, under the sway of their syncretistic way of thinking, egocentric individuals show "a tendency to relate

too much things together so as to construct an overinclusive whole" (Cox 82). Eventually, they produce an unintelligible discourse made up of an indiscriminate heap of details (Piaget, *The Language* 132). Accordingly, it can be advanced that, while relating the scene of Shahid's car accident, the narrator falls back on a form of thinking that broadly matches syncretism in egocentric individuals. That is why she produces an inconsistent narrative made up of an incongruous sequence of narrative short cuts. On this showing, it can be concluded that the narrator's jumbled narrative suggests that traumatic occurrences, such as Shahid's car accident, can easily lead to trauma victims' regression into a syncretistic way of thinking.

In the same novel, Kate, the narrator of the second narrative thread, demonstrates a verbal behaviour that broadly ties in with that of egocentric subjects when they have recourse to syncretistic thinking. This is epitomised by the scene where she recalls the many furnishings her friend Simon crammed into the boot of his father's car the day Shahid had his car accident:

> Against duvets and pillows, a stereo, a television, books and magazines and folders full of notes.
> Against plates, saucepans, cutlery, a shoebox full of half-finished condiments, a food processor with the attachments missing.
> A box of CDs, a box of videos, a box full of photographs and postcards and letters.
>
> (*INSRT* 35-6)

This passage demonstrates two major properties of syncretism in egocentric subjects. The first property is displayed by the typography of the passage which is presented as a set of noun phrases superimposed upon one another. Such an unwonted typography can be seen as a metaphor for the speech that an egocentric subject produces when she falls back on syncretism. Indeed, when resorting to syncretism, many an egocentric individual, especially children, attempt to construct overinclusive discourses. That is why they frequently end up producing an unfathomable speech characterised by its chaotic profusion of details (Piaget, *The Language* 127). Thus, it can be put forward that the typography of the excerpt typifies how, whenever recalling anything related to the traumatic accident that she witnessed, Kate reverts to a syncretistic way of thinking specific to egocentric subjects. She thereupon produces an unintelligible narrative containing a plethora of stacked details, the last passage being a fair illustration of this.

The second key aspect of syncretism demonstrated by the passage finds expression in the unpatterned and thus acausal fashion in which the items of Kate's friend are listed. As

previously specified, egocentric language is chiefly distinguished by an egocentric agent's tendency towards transductive reasoning, namely her tendency to speak in non-sequiturs. According to Piaget, transductive reasoning is among the main features of syncretism, as underscored when he states that "transductive reasoning leads through the agency of syncretism from one particular to another, heedless both of logical necessity and of general laws (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 167). In light of the foregoing parallel drawn between the acausal nature of the passage and transductive reasoning in egocentric individuals, it can be assumed that such a passage epitomises how, as soon as Kate remembers her trauma, she relapses into syncretism. Subsequently, she speaks in non-sequiturs, and thereby produces a non-discursive narrative—a narrative proceeding by intuition rather than by reasoning and logic.

On a similar note, the entire narrative of McGregor's *Reservoir13* whose triggering event is the traumatic disappearance of the thirteen-year-old Rebecca Shaw demonstrates three principal aspects of language in egocentric subjects when they have recourse to syncretism. The first aspect is metaphorically expressed by the structure of the narrative which progresses through monoliths of prose. Such a narrative structure is largely in accordance with the way in which an egocentric agent, especially a child, speaks when she thinks in a synchronistic mode. In fact, under the dominant influence of such a mode of thinking, an egocentric subject tends "to bring heterogeneous phenomena into relation with each other, to find a reason for every chance event; in a word, [she tends] to connect everything with everything else" (Piaget, *Judgement* 4). Eventually, an egocentric subject produces lengthy speech whereby she "simply adds up and condenses [her] impressions instead of synthesising them" (Piaget, *Judgement* 242). Accordingly, the blocks of prose through which McGregor's *Reservoir13* proceeds can reflect the tendency of the impersonal narrator to think in a synchronistic way.

Through the novel's blocks of prose, the narrative shifts in an acausal fashion from character to character, human to animal, ground to sky (McGregor, "I Wanted" n.p.). Acausality is also one of the chief characteristics of speech in an egocentric agent when she thinks in a syncretistic way (Piaget, *The Language* 140). Thus, it can be conjectured that the reason why the narrative moves in deliberate non-sequiturs is because its narrator reasons syncretistically.

Among the central features of syncretistic reasoning is *artificialism* that Piaget contrasts with *animism* (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 253-55). For Piaget, 'Animism' designates the tendency of an egocentric agent to conceive of inanimate objects as endowed with souls. Thus, animism is basically the belief that non-living things can act of their own

accord. Conversely, artificialism is the conviction that both living and non-living beings are created by an intelligent entity that has full control over them (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 254). Accordingly, artificialism presumes the passivity of all beings. This debatably finds expression in the very narrative structure of McGregor's *Reservoir13*. Because it simultaneously combines humans, animals, plants and weather, this narrative evinces how human beings are part of nature which acts upon them on the same level as other species. Thus, such a narrative is a vivid reminder of human helplessness before nature. This reading is buttressed by the tendency of the disembodied narrator to draw heavily on the passive voice, especially when describing natural scenery, which disputably elicits the human being's lack of agency in the face of nature.[84] As already specified, such a form of passivity is among the mainstays of artificialism, and thereby demonstrates how the narrator, when recounting a story whose fulcrum is a traumatic event, reverts back to an artificialist conception of the world typical of that of egocentric subjects when they think syncretistically.

In short, McGregor's *Reservoir13* manifests three unconventional features: the monoliths of prose through which the narrative proceeds, the acausal character of these prosaic monoliths and the passive-voice sentences whereby the narrative is mostly mediated. As has been shown, all of these narrative features tally closely with language in egocentric individuals when they rely upon their syncretistic way of reasoning. Thus, it can be propounded that, while relating a story whose triggering event is Rebecca's traumatic disappearance, the narrator employs language in a way typical of that of egocentric subjects when they resort to syncretism. Based on this assumption, it can be concluded that the narrator's verbal demeanour suggests that traumatic happenings, like Rebecca's mysterious disappearance, can lead to a trauma victim's regression into a syncretistic way of thinking.

Following suit with *Reservoir13*, McGregor's *So Many Ways to Begin* involves several passages articulated through a narrative which broadly corresponds to the language that an egocentric subject produces when she thinks syncretistically. Among these passages is the one where the narrator depicts the handwritten list of house items that Dorothy, David's foster mother, wrote when she moved into her new house:

> **And the list turned yellow with grease and flour and thumb-marks, and ticks appeared as each item was sweated and dreamed and saved into**

[84] The transfer of agency from the human to the non-human, and the displacement of anthropocentrism is a staple of climate change fiction, as evidenced by Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*. Charlottesville and London: Virginia UP., 2015. p.23.

> **life** . . . A rug rolled out across their bedroom floor, and carpet stepped neatly down the stairs. Patterned nets were stretched across the front windows, and curtain material purchased, sewn, and hung.
> (*SMWB* 25-6, boldface, underlining and brackets added)

What is remarkable about the passage is the vividness with which the narrator describes the deterioration of Dorothy's handwritten list (boldfaced). Blemished with 'yellow' spots and 'ticks' over time, this scrap of paper appears to be aging, as if it were a living being, and possibly evokes the old lady's skin. In this regard, it can be assumed that the narrator's description of Dorothy's list unveils through hypotyposis how such a commonly overlooked object is *vibrant*, in Bennett's acceptance of the term, i.e. inherently lively and thereby worthy of consideration (Bennett 122).

Another possible interpretation of the narrator's vibrant description of Dorothy's list is that it is an instance of *animism*, in Piaget's acceptance of the term, i.e. one of the prominent features of syncretism which basically involves an egocentric subject's conception of inanimate objects as endowed with souls (Piaget, *Play* 250-4). This interpretation is underscored by the sentences in the passive voice (underlined). In semantic terms, one of the reasons for using the passive voice is to give prominence to the person or thing affected by an action. In this regard, it can be advanced that the narrator employs the passive voice while portraying inanimate objects in order to make them more noticeable. Thus, such objects, including 'a rug' and 'a carpet,' gain liveliness, which is arguably an instance of animism.

One possible rendering of the narrator's animistic delineation of non-living objects is to suggest that David, the novel's protagonist, has developed an animistic view of the world. According to Freud, animism is common among children and primitive tribes (Freud, "Totem" 13: 1-17). It also appears in certain adults who, in the face of extreme events like traumas, fall back on *projection*, namely the unconscious tendency to attribute one's own repressed desires and fears to others, including to inanimate objects (Freud, "Totem" 13: 92). Subsequently, such objects are experienced as living beings that inspire both love and fear. The same arguably applies to artefacts around which the novel's chapters are structured. As already mentioned, David has archived these artifacts in order to use them in the reconstruction of his biological past. Throughout the narrative, such relics are described vividly through hypotyposis, so much so that they appear to have more depth and authenticity than David whose origins he fails to retrace, which is debatably an example of animism. Accordingly, the vivid language employed in the novel to depict relics can suggest that, due to his traumatic discovery of his adoption,

David falls back on animism. Since animism is a characteristic aspect of syncretism in egocentric subjects, it can be concluded that the animistic description of artifacts in the novel evinces the tendency of traumatised individuals, including David, to think syncretistically.

Just like *So Many Ways to Begin*, many narrative fragments from McGregor's *Even the Dogs* are communicated through a language pretty much in line with that of egocentric subjects when they spontaneously draw on their syncretistic reasoning, the following passage being a fair illustration:

> **A phone rings, and the policeman standing by the door pulls it from his pocket** . . . [*and*] *as the door closes behind him, we see Robert, and Yvonne, working back to back as they take down the old wallpaper, peeling and picking at it with a paint-scraper and a knife*.
>
> (*ED* 9, boldface, italics, underlining and brackets added)

In this narrative fragment, the choral narrator braids together two scenes. The first (boldfaced) is about the police discovering Robert Radcliffe's corpse, while the second (italicised) is about Robert and his wife Yvonne refurbishing their new flat. These two scenes are distinct in time, as the first belongs to the present, i.e. to the choral narrator's simultaneous narration of what she sees. As regards the second scene, it belongs to the past, since it takes place several years before the first when Robert was still with his wife Yvonne. Nevertheless, the two events are presented as synchronous or consecutive, which is the outcome of three elements of the passage. The first element is the passage's typography, in that the choral narrator abruptly shifts from the first to the second scene, without the signposting of paragraph breaks or thematically linked transitions. Her demeanour is redolent of that of egocentric subjects who, when thinking syncretistically, usually tend to bind everything together.

The second element of the passage on account of which the two scenes look contemporaneous is the narrator's exclusive use of verbs in the present tense (underlined). The hyperbolic use of such a tense is a key characteristic of speech in egocentric subjects who, as will be specified in the following chapter, are usually engrossed by the phenomenologically given, i.e. by what they instantaneously perceive or remember (Piaget, *The Language* 230). That is why they commonly reexperience their pasts through recollection as pertaining to their living presents, and thereby mostly employ the present tense.

Concerning the third component of the passage by dint of which the two scenes appear to be concurrent, it is the coordinating conjunction 'and' (bracketed). Such a conjunction is

usually used to link two simultaneous or successive events. However, the narrator employs it to relate two scenes distant in time, thus presenting these scenes as synchronous. The narrator's verbal behaviour is reminiscent of the speech that an egocentric subject produces when she has recourse to syncretism. In fact, syncretism is a *subjective synthesis*, in Piaget's understanding of the term, i.e. it involves an egocentric agent's tendency to relate heterogeneous statements at whim, without realising that she is doing anything artificial (Piaget, *The Language* 140).

Relying on the foregoing interpretation of the three unconventional constituents of the passage, it can be propounded that, on account of the traumatic event that she relates, namely the discovery of Robert's rotting corpse, the choral narrator relapses into a syncretistic reasoning. She thereupon communicates in a language whereby she merges two disparate scenes together, thus making these scenes look simultaneous. On this showing, it can be concluded that the way in which the narrator employs language while recounting a traumatic event corroborates the tendency of traumatised individuals to think syncretistically when reminded of their eerie experiences.

The last extract is not an exception, as several passages and chapters from the novel underscore the choral narrator's proclivity for syncretism. This includes the novel's second chapter through which the narrator flits back and forth between two distinct scenes (*ED* 17-55). The first scene is about Danny who, shocked after discovering Robert's corpse, strides aimlessly across the unnamed city, while vainly trying to figure out how he should act. As for the second scene, it appears, at first blush, to be at the same diegetic level as the first, and is about Danny being investigated by the police about Robert's death. The acausal way in which the choral narrator proceeds while alternating between the two scenes is, in many ways, redolent of the discourse of an egocentric individual when she falls back on syncretism. Indeed, and as repeatedly emphasised, syncretism is chiefly made manifest by the egocentric agent's tendency to speak in non-sequiturs (Piaget, *Judgement* 59).

When wading further into the second chapter, readers become aware that the investigation scene is a metadiegetic insert about Danny who, scared to tell the police about Robert's death lest he is wrongly suspected, lapses into a rambling monologue about an imagined police interrogation. Danny's reaction to his trauma is profoundly reminiscent of egocentric subjects who, when thinking syncretistically, frequently indulge in a talk with an *imaginary audience*. David Elkind, an American child psychologist, understands this to mean the kind of soliloquy through which an egocentric agent anticipates "the reactions of other people to himself. These

anticipations, however, are based on the premise that others are as admiring or as critical of him as he is of himself" (Elkind 1030). Relying upon Elkind's conception of imaginary audience, it can be conjectured that Danny's response to his traumatic discovery largely corresponds to that of an egocentric subject when she falls back on syncretism.

Another constituent of the second chapter typical of syncretism are the many aposiopetic sentences with which each paragraph of this chapter ends. As has been specified, among the major linguistic features in egocentric subjects is their inclination to keep their utterances unfinished. This demonstrates, according to Piaget, the fact that, when resorting to syncretism, an egocentric individual often indulges in a self-talk whereby she thinks aloud, and does not therefore feel the need to end her aposiopetic utterances (Piaget, *The Language* 125).

Alongside their aposiopetic structure, several sentences from the second chapter are truncated. One of the reasons why these sentences' common subject (Danny) is omitted is to suggest that this character's traumatic experience is so overwhelming that it has eclipsed his sense of self, thus making him view himself as a ghost, i.e. as a person whose presence is an absence. Another plausible rendition of these uncommon sentences is that they are particular to the language of an egocentric agent when she has recourse to syncretism. As has been noted, one of the prime features of an egocentric individual's language when she thinks syncretistically is her tendency to utter sentences with indefinite referents or without any referent at all (Piaget, *The Language* 40). In this regard, it can be posited that the second chapter's truncated sentences convey David's inclination to utter statements devoid of any referent, much like individuals at the egocentric stages of their cognitive development.

To put it succinctly, the second chapter from McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is imparted through a narrative which displays four unwonted aspects: its acausal character, its metaleptical imaginary scenario, as well as its aposiopetic and truncated sentences. As earlier demonstrated, all of these aspects broadly tie in with the language in which an egocentric person communicates when resorting to syncretism. Accordingly, one can assume that the chapter's four unconventional characteristics reflect how, as a result of his traumatic happening, Danny reverts back to a type of syncretistic thinking usually specific to egocentric agents, especially children and adolescents.

Similar to the second chapter from *Even the Dogs*, certain short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* demonstrate several properties of syncretism. This includes "We

Were Just Driving Around" which, as its title suggests, is about a group of friends, who 'Were Driving Around' when they suddenly have an accident (*TISTHSLY* 52-4). The narrator reports the accident scene as follows:

> Plus Josh had this very high-pitched laugh that was pretty infectious, [and] once he'd got us all going it was just about impossible to stop? It just kept sort of growing, getting louder and louder, like something sort of swelling up until it filled the car [and] we couldn't hardly breathe and the noise of it was making me dizzy [and] then **Amanda said Josh will you slow down a bit** [and] he turned round to ask her what she'd said so that must have been how come he never saw the corner?
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 54, boldface, brackets, and underlining added)

This passage has two properties that mirror the propensity of the narrator for syncretism. The first property is the passage's indiscriminate jumble of narration (unmarked) and direct speech (boldfaced), as direct speech in this narrative segment is not surrounded by any quotation marks. The second remarkable feature of the excerpt is its punctuation, in that the different details about the few moments preceding the accident are not presented as independent sentences set off by full stops. Instead, they are related by means of the coordinating conjunction 'and' (bracketed), which makes these details appear to be overlapping as they succeed one another. Given these two aspects, the passage is presented as an undifferentiated heap of details, which is reminiscent of the language that an egocentric person employs when tapping into her syncretistic reasoning. Indeed, and as earlier specified, the most notable characteristic of syncretism is the egocentric individual's tendency to bind everything together (Piaget, *Judgement* 59). Relying on the parallel drawn between syncretism in egocentric subjects and the passage's two unwonted aspects, it can be propounded that these aspects mirror the proclivity of the narrator to reason synchronically when recalling her trauma.

Another uncommon feature of the passage is the punctuation of certain of its affirmative sentences which end with question marks rather than full stops (underlined). Such an unusual punctuation can be read in two different ways. The first is that it shows how the narrator is overwhelmed by her trauma, so much so that she cannot make any assertive statements about the very cause of her accident, hence her use of question marks instead of full stops. The second plausible interpretation of the unconventional punctuation of some of the narrator's statements is that these statements are questions for the air. Piaget understands this to mean the many remarks that an egocentric person makes "in interrogative form without being in any way questions addressed to anyone. The proof of this is that the egocentric agent does not listen to the

answer, and does not even expect it" (Piaget, *The Language* 29). Thus, it can be assumed that the narrator's use of question marks instead of full stops is broadly in line with an egocentric agent's questions for the air.

In conclusion, the traumatic happenings of many of McGregor's characters are communicated through narratives which display numerous unusual features, notably an unwonted punctuation, the hyperbolic repetition of the same structures and the monoliths of prose through which some of these narratives proceed. By way of these elements, the author's narratives are presented as a medley of incongruent details, which is profoundly reminiscent of the language that an egocentric subject produces when she resorts to syncretism. Indeed, and as previously underlined, the main property of syncretism is the egocentric agent's tendency to bind everything together into an unfathomable whole. Thus, the tendency of the author's narratives to merge unrelated matters together while recounting characters' traumas suggests that, in reaction to their traumas, such characters use language in a way which reflects their syncretistic mode of thinking.

3. Juxtaposition

In the last subchapter, it has been demonstrated how certain of the properties of McGregor's narratives reflect the tendency of the author's traumatised characters towards syncretism, the mode of thinking which is usually common among egocentric subjects. In the present subchapter, it will be illustrated how some other unwonted elements of the author's fiction mirror a trauma victim's propensity for *juxtaposition*. Unlike syncretism, juxtaposition does not involve the proclivity of an egocentric agent to conglomerate discrete elements into a confused whole. Conversely, it is about the way in which an egocentric individual considers disparate elements one by one in a fragmentary manner devoid of synthesis (Piaget, *Judgement* 220). Put in simple terms, juxtaposition and syncretism are two antithetical modes of thinking in egocentric subjects, syncretism being the predominance of the whole over the details, juxtaposition that of the details over the whole. According to Piaget, juxtaposition is mainly manifested in many an egocentric child's drawings, as "the most universal characteristics of these children's drawings is the inability shown by their authors to portray the relations existing between the different parts of the model. The thing is not there as a whole, the details only are given, and then, for lack of synthetic relations, they are simply juxtaposed" (Piaget, *Judgement* 58).[85]

[85] What basically explains juxtaposition is, as *per* Piaget, the narrowness of the field of attention in egocentric agents (Piaget, *Judgement* 220).

Juxtaposition is displayed not only in the drawings of an egocentric child, but also in her verbal behaviour. This is emphasised by Piaget when he states that "the synthetic incapacity which appears in children's drawings, the inability to establish interference between logical classes, the inability to understand partitive relations, etc. all of which, in the verbal sphere, can be brought together under the heading of juxtaposition" (Piaget, *Judgement* 221). Relying upon Piaget's conception of juxtaposition, it will be exemplified in the present subchapter how several passages about the traumas of the author's characters are imparted through narratives which tally closely with the language that an egocentric subject produces when resorting to juxtaposition. Among the many narrative fragments which typify this statement are those where Kate, the narrator of the second narrative thread from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks*, remembers the day she witnessed Shahid's car accident. This includes the subsequent passage:

> I couldn't understand ***what was happening***, I couldn't believe ***what was happening***.
> I sat there, in the warm afternoon of the last day of summer, and I couldn't work out what I was seeing.
>
> (*INSRT* 7, emphasis and boldface added)

In this narrative segment, Kate does not explicitly refer to her traumatic experience, but rather alludes to it as 'what was happening' (boldfaced and italicised). Her verbal demeanour can be interpreted in two distinct ways. The first is that it evidences how trauma, as shown in the third chapter, can be communicated only by *language muting,* the abstract and indirect language whereby a traumatic past is expressed through certain circumlocutions. Another possible reading of Kate's euphemistic language is that it is largely in line with the language of egocentric individuals, especially children, who scarcely produce intelligible speech. Instead, almost everything in their discourses is indicated by allusion, including by pronouns and demonstratives (Piaget, *The Language* 40). Thus, it can be assumed that the reason why Kate hints at her trauma is because she has reverted back to an egocentric use of language.

As has been specified, egocentric language, according to Piaget, results from one of the two modes of thinking: syncretism or juxtaposition. This is epitomised by the passage where Kate's trauma is not presented as a synthetic whole, but rather as a set of fragmented sentences superimposed upon one another. Such an unusual typography is profoundly redolent of the language in which an egocentric individual communicates when she has recourse to juxtaposition. In fact, when thinking in a juxtaposed fashion, an egocentric person focuses on details at the expense of the whole. She thereupon produces a discourse whose constituents do not show any

logical connection, which evidences an egocentric individual's *synthetic incapacity*, i.e. her inability to combine parts into a coherent whole (Piaget, *Judgement* 58). In this regard, one can advance that the passage's uncommon typography is a metaphorical expression of Kate's inclination to think in a juxtaposed fashion when recalling her traumatic shock.

Just as Kate's narrative manifests several aspects typical of the language in which egocentric agents speak when falling back on juxtaposition, so does the second narrative thread of the same novel. This is clearly evident in the way in which the impersonal narrator describes one of the unnamed street dwellers, the woman from number twenty, while looking out of her window to her neighbourhood:

> In the back bedroom of number twenty, the wife of the old man with the weary lungs is drinking a cup of tea, standing by the window . . . ***She sees*** a white cat roll onto its back on the roof of an outhouse. ***She sees*** a woman hanging out washing, pegs lined up across the shoulders of her blouse like a queue of trapeze artists. ***She sees*** a young man with very short hair emerge from the passageway.
>
> (*INSRT* 83, emphasis and boldface added)

This passage is about the different mundane details that the woman sees out of her window while sipping a cup of tea, including 'a cat,' and 'a woman hanging out washing.' Presented as independent sentences, each of these otherwise frivolous matters become noticeable. This is further highlighted by the hyperbolic expression 'she sees' (italicised and boldfaced) which is used to introduce each of the trivial details that the woman from number twenty perceives. Indeed, such an expression slows up the reading pace, and thereby compels readers to pay attention to each of these unremarkable matters which subsequently become remarkable. Thus, it can be said that, by virtue of certain of its formal properties, the foregoing passage transmutes the ordinary into the extraordinary, which favours consideration, namely the act of "perceiving something or someone with the same care that one usually shows when pondering over the position and height of the stars" (Pelluchon 31, translation mine).

Besides being conducive to the practice of consideration, the excerpt is conveyed through a language deeply reminiscent of that which an egocentric person produces when having recourse to juxtaposition. Indeed, the distinct details around which the extract is structured do not form an intelligible whole. Rather, they are presented as a series of narrative short cuts set side by side, which broadly ties in with juxtaposition in an egocentric subject who, instead of expressing the relation between her successive statements by words like 'because,' is usually

content to juxtapose them without any further ado (Piaget, *Judgement* 4). Accordingly, it can be advanced that, while relating a narrative whose fulcrum is the traumatic accident of the young Shahid, the narrator resorts to a language pretty much in line with that in which an egocentric person speaks when falling back on juxtaposition. The narrator's verbal behaviour suggests, among other things, that, under the dominant influence of their traumas, individuals, as emblematised by characters, can regress into juxtaposition and thereby produce apposed statements, i.e. statements which succeed one another in an illogical fashion.

Akin to *If Nobody Speaks*, several traumatic happenings in McGregor's *Even the Dogs* are conveyed through a narrative evincing certain linguistic properties of the way in which egocentric individuals communicate when they resort to juxtaposition. Among these traumatic occurrences is the discovery of Robert's decaying corpse which is then carried to a hospital morgue. While describing Robert's corpse in the morgue, the choral narrator proceeds as follows:

> Those signs ***saying*** Our staff are entitled to work without fear of violence or abuse.
> Those signs ***saying*** Anyone spitting at a member of staff will be prosecuted.
> The clock ***ticking*** round and the hard metal chairs.
> The clock ***ticking*** round and Robert cold on his steel bed behind that door.
> (*ED* 83, boldface, emphasis and underlining added)

The excerpt is mostly made up of clauses without any verb form showing time, as most of its verbs are present participles (italicised and boldfaced). Such a verbal form, when unaccompanied by any other verb bearing a time marker, usually implies an ongoing continuity without beginning or end, which is typical of traumatic memory. Indeed, and as illustrated in the second chapter, such a memory cannot be temporalised. Instead, it is repetitively experienced through flashbacks as a continuous presence, i.e. as a clotted piece of time that the traumatised individual remembers in all its details throughout her entire life. Another possible reading of the reason why the passage abounds with the present participle is to suggest that the choral narrator uses language egocentrically. In fact, one of the main features of egocentric language is an egocentric person's tendency to employ non-finite clauses, i.e. clauses with verbs showing no tense, person or number. Accordingly, it can be propounded that the non-finite clauses in the narrative fragment epitomises how the choral narrator has regressed into an egocentric use of language.

Alongside its non-finite clauses, the excerpt has two further remarkable features, including the two anaphoric expressions: 'Those signs saying' and 'The clock ticking' (underlined). The redundant repetition of these expressions is, to some extent, upsetting, and thereby makes the reader experience some of the distress that the choral narrator endures when recounting such a highly depressing scene. As earlier mentioned, the restatement of the same expressions in a tautological fashion is the principal aspect of one of three forms of egocentric language—echolalia. This buttresses the hypothesis according to which the choral narrator communicates in a language similar to that of egocentric agents, especially while describing the morgue where Robert's corpse is kept pending autopsy.

Concerning the third uncommon feature of the extract, it is its typography, as this extract is made up of a set of superimposed clauses with no logical connection. The unwonted structure of this passage is reminiscent of juxtaposition in an egocentric subject, who tends simply "to juxtapose his statements instead of making their causal relation explicit" (Piaget, *Judgement* 57). In this regard, one can argue that, in the excerpt, the series of logically unrelated clauses epitomise the choral narrator's inclination to speak in a fashion typical of that in which an egocentric person speaks when falling back on juxtaposition. On this evidence, it can be concluded that the narrator's verbal behaviour while recounting events related to Robert's traumatic death implies that such an uncanny event can easily make the one it affects think in a juxtaposed way, much like an agent in the egocentric phases of her cognitive development.

In the same vein as *Even the Dogs*, many narrative segments from McGregor's *So Many Ways* show certain features of juxtaposition. Among these segments is the one where David, when he was still a child, sneaks into the room at the end of his Auntie Julia's top landing:

> He pushed open the door, and stared. He'd never seen so many things in one room before. There were piles of books and magazines, dresses on hangers and dresses spread out across chairs, hats balanced on top of each other, photo albums. Bunches of flowers hanging to dry, posters for West End productions, jewellery boxes spilling over with tangled necklaces and earrings. Later, once he'd been taken to the British Museum, he would think of comparing this room to the *collection halls of the Egyptian Pharaohs*.
>
> (*SMWB* 32, emphasis added)

In this passage, David lists one by one the many objects crammed into his Auntie Julia's top landing. By doing so, he makes these otherwise unnoticeable items noticeable. In their extraordinary abundance, these items become shrouded in mystery, as emphasised by David when he equates them with the Egyptian Pharaohs' belongings. In this respect, it can be said that David's

depiction unveils the *vibrancy* of inanimate objects, i.e. their possible agency. In their vibrancy, these items which are usually kept invisible become worthy of consideration, hence an ethical function of McGregor's narrative which gives pride of place to the unseen and the neglected and teaches the reader to be attentive.

Aside from revealing the vibrancy of inanimate items, the protagonist's narrative is singled out by its deliberate lack of organisation, as the many listed objects are not categorised or hierarchised, and thereby lack coherence. Such an inconsistent narrative can be translated into two distinct ways. The first is that it emulates the muddled fashion in which Julia's items are stacked. The second plausible reading is that David's rambling narrative echoes his inability to sort out Julia's belongings into coherent categories, which is one of the typical features of juxtaposition. Indeed, when tapping into such a mode of thinking, an egocentric agent, particularly a child, "juxtaposes without choosing. In a sense then, this is synthetic incapacity, since all synthesis implies choice and hierarchy, and differs from mere juxtaposition" (Piaget, *Judgement* 223). In this regard, it can be advanced that David's use of language in the last passage mirrors his propensity for juxtaposition. This passage is not an exception, as most of the narrative involves a series of juxtaposed details devoid of any logical connection. From this point of view, it can be concluded that such a narrative whose fulcrum is David's traumatic discovery of his adoption underlines how such an eerie experience can easily lure the one it impacts into thinking in a juxtaposed mode.

To conclude, the extracts examined in the present subchapter display certain uncommon features, including an unwonted typography and clauses set side by side without being logically connected. As has been demonstrated, these narrative properties are also characteristic features of the language of an egocentric agent when she resorts to juxtaposition. Accordingly, it can be propounded that such unusual narrative elements typify the inclination of the author's traumatised characters to speak in a fashion similar to that in which an egocentric subject speaks when having recourse to juxtaposition.

Chapter 8
Egocentric Time

The last chapter demonstrates how certain narrative properties of McGregor's fiction evoke the traumatised characters' egocentric use of language. Since language, as *per* Chomsky, is *a mirror of mind*, the characters' egocentric language arguably mirrors their egocentric mental state (Chomsky 4). According to Piaget, such a mental state is "a general feature of the young child's conception of the world, not confined to one area of thought. So temporal thinking, too, can be egocentric" (Le Poidevin 20-1). Following from this statement, it will be illustrated in the present chapter how the author's traumatised protagonists experience time in an unconventional way because they revert to a cognitive condition typical of that of an egocentric agent. As has been specified in the second chapter, traumatic memory is so emotionally charged that it exceeds the cognitive capacity of the one it impresses. Unable to assimilate their traumas, many individuals cannot subsequently place them in chronological correspondence with their other life experiences. This is evinced by their testimonies which are characterised by their unhinged chronology. Interestingly enough, these testimonies closely match the discourses that egocentric children produce, especially in terms of their representation of time.

Before discussing the way in which an egocentric agent experiences time, it is worth recalling that time, for Bergson, is a *pure quality*, i.e. "a qualitative multiplicity, with no likeness to number; an organic evolution which is yet not an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities" (Bergson 226).[86] In contradistinction to Bergson, Piaget postulates that time is both qualifiable and quantifiable, hence the two key concepts of his cognitive development theory: *qualitative* and *quantitative time*. For Piaget, 'qualitative time' mainly involves a subject's retrospective capacity to arrange chronologically diverse movements and occurrences (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 70-8).[87] Upon acquiring a qualitative understanding of time, a human being can then develop *quantitative time*, the cognitive capacity to conceive of time as a constant flow. Such a cognitive capacity, in turn, allows

[86] In his book, *The Child's Conception of Time*, Piaget intermittently criticises Bergson's theory of time, as evidenced by his following statement: "We shall try to show that nothing could be more erroneous than this Bergsonian interpretation of the psychological genesis of temporal relations. In fact, all Bergson has done is to carry to its extremes a tendency of the old introspective school of psychology, based on the adult view that inner time can be grasped by introspection, while external time must first be constructed. However, here as elsewhere, introspection, which is a form of derived conduct, gives us nothing but incomplete and deceptive information" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 197).

[87] According to Piaget, an individual can identify the qualitative time of one or several motions only when acquiring *reversibility*, i.e. the mental capacity to extend physical phenomena, including motions, back to their common origins (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 97).

individuals to fuse into temporal syntheses (durations) the intervals between qualitatively distinct motions and events (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 173-5).

According to Piaget, qualitative and quantitative time are acquired progressively in three stages of cognitive development. In stage I (ages $1\frac{1}{2}$-7 years), children have as little true understanding of duration as they have of the order of events. This is chiefly because they rely purely on *direct intuition*, i.e. on immediate perception (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 40). As they have not yet acquired either a qualitative or quantitative conception of time, children at stage I produce anachronistic discourses in which they confuse time with both space and velocity.

When reaching stage II (ages 8-10 years), children begin to fathom the qualitative and quantitative aspects of time. However, their understanding of these aspects is still limited, as they draw heavily upon *articulated intuition* (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 43-52). Piaget understands this to mean the egocentric mode of reasoning which is partly objective, but mostly subjective. Indeed, children at the second stage begin to appreciate that different events can be chronologised, and that time, velocity and distance are proportional. Nevertheless, they still fail "to dissociate time as a structure from its content, i.e. from events or motions" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 61). This is evidenced by one of Piaget's experiments which involves two isochronal activities with unequal difficulty. During this experiment, several children of different ages are asked to transfer small pieces of wood, then small pieces of lead, from one container to another (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 242). At the end of the experiment, they are asked which of the two activities is longer in terms of time. Although these activities take the same time, children at stage II all agree that "the transfer of the lead takes longer because it is more laborious" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 243). Their answer epitomises how they confound time with the way they subjectively experience it. Children at the second stage also confuse time with space, as they believe that 'further' necessarily means more time, and vice versa. Likewise, they regard time and speed as directly rather than inversely proportional, in that they think that the faster an object the more time it needs to cover the same distance (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 44). These children overcome their misconceptions about time only when they reach stage III of *operational grouping* (ages 10 years and upwards). At this stage, human beings acquire both a qualitative and a quantitative understanding of time, and therefore can order chronologically distinct events, while also reckoning their durations.

Piaget refers to the way in which children at stage I and II conceive of time as *egocentric time* (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 198). With such a view of time, and as already specified, children not only fail to identify the chronological order of disparate events. Rather, they also confound time with its content. That is why they commonly produce anachronistic narratives where time is presented as *plastic*, in Piaget's understanding of the term, i.e. as contracting, expanding and even freezing (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 248).

Tapping into Piaget's cognitive development theory, it will be shown in the present chapter how McGregor's fiction displays certain narrative features that evoke traumatised characters' egocentric conception of time. To this end, it will be demonstrated in the first subchapter that the anachronistic nature of many passages about the characters' traumas disputably elucidates how, when recalling their uncanny experiences, these characters experience time in much the same way as egocentric children, and therefore fail to identify its qualitative aspect. As previously indicated, as long as egocentric agents do not develop a qualitative understanding of time, they cannot acquire quantitative time. This is exemplified by many excerpts from McGregor's fiction about the characters' traumas. In fact, and as will be detailed in the second subchapter, these excerpts debatably typify how, when reminded of their traumas, characters lose their quantitative understanding of time, and therefore experience it as plastic.

1. Anachrony : The Disruption of Qualitative Time

In the introduction to this subchapter, it has been indicated how Piaget understands 'qualitative time' to mean the cognitive capacity to arrange disparate events and motions in a chronological order. However, egocentric agents, particularly children under the age of ten, do not have such a cognitive capacity, as epitomised by their many chronologically scrambled statements (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 248). According to Piaget, the main reason behind egocentric subjects' propensity for anachronism is that they do not conceive of time as both homogeneous and continuous. Instead, they experience it as *local*, i.e. as a heterogeneous phenomenon that varies radically from one situation to another (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 259). That is why they cannot order diverse situations on a common temporal scale, hence their anachronistic discourses.

Following suit with egocentric individuals, many narratives from McGregor's fiction show a clear-cut tendency towards anachronism. Among them is *So Many Ways to Begin* which centres on the traumatic experience of David Carter, who accidentally discovers that he was

adopted when he was still a baby. As already illustrated, this trauma reverberates throughout the novel which mostly proceeds through three parts, with each part segmented into a varied number of chapters. Unlike most of the novel's chapters, the epilogue and the first chapter of each of the novel's three parts are without headings. The anonymous way in which these opening sections begin contestably parallels the way in which David's life story itself begins. In fact, this protagonist fails to find his birth mother, and is therefore left with 'So Many Ways to Begin,' i.e. with so many possible biological origins. Since it has no definite beginning, David's life story cannot be transmuted into an all-inclusive narrative. This idea finds expression in the last chapter of the novel whose lack of a heading possibly illustrates how, due to David's trauma, his life story resists closure.

Just as the untitled chapters echo David's trauma, so do the titled chapters of the novel. Numbered from one to sixty-two and headed with the names of one or several dated relics, these chapters appear, at first glance, to be organised in a way that tallies closely with *seriation*, the archaeological method whereby artefacts are placed chronologically (Dunnell 305). When wading into the novel, however, readers discover that its chapters are presented out of chronological order, as they progress through a narrative which shuttles back and forth in time between different events that have impacted David's life. The anachronistic character of the narrative is typical of trauma victims' testimonies which, as has been established in the second chapter, are chiefly marked by their shipwrecked chronology. One possible reason why traumatised individuals cannot chronologise their eerie accidents is because they conceive of them as so uncanny that they cannot place them on the same temporal scale as their other life experiences. In much the same way, egocentric children regard disparate events and motions as radically different, so much so that they cannot group them in chronological, or any other logical, order (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 173-95). Unable to have a qualitative (chronological) understanding of time, young children communicate in a language distinguished by its disjointed chronology. Following from the parallel drawn between egocentric children and trauma victims, it can be conjectured that the reason behind communicating David's trauma through an anachronistic narrative is to evidence how, under the thrall of such a disquieting experience, David relapses into an understanding of time much in line with that of egocentric individuals.

Just like *So Many Ways to Begin*, McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* is distinguished by its anachronistic structure, as it alternates in an acausal fashion between two narrative strands about three years apart. As previously indicated, the relationship between these two narratives is that

they both chiefly revolve around the collective trauma of an anonymous street's dwellers, who witness the car accident of the young Shahid Mohammed Nawaz. Unable to come to terms with such a dreadful event, Kate, a former inhabitant of the unnamed street and the narrator of the second narrative thread, reexperiences it through recollection compulsively and without respite. Her demeanour is typical, as most trauma victims relive their frightening happenings, whether they are awake or asleep. Under the sway of their traumas, individuals lose their qualitative understanding of time, and cannot subsequently chronologise these eerie events. Instead, a trauma victim repeatedly experiences her disturbing past as a piece of *frozen time*, an occurrence excised from the ongoing flow of time (Davoine xxx). This characteristic trauma symptom is metaphorically expressed through the novel's anachronistic structure which conceivably echoes Kate's cognitive incapacity to place her trauma in chronological correspondence with her other life experiences.

Besides, the anachronistic character of the novel makes readers lose their bearings, and thereby awakens them to their inherent vulnerability, which is the key step towards developing an ethics of consideration. This is underscored by Pelluchon when she states that "the ethics of consideration is inseparable from the recognition of our vulnerability, which is the mark of our fragility, but also what makes us capable of feeling concerned about others to the point of suffering from their sufferings" (Pelluchon, translation mine 26). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the anachronistic configuration of the novel favours the practice of consideration: it conjures up a sense of loss, opens readers' eyes to their intrinsic vulnerability, and thereby impels them to feel sympathy for Kate.

In addition to being the hallmark of how the two narrative strands alternate, anachronism is also the characteristic feature of how each chapter from both narratives proceeds. This statement is substantiated by many examples, most notably by the first chapter from Kate's narrative which, at first, seems to be part of the first narrative (*INSRT* 7-12). Indeed, it opens without any temporal indicator, and then progresses through Kate's meticulous description of the anonymous street, the backdrop of the first narrative strand. Among the conspicuous properties of this chapter features its disrupted chronology, as epitomised by the following excerpt:

> It rained, . . . but that was all, there was nothing else unusual about **the day**.
> And somehow it seems wrong that there wasn't a buildup, a feeling in the air, a premonition or a warning or a clue . . . *The silence didn't last long, people started rushing out into the street, shouting, flinging open windows and doors*.
> (*INSRT* 10, boldface, italics and underlining added)

In this passage, Kate's narrative displays four features particular to egocentrism. The first is its euphemistic tone, as she does not refer explicitly to Shahid's car accident. Instead, she alludes to it in a roundabout way, as epitomised by the entire passage. Similarly, egocentric agents scarcely produce intelligible speech, in that they mention almost everything by means of certain circumlocutions, such as pronouns and demonstratives (Piaget, *The Language* 40). Accordingly, Kate's euphemistic style can be an index of how she uses language egocentrically.

What further corroborates Kate's egocentric demeanour is the underlined sentence, as it is peppered with words bearing the hallmarks of superstition. In a very similar way, egocentric agents speak in a language which evokes their superstitious beliefs, as highlighted by Piaget's observations about a young boy at an egocentric phase of cognitive development. Although sweating while picking some mushrooms, this young boy decides to keep his thick coat on. When Piaget asks him about the reason why he does not take off his coat, he answers that it is "for fear of not finding any mushrooms. It should be noted that the boy had never been superstitious and had never been told during his religious education (Protestant) anything suggesting magical rites. The observations noted here are the more or less conscious tendencies among egocentric agents" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 165). In light of Piaget's considerations, it can be concluded that the superstition-laden language in which Kate communicates reflects how she regresses into a conception of the world largely typical of that of an egocentric child.

The third element of the passage underscoring Kate's cognitive egocentrism is her use of 'the day' (boldfaced), while reporting Shahid's accident. Indeed, she could have said 'that day,' which would have allowed the reader to easily understand that she talks about a past occurrence. However, by using 'the day' instead, she gives the impression that she talks about a scene belonging to her living present. Her verbal demeanour tenably reflects how, akin to many trauma victims, she reexperiences her trauma as a *simultaneity*, i.e. as a past that keeps happening, each time as if it were for the first time (Caruth, *Trauma* 177). The manner in which trauma victims, including Kate, relive their eerie pasts is broadly in consonance with the manner in which egocentric children perceive their past experiences. Indeed, according to Piaget, egocentric children are always engrossed by the phenomenologically given, i.e. by what they instantaneously perceive or remember (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 40-8). That is why they commonly reexperience their pasts through recollection as pertaining to their living presents. Following Piaget's observations, it can be postulated that Kate's presentation of her

trauma as belonging to her living present mirrors her inclination to think in a way much in line with that of egocentric children.

The fourth property of the passage typifying Kate's egocentric behaviour is its confused chronology, as it involves an instance of what Genette terms *proleptic analepsis*, "an inverse movement—a recall that is anticipated" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 81). Indeed, in this passage, Kate does not proceed chronologically, but rather metaleptically, as she briskly switches to the depiction of people's reactions to Shahid's accident (italicised), before making any explicit mention of this traumatic event. Her demeanour is redolent of the way in which egocentric time works in young children who, although capable "to recall things better than adults, nevertheless stack up their memories in a confused jumble" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 248).

By the same token, and in the same novel, many traumatised characters intermittently lose their qualitative understanding of time, and thereby fall back on anachronism. This is substantiated by the subsequent scene about the man with the burnt hands from number sixteen when sitting in a chair next to his flat:

> The young man **stands** back from the door, he **looks** around. His face **is** red and he **is** sweating. He **sees** the man in the chair, they **see** each other, the young man **makes** a face like well what a laugh and the man in the chair **replies** with a single slow nod.
>
> *She said it is too hot I cannot breathe I cannot please my God can't you help me darling please*.
>
> (*INSRT* 159, italics and boldface added)

The passage displays four properties of egocentrism, the first being metaphorically expressed through the exclusive use of the present tense (boldfaced). By relying solely on such a tense in this passage as well as in the entire first narrative, the impersonal narrator gives the impression of reporting what it simultaneously perceives, which is obviously not the case. Indeed, the story it relates involves its subsequent narration of the day when Shahid had an accident. Accordingly, it can be said that the disembodied narrator resorts to the simple present because it experiences the young boy's accident as pertaining to its living present. Its verbal demeanour is common among trauma victims who, as established in the second chapter, relive their initial shocks as something new. The narrator's verbal behaviour is also profoundly redolent of egocentric children who, as has been specified, recall their pasts with so much vividness that they appear to be living them for the first time. In view of these considerations, it can be propounded

that the language in which the bodiless narrator communicates evokes how it is traumatised by Shahid's accident. On account of such a disconcerting event, the narrator regresses into a cognitive state reminiscent of that of egocentric subjects, and thereby experiences its trauma as pertaining to its living present, hence its exclusive use of the present tense.

Another element of the passage bearing the hallmarks of egocentrism is the unwonted reported speech (italicised) which is about the man with the burnt hand's recollection of his wife's calls for help when she was burning alive inside their blazing house. Although preceded by an introductory verb ('said'), this reported discourse, much like many others in McGregor's fiction, is not boarded by quotation marks, and is therefore presented as a hybrid combination of direct and free direct discourse. Usually direct discourse reports a verbal exchange between two or more individuals, while free direct speech is commonly about a first-person internal monologue. Being an undifferentiated blend of these two forms of reported discourse, the way the widower's reminiscence is presented arguably implies that what is communicated is an externalised internal monologue. More specifically, it is about the widower, who unwittingly engages in a monologue wherein he repeats to himself his wife's calls for help. His demeanour broadly coincides with *echolalia* in egocentric agents, namely the tendency of an egocentric individual to reiterate aloud some words, especially those of others (Piaget, *The Language* 11-13). Tapping into this, it can be conjectured that the uncommon reported speech evinces how, whenever remembering his trauma, the widower reverts to egocentric use of language.

In addition to being introduced without quotation marks, the reported speech is also devoid of all other forms of punctuation, and is subsequently presented as a medley of clauses that overlap as they succeed one another. In much the same way, and on account of their syncretistic mode of thinking, children focus on the whole to the detriment of its details, and therefore produce discourses made up of a jumble of details. Accordingly, one possible explanation why the reported speech is presented in such an unconventional way is to suggest that, as soon as the man with the damaged hands recalls his trauma, he falls back on a mode of thinking evocative of syncretism in egocentric children.

A further remarkable property of the reported speech is its temporality, in that it ties in with what Genette defines as *external analepsis*, "an analepsis whose entire extent remains external to the first narrative" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 49). Indeed, the calls for help of the widower's wife that the reported speech presents do not belong to the narrative in which they are embedded, as this narrative takes place several years later. The anachronic nature of

these calls evokes the widower's cognitive incapacity to correlate them with a unique position in time. Such an incapacity most probably stems from the fact that he cannot detach himself from his trauma. In fact, individuals can temporalise their life experiences only when taking some distance from them. This is underlined by Piaget when he states that "Grasping time is tantamount to freeing oneself from the present, to transcending space by a mobile effort, i.e. by reversible operations. To follow time along the simple and irreversible course of events is simply to live it without taking cognisance of it" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 259). However, according to Piaget, egocentric agents cannot detach themselves from what they instantaneously perceive or remember. That is why they relive their past memories as part of their living presents. Following Piaget's observations, it can be said that the anachronistic character of the reported speech evokes how, upon remembering his trauma, the man with the burnt hands reverts to a cognitive state highly reminiscent of that of egocentric subjects. He thereupon fails to take any distance from his trauma, loses his qualitative (chronological) understanding of time, and eventually experiences his eerie memory as part of his actual present.

The widower's regression into former stages of mental development is not an exception. Indeed, his reaction is common among trauma victims, who intermittently experience a deep anguish that Freud terms *mental helplessness* (*Hilflosigkeit*) (Freud "Inhibitions" 20:138). According to Freud, such an overwhelming feeling is readily observed in a young child upon the absence of her loved and desired object—her mother. Drawing the parallel between young children and certain adults, Freud eventually concludes that, in childhood, as well as in adulthood, the temporary or definitive absence of a beloved object can generate a profound sense of helplessness, which unavoidably grows into a trauma (Freud "Inhibitions" 20:156-7). Tapping into Freud's observations, it can be advanced that, upon remembering the loss of his beloved wife, the widower endures in the last passage a profound sense of helplessness typical of that which overcomes a young child upon the absence of her mother.

In tandem with the last passage, "Keeping Watch over the Sheep" from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* typifies how traumatised characters backslide in a mental state evocative of that of a young child (*TISTHSLY* 43-8). In brief, this short story is about a man who is denied entry to his daughter's Nativity play, on the grounds of divorce and under the terms of a restraining order. Although most of the story's events are pieced together in a chronological fashion, its final scene whisks readers backwards and forwards in time:

> He turned back towards the hall, sliding his face along the window to try and find a gap in the curtains, listening out for the sound of that one little voice he'd come to hear.
> *He didn't even know how it had all started going wrong. With Rachel's mother . . . Maybe it was both of their faults in a way. Maybe there were some things he probably shouldn't have said, or done. Or broken.*
> . . .
> **Later, once the police had got the handcuffs on and were picking him up off the ground, he noticed that someone had opened the hall curtains.**
> (*TISTHSLY* 47, emphasis, underlining and boldface added)

In this passage, the unmarked segment is the last chronologically ordered event of the story, and it is about the main protagonist, when he sneaks into his daughter's school to catch a glimpse of her performance in the Nativity play. The time flow of the narrative is then broken by an abrupt retrospective account in free indirect speech about the protagonist's recollection of his tumultuous marital life (italicised). In addition to being introduced in an anachronic fashion, the italicised section involves two subordinate clauses set off from their main clauses by a full stop (underlined). One plausible rendition of these unwonted syntactic structures is that they evoke the incapacity of the protagonist to transmute into a coherent narrative some of his recollections of his tempestuous marital life. As specified in the third chapter, traumatic events linger as a *saying without a said*, i.e. as extremely frightening events which not only resist language, but actively destroy it. That is why most traumatised individuals' testimonies are usually fragmented and incoherent. In this regard, the fragmented clauses in the passage possibly reflect how the man is, to some extent, traumatised by his failure to keep his family united.

The passage eventually ends with a *proleptic analepsis* (boldfaced), as the narrator suddenly shifts from the character's retrospection to an anticipated recall about how this character has eventually been arrested for violating the restraining order. Since egocentric agents' recollections are distinguished by their shipwrecked chronology, the passage's anachronistic structure is arguably evidence of how, as a result of his divorce, the protagonist backslides into an egocentric vision of time.

As will be specified in the next chapter, the tendency of the traumatised characters towards egocentrism stems from their tendency to remain closed in on themselves. Indeed, such a mental state is mainly distinguished by an egocentric agent's proclivity to reduce worldly phenomena, including time, to one perspective—her own (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 220). Thus, it can be posited that the traumatised characters' tendency towards egocentrism is a cognitive manifestation of their unconscious tendency to remain "at

home with oneself [*chez soi*]" (Levinas, *Totality* 37). Levinas understands this to mean the propensity of many an individual to remain turned in on themselves, lest they be wounded. Indeed, an experience of otherness, as advanced by Levinas, is basically about "reverting from grasping to being grasped . . . from the activity of being a hunter of images to the passivity of being prey, from being aim to being wound" (Levinas, *Otherwise* 75). In other words, for Levinas, to be open to others means to welcome with open arms their injuries. Based on Levinas's conception of an experience of alterity, it can be supposed that the anachronistic nature of the previously studied passages is an instance of how the traumatised characters relapse into an egocentric state. Such mental state, in turn, allows them to fend off openness to otherness, for fear of being wounded by others, especially by their traumas which, as has been established, persist as alien others.

In the same vein as McGregor's other writings, *Even the Dogs* is marked by its anachronistic narrative, as the 'We,' the novel's choral narrator, flits back and forth in time in deliberate non-sequiturs. Among the many scenes corroborating this statement is the one from the third chapter where the choral narrator waits at the morgue for the autopsy of Robert's corpse:

> We watch the hands of the clock tick through the seconds and minutes and hours, and we **wait**. For someone to come and open one of those heavy doors and roll Robert out. Bring him out to us. Take him away.
>
> . . .
>
> Heather outside the flat again. When was this. *Must have been Christmas Day, was it*. Before she knew anything was wrong. Sort of before any of us knew. **Waiting** outside with a bag full of cans and snap, **waiting** for someone to come to the door.
>
> (*ED* 60-1, italics, underlining and boldface added)

One of the remarkable features of this passage is its subordinate clauses which are 'severed' from their main clauses (underlined). Such uncommon syntactic structures permeate the author's fiction, and can be interpreted, in the present case, as a metaphorical expression of how the impersonal narrator is traumatised by the eerie event to which it bears witness. As established in the fourth chapter, a trauma persists as a *double*, i.e. as a mental phenomenon dissociated from the ego. Based on this, it can be propounded that the splintered subordinate clauses in the excerpt emulate how traumatic memories, including those of the narrator, endure as splintered psyches.

Alongside its fragmented structure, the passage has a solecistic punctuation, as it involves a question tag (italicised) ending with a full stop instead of a question mark. Usually

people use question tags when seeking confirmation of their statements. However, by ending its question tag by a full stop, the disembodied narrator appears not to be seeking any confirmation. Its verbal demeanour can then be translated into two different ways. The first is that the narrator's unconventional question tag is an assertive statement of how Robert has been forsaken by his friends, as well as by his entire society. Accordingly, such a question tag is a euphemistic expression whereby the narrator blames the whole of Robert's society for his death. Another conceivable reading of the narrator's question tag is that it is addressed to nobody, and therefore awaiting no confirmation. Drawing on this interpretation, such a question tenably evinces the narrator's tendency to speak in a language largely in agreement with that of egocentric individuals. In fact, and as specified in the last chapter, egocentric subjects nowise infrequently indulge in soliloquies in which they ask questions, while apparently waiting for answers. However, in reality, they are absorbed in their fantasies, while merely asking *questions for the air*, in Piaget's understanding of the term, i.e. questions to which they expect no answers. Drawing on Piaget's conception of many of an egocentric individual's questions, it can be said that the narrator's solecistic question tag is a question for the air, which typifies this narrator's propensity for egocentric language.

Besides its unusual structure and punctuation, the passage has an anachronistic structure. Indeed, it opens with the narrator's simultaneous narration of how it loiters around the morgue where Robert's corpse awaits autopsy. The passage then takes an analeptic turn, as the narrator flits, in an acausal fashion, to the subsequent narration of the day when Heather comes knocking at Robert's door, not knowing that he is lying dead in his derelict flat. Since egocentric time is mainly characterised by an egocentric agent's tendency to stack up her memories in a confused jumble, the anachronistic way in which the choral narrator recollects its traumas conceivably evokes its propensity for an egocentric version of time.

Other than being out of chronological order, the last extract, like the rest of the narrative in which it is embedded, is dominated by the characters' incessant waiting, with the word 'wait,' or close variants of it, mentioned two hundred and eighteen times in the novel. The hyperbolic repetition of this word to refer most frequently to the characters' cravings for drugs gives the impression that these characters measure the passage of time not by the ticking of the clock 'through the seconds and minutes and hours,' but rather by their intermittent gnawing need to

'score.'[88] Such an uncommon manner in which characters experience time is, in many ways, reminiscent of what Piaget identifies as the most elementary form of time found at the sensorimotor stage (ages birth-$1\frac{1}{2}$ year) (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 255). According to Piaget, when a baby cries with hunger, it experiences duration as the waiting time for food. Such a rudimentary way to gauge the passage of time is what Piaget terms *sensory motor time*. Relying upon this Piagetian concept, it can be advanced that by making their waiting time to satisfy their 'hunger' their primary means to measure durations, the traumatised characters regress into a conception of time typical of *sensory motor time* in babies.[89]

Thus far, it has been argued that one of the reasons why most of the characters' traumas are imparted through narratives out of chronological order is to show how, as a result of such troubling events, these characters lose their qualitative understanding of time. Unlike these anachronistic narratives, McGregor's *Reservoir13* is set out in natural sequence, as its disembodied narrator proceeds chronologically, while relating how the dwellers of the unnamed village go on with their lives over the course of the thirteen years following the traumatic disappearance of the young Rebecca Shaw. The chronological fashion in which this novel is introduced does not, however, imply that its characters and incorporeal narrator have maintained their qualitative conception of time, despite the trauma they have endured. Indeed, individuals who lack an adequate understanding of qualitative time can produce, in certain circumstances, chronologically ordered narratives. This is the case of egocentric children who are able to chronologise the movements of a *single* object, since in this case, and as underscored by Piaget, "the time sequence ('before' and 'after') coincides with the space sequence" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 26). The same logic arguably applies to two further cases, the first being when several objects move simultaneously in the same direction and with a uniform velocity. Indeed, in this situation, the different objects act like a single body in motion, and, as such, their temporal succession corresponds to their spatial succession. Likewise, when several objects overlap while succeeding one another, their progression over time coincides with their progression over space. What follows from these considerations is that the impersonal narrator of *Reservoir13* could have lost its qualitative comprehension of time, on account of the trauma to which it bears witness. However, it produces a chronologically ordered narrative because the

[88] 'To score' is employed twenty-eight times in the novel, and it is a slang term for the self-injection of drugs (*ED* 19, 26, 28*2, 29*3, 39, 40, 42, 43*2, 44, 47*2, 48, 51, 71, 79, 88, 89, 103*2, 111, 115, 135, 184*2).

[89] 'Hunger' is what the choral narrator uses in the following quotation to refer to the characters' cravings for drugs: "The hunger it gives you, the need" (*ED* 146).

different events upon which it focuses in each of its narrative monoliths are cultural and natural phenomena that interpenetrate, even as they succeed one another.

To conclude, the author communicates most of his characters' traumas through narratives chiefly marked by their anachronistic structure. One reason for this is to evince how, due to their incapacity to correlate their frightening accidents with a unique position in time, traumatised characters regress into a cognitive state deeply reminiscent of that of egocentric subjects. On account of such a cognitive condition, these characters lose their qualitative understanding of time, and thereby resort to anachronism.

As has been briefly signalled, and as will be detailed in the following chapter, traumatised characters' tendency towards egocentrism is a conscious expression of their unconscious inclination to eschew openness to the other, for fear of the sufferings that the other, especially their traumas, can inflict upon them. Although they arguably evoke how the traumatised characters become unresponsive to others, the author's narratives are conducive to the practice of the ethics of alterity. Indeed, and as has been explained, they are marked, among other things, by their anachronistic character. By virtue of this property, along with several others, these trauma-laden narratives make readers lose their bearings, and thereby impel them to experience some of the profound sense of loss the traumatised characters endure whenever reminded of their eerie experiences. Readers are thereupon urged to feel sympathy for these characters, hence the ethical yield of the author's narratives.

2. The Plasticity of Time

In the introduction to the present chapter, it has been indicated that qualitative time, according to Piaget, is a precondition for acquiring *quantitative time*, namely the cognitive capacity to perceive the flow of time as uniform (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 273). However, and as demonstrated by the last subchapter, the author's traumatised characters lose their qualitative understanding of time. They thereupon regress into a cognitive state much similar to that of egocentric children, who usually regard time as *plastic*, i.e. as contracting, expanding and even stopping (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 248).

Among the many of Piaget's experiments demonstrating the plasticity of time in egocentric children is the one in which he places in front of two flasks several children at egocentric phases of cognitive development. The first of these flasks is narrow and cylindrical, while the

second, placed immediately above, has the shape of an inverted pear, with its diameter at the widest point being larger than that of the lower flask. The inverted-pear-shaped flask (I) is filled up with water. Then, by means of a tap, Piaget allows the water to drop into the lower cylindrical flask (II). Because of the difference in shape between the two flasks, a given drop in water level in the upper flask (I1 to I2) is accompanied by a rather larger rise in the lower cylindrical flask (II1 to II2). The children are then asked to make judgements about the time it takes for the water level to rise in the cylindrical flask (II), and to fall in the pearl flask (I):

> PEL (6 years): Does the water take as long to rise from here to there (II1 to II2) as it does to drop from here to there (I1, to I2)? *No*. How long does it take to rise here (II1 to II2)? *Two minutes, I think*. And to drop here (I1 to I2)? *Five minutes*. Why? *It's bigger and there's more water on top.*
> CHAP (7 years). The water is allowed to drop from I1 to I2: Did you see that? *Yes, the water dropped here* (I1 I2) *and rose there* (II1 II2). Did it take the same time here (I1 I2) and there (II1 II2)? *No, it took longer to rise in here* (II) *than to drop down there* (I). Why should it take longer in here (II)? *Because I could tell*.
>
> (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 53, emphasis in original)

The foregoing experiment evidences how children confuse time with shape. They also confound time with both speed and distance, since they believe that "'more rapidly'= 'further' (overtaking) and 'further'= 'more time,' irrespective of all other factors involved" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 41). That is why these children do not regard time as a constant flow, as adults do. Instead, they view it as a phenomenon capable of being expanded, contracted or even stopped.

Much like children, many of the author's characters experience time as elastic, as soon as they remember their traumas. This statement is displayed by many instances from the author's fiction, including the scene of Shahid's car accident in *If Nobody Speaks*:

> **He can see** the road stretching out behind the car, the still-wet surface gleaming darkly, **he can see** the houses on either side . . . **He can see** people in the street looking at him . . . **he can see** the funny man at number eighteen. . . and **he can see** the people sitting outside the house next to his, **he can see** the small boy on his tricycle . . . **He can see** all of this, the boy in the middle of the road. **He can see** the street, and the people, and the sky.
>
> (*INSRT* 252, boldface added)

What is most appealing about the passage is the anaphoric expression (boldfaced) used to introduce each of the many visual fragments about what Shahid sees in the split second before being hit by a car. By using 'he can see' and not simply 'he sees,' the narrator possibly suggests

that Shahid suddenly has a revelation. More specifically, the narrator's boldfaced expression intimates that, owing to his trauma, the young boy has his eyes opened to the remarkable nature of what is usually perceived as unremarkable, including 'the street, and the people, and the sky.' This interpretation draws upon the fact that traumatic experiences, including the young boy's accident, inevitably conjure up an ample quantity of emotion. As established in the first chapter, emotion is a neural energy, by dint of which mental representations gain psychic value. On account of the substantial emotion it has generated, Shahid's trauma has made the world around him look weird. Under the sway of such an uncanny experience, and on the spur of the moment, the young boy 'can see' how extraordinary the things are that people commonly perceive as ordinary.

Following suit with Shahid, and by virtue of the boldfaced expression, readers awaken to the fact that ordinary things are *vibrant*, in Bennett's understanding of the term, i.e. are made up of lively matter, the building block of everything, including human beings (Bennett 122). Indeed, the anaphoric repetition of 'he can see' slows down the reading pace, and thereby urges readers to dwell on the many trivial details listed in the passage. Subsequently, these apparently unexceptional phenomena become exceptional. Accordingly, the anaphoric expression is conducive to the practice of consideration, the ethical act of "perceiving something or someone with the same care that one usually shows when pondering over the position and height of the stars" (Pelluchon 31, translation mine).

Aside from its ethical import, the hyperbolic repetition of the boldfaced clause brings to mind egocentric time in children under ten. As previously specified, the reiteration of this clause slows down the reading pace, and thereby gives the impression that Shahid's accident lasts hours, not a split second. Thus, the manner in which the scene is introduced makes time seem to be expanding, which is one of main properties of egocentric time. This is made manifest by the conversation Piaget has with a boy of four: "How long does it take you to go home? *One hour*. And if you are in a hurry? *I go more quickly*. Does that take more or less time? *More time*. Why? *Because*" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 38, emphasis in original). The young boy's answers clearly show how he sees time and speed as directly proportional, and thereby ends up thinking that time expands as speed increases. In view of these observations, it can be assumed that the anaphoric expression reflects how, due to the accident it has witnessed, the incorporeal narrator backslides into an egocentric mental state, and thereby ends up viewing time as a phenomenon capable of being distended.

Similar to the last extract, and in the same novel, many scenes demonstrate how, under the thrall of their traumas, characters feel that time slows down. Among these scenes is the one where 'the boy with the pierced eyebrow' from number seventeen suddenly sees 'the man with the carefully trimmed moustache' from number twenty while bungee jumping off a crane:

> The boy with the pier**c**ed eyebrow doe**s**n't reali**s**e who it i**s**, or what he is **s**eeing, all he **s**ees is a figure falling from the crane, falling through the air and di**s**appearing behind a row of hou**s**e**s**.
> For a very short moment there i**s** a lump of shock in his mouth, his con**c**entration **s**ucked into the panel of **s**ky the man is falling through; and in that moment, in the time it take**s** for the orange jui**c**e from the carton at his mouth to gush down and fall from his chin, to turn in the air and catch the light and **s**plash into his lap, in that moment his blood**s**tream is infu**s**ed with a dambur**s**t of adrenalin and hi**s** eye**s** widen and hi**s** finger**s** twitch with the energy of it.
> (*INSRT* 249, boldface and underlining added)

Among the notable aspects of this passage are the many words with /s/ et /z/ sounds (underlined and boldfaced). The hyperbolic repetition of these two phonemes arguably has an acoustic effect reminiscent of the buzzing sound people hear when vehicles zoom past them. Thus, by employing several words with /s/ et /z/ sounds, the impersonal narrator evokes the high speed at which the scene it depicts takes place. Besides its phonetic properties, another aspect of the passage evoking substantial velocity is its punctuation. Apart from one instance, the passage is devoid of full stops. The lack of this form of punctuation speeds up the reading pace, makes the many visual fragments in the passage appear to be succeeding one another at breakneck speed, and thereby emphasises the tremendous velocity at which the scene occurs.

Although happening at high speed, the scene involves a segment (underlined) in which time seems to stretch out. Indeed, in this segment, the incorporeal narrator dwells on the description of the young man while he is still in shock, so much so that it produces an effect redolent of *slow motion*, the cinematic effect of "slowing down the motion of a photographed subject which can be achieved by playing back the film at a slower frame rate than normal" (Chandler 393). Relying upon what has been demonstrated in the present excerpt, it becomes clear how the narrator equates time with speed, and thereby presents the scene it describes as both rapid and extended in time. The paradoxical phenomenality of this scene is profoundly reminiscent of egocentric time in children, who think that 'quicker' signifies 'more time,' thus "likening the impression of the speed of an action to its duration" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 253). Following from this statement, one can put forward that the disembodied narrator presents speed and time as directly proportional. In doing so, it shows how, when faced

with an unexpected event, the young man regresses into a cognitive state similar to that of an egocentric child, and thereby has the impression that time decelerates.

Just like *If Nobody Speaks*, several short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* exemplify how, in response to their traumas, characters lose their quantitative understanding of time. Among these short stories is "Wires" which, as has been specified, is about the young woman Emily, who is driving on a motorway when a sugar beet crashes through her windscreen (*TISTHSLY* 160-75). This frightening experience is reported as follows:

> But in the time it had taken to say 'Oh' she'd apparently had the time to make a list of all the things she was having the time to think about, like, i.e. ***Item One***, how she'd said 'Oh' without any panic or fear, and did that mean she was repressed or just calm or collected or what**;** ***Item Two***, what would Marcus say when he found out, would he try and find someone to blame, such as herself for driving too close or even for driving on her own at all, or such as the lorry driver for overloading the lorry, or such as her, again, for not having joined the union like he'd told her to.
>
> (*TISTHSLY*, emphasis, boldface and underlining added 160-1)

Like the rest of the short story in which it is embedded, the present passage is focalised through Emily, who can also be the narrator. If it is the case, then this passage shows how, as a result of her trauma, Emily ends up referring to herself in the third person. Her demeanour would then be symptomatic of traumatic neuroses, since a trauma victim, as established in the fifth chapter, intermittently loses her sense of self, and eventually ends up perceiving herself as a foreign other. Accordingly, the use of the third person in the passage can be evidence of how Emily has become traumatised by her car accident.

Another noteworthy aspect of the passage is its social media language, as typified by the boldfaced and italicised expressions. Apart from two instances, each of these expressions is preceded by a semicolon (boldfaced and underlined), and is used to introduce one of the visual fragments about what Emily remembers in the split second before the sugar beet crashes through her windscreen. Usually, semicolons are used instead of full stops to connect independent clauses that are related in terms of meaning. However, this is not the case in the present passage where semicolons are employed to link radically different memories from Emily's past. One possible reason behind such a solecistic use of punctuation is to emulate the rapid pace at which Emily's recollections succeed one another, which is typical of traumatic memories. In fact, and as specified in the second chapter, traumatic flashbacks usually cross the threshold of consciousness as a series of indiscriminate mnemonic fragments that interpenetrate, even as

they succeed one another. Drawing upon these considerations, it can be concluded that the unwonted use of semicolons evokes how Emily is traumatised by her car accident. Due to such a trauma, she spontaneously remembers many events that have marked her life at lightning speed.

In contrast with their high velocity, Emily's recollections appear to last several minutes rather than a blink of an eye, in that each of these recollections is transcribed into a lengthy narrative fragment. This is epitomised by the underlined segment which is not only long, but also involves unwonted punctuation. In fact, it is made up of interrogative clauses ending with commas instead of question marks, which hastens the reading pace, and thereby makes reaching the end of this segment like coming up for a gulp of air. Thus, by means of its solecistic punctuation, the segment exhausts readers, appears to be much longer than it actually is, and subsequently reinforces the impression that Emily's memories expand *ad infinitum*. Based on what has been shown in the current excerpt, it becomes obvious how, by way of certain textual elements, especially uncommon punctuation, the narrator likens speed to duration. In doing so, she presents Emily's reminiscences as both quick and extended in time, which ties in with the conception of time in egocentric children. In fact, these children associate time with speed, and eventually end up thinking that an event happening at considerable speed inevitably takes a long period of time. Accordingly, the unconventional properties of the passage, most notably its punctuation, contestably evoke how, in response to her trauma, Emily loses her quantitative conception of time, relapses into an egocentric cognitive state, and eventually feels that time dilates.

Similarly, and in McGregor's *Reservoir 13*, time appears to be a distensible phenomenon, the subsequent excerpt being a fair illustration of this feature:

> The missing girl **had been looked for** . . . **She had been looked for** in the nettles growing up around the dead oak tree in Thompson's yard . . . **She had been looked for** at the Hunter place, around the back of the barn conversions ***and*** in the carports ***and*** woodsheds ***and*** workshops, in the woodland ***and*** in the greenhouses ***and*** the walled gardens.
>
> (*Reservoir* 10-1, italics and boldface added)

The passage gives a detailed account of the many places where the police and the villagers have looked for Rebecca on the night she went missing. In tandem with the narrative in which it is embedded, this passage is singled out by its passive voice sentences, which can be a metaphor for the passivity of the novel's characters before the young girl's disappearance. Indeed, such a disquieting event remains an unsolved mystery, and thereby grows into a collective trauma

haunting the characters whether they are awake or asleep. As has been demonstrated in the first and second part of the thesis, a traumatic experience persists over time because it exceeds the cognitive capacity and self-identity of the one it impresses. Thus, the hyperbolic use of the passive voice in the novel is, among other things, an index of how the villagers are reduced to a state of helplessness, in which they suffer from a collective trauma beyond their self-identities and cognitive powers.

In addition to its passive voice sentences, another noteworthy property of the passage is its use of an anaphoric expression (boldfaced) or polysyndeton (boldfaced and italicised) to introduce each of the places where 'The missing girl had been looked for.' By way of these two literary devices, the excerpt produces a cumulative effect, and thereby makes the many places it lists look even more numerous than they actually are. Faced with such a narrative, readers lose their bearings, and are thereby impelled to experience some of the dismay that the characters endure each time they remember their trauma. In this regard, it can be assumed that the passage relies upon both the anaphoric structure and polysyndeton so as to transmute the reading process into an ethical experience, in Levinas's acceptance of the word, i.e. an experience where a subject suffers, despite herself, from others' sufferings (Levinas, *Otherwise* 50).

Besides its ethical outcome, the use of the two literary devices can be rendered in two different ways. The first is that it is a metaphorical expression of the characters' collective trauma. As has been specified in the second chapter, most trauma victims show an overwhelming compulsion to relive their traumas, each time as if it were the first time. Based on this, it can be said that the passage draws upon both the anaphoric expression and polysyndeton in order to mimic the characters' compulsion to reexperience their collective trauma. Another possible reason behind the hyperbolic use of the two figures of speech is to show how the characters have regressed into an egocentric view of time. Indeed, these literary devices slow down the reading pace, and thereby make the scene described in the present passage appear to expand *ad infinitum*, which arguably evokes how the traumatised characters, much like egocentric children, experience time as a phenomenon capable of being dilated.

On a similar note, and in McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, many scenes attest to how the traumatised characters regard time as a tensile phenomenon. This includes the scene where the choral narrator is sitting next to Robert's corpse in the back of an ambulance (*ED* 17-55). Among the notable aspects of this scene is its anachronistic nature, as the choral narrator alternates between the simultaneous narration of how Robert's corpse is carried to the morgue and

the subsequent narration of how Danny discovers Robert's rotting corpse. Although these two events are several days apart, they are presented as though they were simultaneous or consecutive.

What is also striking about the scene is that it appears to have lasted much longer than it actually did, as the choral narrator devotes the entire second chapter to recounting it. One possible reason why it is introduced as such is because its narrator confuses time with speed. Subsequently, the narrator likens the duration of this scene to the high speed of the ambulance carrying Robert's corpse, and thereby presents it as a long drive. Following this logic, the present scene testifies to how the choral narrator, akin to an egocentric child, thinks that time expands as speed increases.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated that many passages from McGregor's fiction epitomise how, under the influence of their traumas, the characters end up viewing time as a tensile phenomenon, which is one of the main aspects of egocentric time. In what follows, it will be shown how, akin to egocentric agents, traumatised characters regard time as capable of being contracted or even stopped. Among the many instances typifying this statement is one of the several passages from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* where Kate remembers Shahid's accident:

> But mostly there was **this moment of absolute silence**. Absolute stillness.
> . . .
> It seemed, or at least it seems now, that everything else was motionless.
> The beercan caught between the hand and the ground.
> The blanket not quite touching the wall.
> The boy with the tricycle a flinch away from the tree.
>
> (*INSRT* 9, boldface added)

The passage displays four noticeable properties, the first being the vividness with which Kate recalls the scene of Shahid's car accident. Although this scene happened three years earlier, Kate still recalls not only its central event, but also several of its secondary details, including a falling 'beercan' and a flapping 'blanket.' As has been specified in the second chapter, traumatised individuals remember even the trivial details of their disconcerting accidents. Thus, the crystal clarity with which Kate recollects even certain minor details of Shahid's accident is evidence of how she is traumatised by this disquieting event.

Alongside its striking vividness, another obvious aspect of the passage is the euphemistic way in which Kate refers to her trauma. Indeed, in this passage, and until the near end of the novel, Kate's trauma is never made explicit, but is rather designated in a roundabout way by

means of certain circumlocutions, including the boldfaced expression in the present passage. Such an allusive mode in which Kate's trauma is addressed typifies how this protagonist cannot express her eerie accident in straightforward language. Her demeanour is symptomatic of traumatic neuroses, since most trauma victims, as has been established in the third chapter, are confronted with the inadequacy of language to express their extremely disturbing past experiences. They thereupon resort to an abstract and indirect language whereby they communicate their traumas in an allusive way, hence the euphemistic fashion in which Kate refers to her trauma in this passage, as well as in several other passages throughout the novel.

What further characterises the extract is its syntactic structures, as it is mainly made up of non-finite clauses, i.e. tenseless clauses. Since 'tense' is the only category of verbal inflection that specifies the time of an action or event, the tenseless clauses that Kate employs when referring to her trauma evoke how she cannot correlate such a frightening accident with any position in time. Her demeanour is common among trauma victims who, as established in the second chapter, always conceive of their eerie accidents as events excised from time flow.

The last evident aspect of the passage is its typography, as it is made up of non-finite clauses superimposed upon one another. By virtue of both its syntactic and typographical properties, this excerpt is presented as a fragmented series of narrative stills, which can be rendered in two distinct ways. The first is that these unwonted aspects are a metaphorical expression of Kate's trauma which, like other eerie events, and as already specified, cross the threshold of consciousness as mnemonic fragments without a coherent semantic component. The second plausible rendition of these two properties is that they reflect how, in response to her traumatic memory, Kate regresses into an egocentric mental state. She thereupon presents her trauma as a moment where time stands still, which is also one of the main features of egocentric time in children under ten.

In the same fashion as in the last passage, many extracts from McGregor's *Even the Dogs* present time as a phenomenon capable of being stopped. This includes the scene from the third chapter where the choral narrator waits for the end of Robert's post-mortem examination:

> We gather together in the room, sitting, standing, leaning against the wall, and we wait. *For the morning. For someone to come back. For something to happen*.
> **Waiting is one thing we're good at, as it happens.**
> **We've had a lot of practice.**
> **We've got all the time in the world**.
> (*ED* 57, emphasis, boldface and underlining added)

The passage shows three prominent aspects, the first being the typography of certain of its clauses (boldfaced). Superimposed upon one another, these clauses produce an effect that broadly ties in with *dialectical montage*, an effect in filmic montage in which two or several shots are juxtaposed so as to evoke tension and discord (Chandler 100). Following this logic, it can be supposed that the superimposed and anaphorically introduced clauses in the passage are profoundly reminiscent of traumatic flashbacks which, as previously established, manifest themselves to the consciousness of the one they impact as disjointed mnemonic fragments devoid of any logical connection. Accordingly, the boldfaced clauses arguably typify how the choral narrator is traumatised by the scene it recollects.

The second property of the passage is its hyperbolic use of the present tense and the present participle form (underlined), which creates the impression that the scene depicted in this passage stretches endlessly. This is emphasised by the repetitive use of the verb 'wait,' or close variants of it, which makes the choral narrator appear to be dwelling in some sort of limbo (Ganteau, "Vulnerable" 92). The way time is presented in the passage is broadly in line with egocentric time in children under ten, since for these children "A period of idleness will seem extremely long while it lasts because nothing at all was happening at it" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 232). In this regard, one can argue that, in the current passage, the presentation of time as a phenomenon capable of being expanded reflects the tendency of the choral narrator towards egocentric time.

What further corroborates how the narrator has an egocentric perception of time is the third property of the passage, namely its non-finite clauses (italicised). Because they are devoid of any verb showing time, these clauses produce an effect reminiscent of a series of *freeze-frame shots*, i.e. of still images (Chandler 100). Thus, by way of its non-finite clauses, the passage makes time seem to stall, which, as earlier indicated, is one of the main aspects of egocentric time.

Another excerpt from the same novel showing the hallmarks of egocentric time is the subsequent one : "One last fix to get their heads down and then it was like no more than a blink before they were awake again ***and*** cold ***and*** sick ***and*** crawling around looking for the next score. Might have been a few hours but it never felt more than a minute" (*ED* 51, emphasis and underlining added). This passage clearly shows how the novel's characters regard time as an elastic phenomenon. When they are overwhelmed by their gnawing need for a 'fix,' they feel that time hangs heavy, as underscored by the use of polysyndeton (boldfaced). However, once

they have their fix, and as typified by the underlined sentence, characters experience an extreme sense of pleasure, so much so that they feel that time goes very fast. The same applies to young children who confuse time as an objective phenomenon with their subjective experience of it (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 197). Eventually, they feel that time either slows down or speeds up, depending on whether they are in a good or bad mood. Accordingly, the last passage clearly shows how the novel's characters have an egocentric perception of time, and thereby feel that time is capable of being expanded and contracted.

Like the previous excerpt, several passages from McGregor's *So Many Ways* show how traumatised characters resort to egocentric time when remembering their traumas. This includes the following excerpt from the italicised prologue which is basically about the traumatic adolescence of Mary, the woman David mistakenly thought to be his biological mother:

> ***She kept it hidden the whole nine months. She wore bigger clothes. She ate as little food as she could*** . . . *She took a bus to the hospital when she could stand* ***it*** *no more, wrapping her saved wages in the middle of her brown paper bundle of clothes, leaving a note that said nothing on her bed and a month's money uncollected. Her waters had already broken by the time they took her on to the ward. When the baby was born, an underweight boy, he was taken from her almost without discussion.*
>
> (*SMWB* 8-9, boldface and underlining added)

Although it is only two pages long, the passage relates many harrowing experiences that Mary endured over nine successive months, notably how "she becomes pregnant after her employer has taken a passing interest in her, how she hides her pregnancy, abandons the child after a short stay in hospital and goes back to her family in Ireland" (Ganteau, "Espousing" 61). Accordingly, this passage creates the impression that time speeds up, an impression which is further accentuated by certain of the passage's syntactic structures. Opening with paratactic clauses (italicised), the passage slows down the reading pace, and thereby makes time appear to be decelerating. The passage then proceeds through long sentences, speeds up the reading pace, and thereby makes time seem to be accelerating. Thus, by means of its syntactic structures, the passage presents time as plastic, sometimes decelerating and sometimes accelerating, which is one of the principal features of egocentric time. Following from these considerations, the passage arguably reflects how, whenever reminded of her traumatic adolescence, Mary falls back on a conception of time much similar to that of a child.

A second remarkable aspect of the passage is the euphemistic fashion in which Mary's trauma is addressed. Indeed, nowhere in this passage is Mary's pregnancy mentioned in an

explicit way, but is rather designated by the impersonal pronoun ‘it’ (boldfaced and underlined). Such an indirectness can be an index of how Mary is traumatised by her pregnancy, since most trauma victims, as earlier specified, communicate their traumas through indirect and abstract language. Similarly, and as indicated in the previous chapter, egocentric children employ ambiguous language in which almost everything is indicated by allusion, including by pronouns and demonstratives. Thus, the impersonal pronoun in the passage disputably indicates how, in response to her trauma, Mary regressed into an egocentric use of language.

In conclusion, McGregor’s fiction is marked by the cinematic aspect of certain of its passages, the hyperbolic use of some expressions and unwonted punctuation. These narrative properties, along with certain others, present time as an elastic phenomenon. One plausible reason for this is to show how, in reaction to their traumas, the characters revert to an egocentric mental state. Subsequently, they end up viewing time as capable of being contracted, expanded and even stopped, much like egocentric agents do.

As will be exemplified in the next chapter, the traumatised characters’ egocentrism is debatably a defense mechanism. Indeed, among the main aspects of egocentrism is an egocentric agent’s unresponsiveness to others, as such cognitive demeanour basically involves an egocentric individual’s reduction of worldly phenomena, including time, to one perspective—her own. Accordingly, the egocentric behaviour of the characters is tenably a cognitive means through which they ward off openness to otherness, lest they be wounded by their internal others—their traumatic memories.

Chapter 9

Preoperational Thinking and the Impairment of Otherness

The last two subchapters have shown how the author's fiction is marked by certain narrative peculiarities, such as the use of unwonted typography, anachronistic structures and the hyperbolic repetition of the same expressions. As has been illustrated, these properties, along with several others, typify, among other things, how the traumatised characters use language and conceive of time in a way typical of cognitive egocentrism. According to Piaget, such a cognitive state is chiefly characterised by an egocentric agent's *preoperational thinking* which, along with *operational* and *sensorimotor thinking*, constitutes one of the three ontogenetically distinct modes of thought in human beings (Piaget, *Structuralism* 90-6).

Piaget understands 'sensorimotor thinking' to mean the most rudimentary paradigm of thought which is mainly observed in young children (ages birth-2 years), and which chiefly involves "reflex-complexes, such as the sucking movements of a neonate" (Piaget, *Structuralism* 63). Upon reaching the age of two, a human being develops *preoperational thinking* which is chiefly *iconic*, namely limited to what is instantaneously seen (Piaget, *Structuralism* 94). On account of this mode of thought, children (ages 2-7 years) do not venture beyond the here and now, and cannot thereby acqu36ire concepts like 'the past' and 'the future'(Piaget, *Structuralism* 94). Indeed, acquiring new knowledge requires projecting oneself beyond immediate perception. To put it in Piaget's terms, the acquisition of new knowledge rests upon *accommodation*.

Piaget uses 'accommodation' to refer to one of the twin mental processors that he introduces in his theory of human cognitive development: *assimilation* and *accommodation*. According to Piaget, 'accommodation' is the mental phenomenon which allows for "the modification of internal schemes to fit reality" (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6).[90] In contrast to accommodation, assimilation is the mental processor which permits "the filtering or modification of the input" (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6). These two processors are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Indeed, any new life experience usually leads to the revision of one or several preexisting schemes (accommodation). Once remodelled, these schemes are treated in such a way as to fit in with other schemes of the human mind (assimilation) (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 5).

[90] See detailed definition of 'scheme' on p.19.

According to Piaget, preoperational thinking in children under seven is mostly distinguished by its lack of accommodation. The main reason behind this is that these children unconsciously see themselves as the centre of the universe, and thereby spontaneously reduce the world to one perspective—their own, hence Piaget's concept of *egocentric space* (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 209-46). Such a cognitive conception of space wanes, but by no means disappears, when individuals (ages 7 years and upwards) develop *operational thinking*, in Piaget's acceptance of the term, i.e. the mode of thought which is essentially symbolic (linguistic) (Piaget, *Structuralism* 94). By way of their operational thinking, individuals relativise their perception of space, accommodate themselves to others' points of view, and thereby acquire increasing knowledge of the world.

Unlike most individuals over seven years of age, traumatised individuals demonstrate a clear-cut tendency towards preoperational thinking which, as has been specified, is mainly iconic. This claim is underscored by van der Kolk when he advances that trauma victims are pulled towards:

> . . . predominantly visual and less developed and interactive structures of thought. If vision remains the central organisational force, the traumatised individual has to go step-by-step over the immediate visual field. Time sequence is difficult because of the concentration on the here and now. This type of visual thinking keeps a traumatised individual centred on his own world and preoperational in logic.
>
> (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 99)

By regressing into a preoperational (iconic) paradigm of thought, trauma victims display a cognitive demeanour that closely matches that of egocentric agents, more particularly children between two and seven. Indeed, akin to these children, traumatised subjects scarcely show any propensity for the accommodation of their preconceptions of the world to new life experiences (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 96). Instead, they reduce the entire world to their own perception of it, which, as earlier indicated, is the hallmark of what Piaget terms 'egocentric space.' As will be further detailed, trauma victim's regression into such a conception of space is arguably a defence mechanism whereby they eschew openness to otherness, for fear of being wounded by their internal others—their traumatic memories.

Using an approach informed by the foregoing theoretical framework, it will be shown in the present chapter how, in order to escape from their traumatic memories, characters fall back on an egocentric conception of space. Doing so, they become trapped in worlds of their

own imagination where access to alterity becomes problematical. In order to evidence this claim, it will be illustrated that certain passages from the author's fiction exemplify how traumatised characters develop a superficial engagement with the world, as they focus almost exclusively on the observable aspects of worldly phenomena. Accordingly, their cognitive demeanour largely fits in with preoperational thinking in certain individuals who, due to their egocentric conception of space, do not venture beyond their immediate visual field. Instead, they usually reduce others to one perspective—their own. Similarly, and as will be evinced in the second subchapter, traumatised characters often tend towards a self-centred view of the world. The reason why they relapse into such an 'autistic' cognitive state is arguably to avoid openness to their traumatic memories which persist as internal others. Doing so, and as will be specified in the third subchapter, these characters unwittingly face an ethical crisis, since they end up pursuing an illusory existence in which their capacity to experience otherness becomes considerably impaired.

1. Iconic Thinking and the Iconotext

Many traumatic events in the author's fiction are communicated through narratives bearing the hallmarks of the *iconotext*, in Louvel's conception of the term, i.e. any fictional work where "text and image merge in a pluriform fusion, as in an oxymoron" (Louvel 15).[91] Relying on pictures as their structuring principle, these iconotextual narratives illustrate how traumatised characters often do not venture beyond the visual aspects of their life experiences. Instead, they are driven towards the phenomenologisation of worldly phenomena, in the sense that they unwittingly reduce whatever they experience to its observable properties, which is the distinguishing feature of preoperational (iconic) thinking. Among the several examples evidencing this statement is the subsequent excerpt from *Reservoir 13*:

> On the television there were pictures of an earthquake's aftermath**:** (1) people walking down a road covered in dust, (2) collapsed bridges, (3) rescuers kneeling in the rubble to reach down into dark spaces.
>
> (*Reservoir* 137, enumeration, boldface and underlining added)

Unlike the narrative in which it is embedded, this passage, like many others, does not centre on the characters' collective trauma, namely the disappearance of the young Rebecca Shaw. Rather, it is about the aftermath of an earthquake that these characters watch on television.

[91] 'Image,' here, should be understood in the broad sense of the word, as epitomised by Louvel's following statement: "My concern is primarily with literature including two-dimensional works of art: painting, photography, miniature, engravings or vision-related artifacts: mirrors, optical devices, all kinds of reflections" (Louvel 15).

Imparted through three paratactic clauses devoid of any verb showing time, the television broadcast of such a traumatic event is eventually presented as a series of narrative stills. More specifically, it is introduced as a sequence of three distinct screenshots: the first presents the reader with a medium wide shot of people covered with dust; the second, with an extreme long shot of crumbled bridges; and the last one, with a full shot of rescuers attempting to save casualties. Accordingly, these clauses display *high pictoriality*, i.e. a high degree of pictorial saturation characteristic of iconotextual narratives which rely on pictures as their organising principle (Louvel 179). One plausible interpretation why the calamitous earthquake in the last passage is conveyed through such a highly pictorial narrative is to evoke how characters become fixated on the visual aspects of their life experiences, including especially those of their collective trauma. Following this interpretation, it can be said that this narrative is a metaphorical expression of how the traumatised characters regress into a paradigm of thought largely in line with what Piaget identifies as preoperational thinking in egocentric agents, who mainly dwell on the visual components of the world around them (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* 40). The reason why characters resort to such a paradigm of thought is probably to avoid openness to others, lest they reactivate their internal other—their collective trauma.

Aside from being an epitome of preoperational thinking, the last passage challenges the anthropocentric belief in human superiority over non-humans. As has been shown, it is mainly made up of three paratactic clauses performing disparate landscape or cityscape shots about the aftermath of a disastrous earthquake. The passage thereby produces a fragmented image of such a natural phenomenon at odds with the conventional way in which nature is portrayed in the works of certain artists, such as Henry Peacham, a landmark in the English tradition of landscape painting. Distinguished by the harmonious fashion in which they portray natural scenery, Peacham's landscapes provide "a unit of human occupation," and thereby promote "the supremacy of humanity, its uncontested possession of nature" (Schama 10, 397). Replacing harmony with fragmentation, the last passage, like many others in the author's fiction, challenges the prevailing belief in human superiority over nature.

The very choice of an earthquake as a theme is very telling *per se*, since it reminds readers of how vulnerable human beings are before forces of nature. Subsequently, readers are pushed out of their comfort zones, and are impelled to see how natural elements are *vibrant*, in Bennett's acceptance of the term, i.e. endowed with agency of their own, and therefore able to

"impinge on us as much as we impinge on them" (Bennett 115). Thus, the depiction of the earthquake in the last passage promotes interconnectedness between humans and non-humans.

The idea of interconnectedness is further corroborated by the unwonted punctuation of the passage which includes a semicolon instead of a colon (boldfaced and underlined). Such an unconventional punctuation permeates the entire novel, as suggested by the author himself in an interview about *Reservoir 13* carried out by the American writer, George Saunders. At the end of this interview, McGregor asked Saunders, "You didn't ask me about semicolons," and Saunders's answer was, "Oh, no. And I never will" (Saunders n.p.). In grammatical terms, semicolons are mainly used "to *unite* two *closely connected* sentences" (Garner 357, emphasis added). The hyperbolic and unwonted use of such punctuation in *Reservoir 13*, which is basically a pastoral novel, arguably spotlights the inherent interconnectedness between human beings and nature.

In short, the earthquake in the last passage is communicated through a narrative not only fragmented, but also marked by the unconventional use of semicolons. By virtue of these two properties, it could be argued that the passage undermines the anthropocentric belief in human dominance over nature, as it metaphorically shows how "the human emanates from the natural, in the same way as natural elements . . . are tightly intertwined with the human" (Ganteau, "Diffracted" n.p.). Readers are thereby compelled to put human beings on a par with other beings in the world, and thus become considerate of non-humans, hence the ethical yield of the passage. Paradoxical as it may sound, the passage also carries an overtone of egocentrism, as suggested by the highly pictorial fashion in which it reports the disastrous earthquake. Indeed, the reason why such a natural disaster is depicted with so much visual vividness is possibly to evoke how, in reaction to their collective trauma, the characters revert to a predominantly iconic mode of thought matching with preoperational thinking. Thus, the last passage evidences van der Kolk's previously quoted statement about the direct link between preoperational thinking and traumatic happenings.

Like *Reservoir13*, McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* is replete with evocations of iconic thinking. Among the many instances epitomising this assumption is one of the passages in which Kate remembers three years later the car accident of the young Shahid:

> . . . the whole street *frozen* in a *tableau* of gaping mouths
> It seemed, or at least it seems now, that everything else was *motionless*.
> **The beercan caught between the hand and the ground.**

The blanket not quite touching the wall.
The boy with the tricycle a flinch away from the tree.
(*INSRT* 9, italics and boldface, and underlining added)

Among the striking features of this passage is that it is and is not *paternal*, in Louvel's acceptance of the term, i.e. the type of iconotexts "where the image generates the narrative" (Louvel 102). The passage is paternal because it appears to be triggered by photographs about Shahid's car accident, and it is not paternal because it is actually prompted by Kate's recollection of this accident. This statement is buttressed by the passage's lexical properties and boldfaced clauses. In terms of its lexical aspects, the passage is punctuated with words evoking motionlessness (italicised), which is one of the main features of pictures. Indeed, a picture, including a photograph, is not so much temporal as atemporal, since it captures an otherwise fleeting moment, thus excising it from the ongoing flow of time.

What further illustrates the photographic aspect of the passage is its boldfaced clauses which display three notable features. The first is their typography, since they are superimposed upon one another in a fashion evocative of a filmstrip. The second is that they are devoid of any verb showing time, which creates the impression that they delineate static pictures. Thirdly, they are characterised by a paratactic style, which speeds up the reading pace. Subsequently, the pictorial impression that the three clauses convey does not last long, and thereby introduces an impression of transience.

Owing to its textual and paratextual properties, the passage impacts readers in a way reminiscent of the *painting-effect*. Louvel understands this to mean "an illusionistic effect so powerful that painting seems to haunt the text despite the absence of any direct reference to painting in general or to a particular painting" (Louvel 90). However, and in contrast to Louvel's *painting-effect*, the passage is presented in a style evocative of photographs rather than paintings, and can therefore be said to create a 'photographic effect.' What is remarkable about this effect is that it parallels the uncanny character of traumatic memories in two respects. As has been specified in the fourth chapter, one of the reasons why a traumatic memory is uncanny is because it appears to be and not to be the eerie event it re-presents. Similarly, and by dint of its photographic effect, the passage creates the impression of being and not being triggered by photographs about Shahid's accident. This impression, as previously indicated, is conveyed by paratactic clauses, and is therefore transitory. Likewise, a traumatic memory, in its uncanny manners, produces a fleeting effect, since it crosses the threshold of consciousness like a ghost which vanishes almost as soon as it appears.

According to van der Kolk, traumatic memories persist as uncanny mental phenomena because they provoke "a mismatch between higher level logical structures and lower level functions such as vision" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 95). Simply put, disconcerting events are traumatic because they grow into predominantly iconic mental phenomena that cannot be processed by higher cognitive structures, including language. That is why van der Kolk ends up concluding that trauma victims regress into an iconic mode of thought redolent of preoperational thinking in egocentric agents. However, van der Kolk does not go so far as to explain the relationship between preoperational (iconic) thinking and traumatic neuroses. In the present subchapter, as well as the subsequent ones, it will be advanced that preoperational thinking is a defence mechanism which allows trauma victims to eschew *operational thinking*, the most evolved paradigm of thought in humans (Piaget, *Structuralism* 94). As has been specified, operational thinking is basically linguistic, with language being the very means through which a human being opens up to others. This idea is underlined by Levinas when he states that: "I may either decide to remain within myself, assimilating the other and trying to make use of him, or I may take the risk of going out of my way and trying to *speak* and to give to him" (Levinas, *Totality* 16, emphasis added). Following these considerations, it can be concluded that traumatised individuals relapse into a preoperational (iconic) thinking to elude operational (linguistic) thinking. This, in turn, enables them to avoid openness to others, and more particularly their traumas which endure as internal others. However, by resisting openness to their disquieting pasts, traumatised individuals do not put an end to their sufferings. Conversely, their eerie experiences grow into uncanny mental phenomena, and thereby become harbingers of death and destruction.

In light of what has been demonstrated, it becomes clear how the last extract is marked by certain textual and paratextual properties whereby it produces a 'photographic effect,' an illusionistic effect by means of which Kate's recollection of Shahid's car accident gives the transient impression of being made up of photographs of this shocking event. The deeply photographic aspect of the passage can be interpreted in two causally related ways. The first is that it demonstrates how Kate, like many trauma victims, backslides into a largely iconic mode of thought typical of preoperational thinking. The reason why she does so is probably to avoid openness to others, including especially her trauma, by reducing them to "a theme or an object—appearing, that is, taking its place in the light" (Levinas, *Totality* 43). Accordingly, her cognitive demeanour makes her ethically disabled, since, for Levinas, an ethical experience is that in which the other is perceived as an *infinity*, a noumenon in excess of her phenomena

(Levinas, *Totality* 77). Aside from providing evidence of Kate's preoperational thinking, the last passage also shows the way in which such a mode of thought impacts her. As has been illustrated, the photographic effect produced by certain of the passage's properties exemplifies how Kate's trauma takes on an uncanny character. Thus, this passage typifies how, by attempting to withstand the reactivation of her traumatic memory by way of preoperational thinking, Kate makes her traumatism worsen, which is typical, since what one resists usually persists.

By the same token, and in the same novel, the first narrative strand displays several properties evoking the proclivity of traumatised characters for an iconic paradigm of thought. As has been indicated, this narrative thread is about a disembodied narrator's *subsequent narration* of the day when the young Shahid was hit by a car. Nevertheless, the narrator relies exclusively upon the present tense, and thereby shows how the characters who witnessed the young boy's accident always reexperience it as belonging to their living present. More particularly, these characters conceive of their collective trauma as part of what they instantaneously see. This statement is evidenced by three properties of the narrative thread, including the fact that it is mainly dominated by what the impersonal narrator sees.

Besides, this narrative is marked by the hyperbolic use of antonomasia, as the disembodied narrator does not refer to the traumatised characters by their names, but rather as "the young man at number eighteen, with the dry eyes," "the old man from number twenty-five," "the boy with the white shirt from number seventeen" and "the girl at number twenty-two" (*INSRT* 27, 12, 14, 32). These examples, along with several others, are obviously about what is visually perceived, namely the characters' physical traits and/or house numbers. They can therefore be regarded as a metaphor for how these traumatised characters develop a superficial conception of the world whereby they view one another almost exclusively in terms of their observable attributes. Their cognitive demeanour thereby ties in with preoperational thinking, and, as such, explains why they have trouble gaining access to the interiority of other beings in the world.

In addition to being replete with visual descriptions, the bodiless narrator's narrative includes many scenes where characters look secretly at their neighbourhood through their windows. Apart from producing a framing effect, windows in these scenes can be said to have the symbolic function of eyes, and can thereby be viewed as metaphorical expressions of how the traumatised characters mostly think in terms of what they immediately see. Thus, the symbolic function of windows in the novel, along with the hyperbolic use of antonomasia and visual

verbs, exemplifies how the traumatised characters resort to a chiefly iconic mode of thought, which is usually particular to preoperational thinking in egocentric individuals.

In the same vein, several short stories from McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing* epitomise how trauma victims incline towards a preoperational mode of thought. Among these short stories is "In Winter the Sky" which, as has been indicated, is about George and his wife Joanna, two farmers living in the Fenlands along with George's paralysed father (*TISTHSLY* 5-35). George's life is plagued by the knowledge of how he killed a pedestrian whilst driving his father's car and then buried his body in the Fens. Likewise, Joanna is haunted by her husband's involuntary homicide, as epitomised by the subsequent excerpt from her notebook:

> 1[The floods have come, again,
> the road like a causeway
> across the sea.]
>
> 2[T h e w a t e r s t r e t c h e d a s f a r a s t h e h o r i z o n t h e
> h o r i z o n
> l o s t
> i n t h e t h i c k
> f o g.]
>
> 3[Telegraph poles dotted
> across the water
> like the masts
> of sunken boats.]
>
> (*TISTHSLY* 33, brackets and enumeration added)

Although this passage is about Joanna's recollection of a flood, it gives the impression of being triggered by actual images of this deluge. This statement is underlined by the three sentences of the passage (enumerated) which are an instance of the iconotext, in that their "layout, like calligrams, defines a textual space in the same way paintings may tell stories" (Louvel 38). For example, the image generated by the unwonted line break in the first sentence (1) is that of the flood which has covered the fields, thus leaving 'the road like a causeway across the sea.' In the second sentence (2), the unconventional leading (line spacing) and tracking (letter spacing) create an image of a landscape almost entirely covered by fog and water. Finally, the unusual typography of the third sentence (3) is an iconic rendering of how the deluge leaves the Fens looking like a chain of lakes dotted with 'telegraph poles.' Drawing upon the foregoing remarks, it becomes clear how the typography of Joanna's narrative in the last passage is highly visual.

This, in turn, can be an index of how, due to the flood that she remembers, Joanna relapses into a predominantly iconic mode of thought typical of preoperational thinking in egocentric agents.

Besides providing evidence of preoperational thinking, the iconic vividness with which Joanna recalls her trauma can be seen as an instance of "post-traumatic *acting out* in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scene" (LaCapra 21, emphasis added). Acting out is usually inextricable from *working through*, the psychological process whereby "the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present, and future" (LaCapra 144). This is highlighted by LaCapra when he states: "Acting out and working through constitute a distinction, in that one may never be totally separate from the other, and the two may always mark or be implicated in each other" (LaCapra 150). The last passage is a fair illustration of this statement, since it displays a sense of chronology in the succession of images at odds with the characteristic of trauma that mixes up chronology. One possible explanation for this chronological configuration is that it is an index of working through, as it illustrates how Joanna attempts to give a coherent account of her trauma, which would in turn help her to overcome this eerie past. In this regard, it can be propounded that, by means of certain of its properties, namely its chronological order and highly iconic nature, the passage typifies how Joanna, like many trauma victims, wavers between acting out and working through.

As has been specified, the passage is determined by a visual economy particular to the iconotext, as it creates an illusionistic effect so powerful that images of the flood seem to haunt it. Besides, it appears to be and not to be poetic, in that it is written in free verse. Owing to these properties, the passage displays a paradoxical phenomenality reminiscent of traumatic memories which, in their uncanny manners, cross the threshold of consciousness, while giving the impression of being and not being the frightening pasts that they re-present. Besides their paradoxical phenomenality, another uncanny aspect of traumatic memories is their latency. As has been illustrated in the fourth chapter, these memories are active, even when below consciousness, since they intermittently breathe their eerie contents into conscious representations other than those with which they are originally associated. This is exemplified by the last passage where Joanna's obsession with the flooded landscape can be interpreted as a conscious expression of her unconscious fixation on what is buried in them: the corpse of the man her husband killed.

In light of what has been demonstrated, it becomes obvious how the typography of the last passage makes Joanna's depiction of the flood so vivid that it appears to be generated by actual images of this deluge. In its visual vividness, the passage can be seen as a signal example of how Joanna falls back on an iconic mode of thought usually specific to egocentric individuals, especially children under seven. As will be detailed in the third subchapter, such a mode of thought is a defence mechanism whereby trauma victims, like Joanna, attempt to elude their appalling past experiences. However, since what one resists persists, these eerie experiences endure. This is illustrated by the last passage where Joanna's trauma is latently present in her highly iconic description of the flooded Fens.

Up to this point, it has been shown how several of the characters' traumas are conveyed through narratives relying on pictures as their structuring principle, which is characteristic of iconotexts with high degree of pictorial saturation. These narratives, in turn, testify to how traumatised characters tend towards a predominantly iconic mode of thought usually specific to preoperational thinking. One of the most prominent instances of iconotextual narratives are those which involve *hypotyposis*, "a figure which consists in 'describing a scene so vividly, dynamically, and accurately that it meets our eyes with the presence, the sharpness, and the colours of reality'" (Louvel 50). This is exemplified by McGregor's fiction, especially *So Many Ways to Begin* which, as previously noted, reads like a catalogue from a museum exhibition. Indeed, the headings of most of its chapters are the names of dated relics that David has archived in order to use them in the construction of his family history, e.g. 'Handwritten list of household items, c.1947' and 'Local map, Whitechapel district, London, annotated, c.1950.' The narrator's description of these intrinsically valueless artifacts through hypotyposis makes them gain ineffable vividness, so much so that they seem to have more depth and authenticity than David whose origins he fails to retrace. Among the many passages from the novel illustrating this claim is the one where David recalls one of his childhood experiences when he sneaked into the room at his Auntie Julia's top landing:

> He pushed open the door, and stared. He'd never seen so many things in one room before. There were piles of books and magazines, dresses on hangers and dresses spread out across chairs, hats balanced on top of each other, photo albums. Bunches of flowers hanging to dry, posters for West End productions, jewellery boxes spilling over with tangled necklaces and earrings. Later, once he'd been taken to the British Museum, he would think of comparing this room to the *collection halls of the Egyptian Pharaohs*.
>
> (*SMWB* 32, emphasis added)

In this passage, David's depiction verges on hypotyposis, as it is so vivid that it makes Julia's discarded objects seem to come to life. Besides, David equates these valueless items to the Egyptian Pharaohs' invaluable objects. In doing so, he underscores, once again, the vibrant character of all inanimate things, in Bennett's acceptance of the term, i.e. the fact that inert things, however trivial they may look, are as lively as any living being (Bennett 10). Based on this, it can be conjectured that from David's account emerges an interest in an ethics of the ordinary. It makes otherwise insignificant objects look vibrant, and thereby favours consideration, "the ability to admire and to notice the rare and the extraordinary in each worldly phenomenon, including in natural and ordinary things" (Pelluchon 75, translation mine).

In contrast to its ethical import, David's account of his Auntie Julia's discarded items can be seen as a signal example of how he tends towards *phenomenological reduction*, understood by Levinas to mean the act of reducing others to the way they manifest themselves to one's consciousness (Levinas, *The Theory* 150). Likewise, and as has been shown, preoperational thinking is distinguished by the proclivity of egocentric agents to confuse others with the way they instantly see them. In this regard, it can be concluded that, despite unveiling the remarkable nature of the otherwise unremarkable objects, the last extract is still phenomenological in character, i.e. describing objects not as they are in concrete life, but rather as they appear in David's consciousness. Accordingly, the passage can be regarded as evidence of David's preoperational thinking, whereby he unwittingly reduces worldly phenomena to the way he instantly sees them. The reason why he does so is arguably to avert openness to others, especially to avoid disclosing his trauma, for fear of the profound sense of fright his recollection of such an uncanny event can readily generate.

To conclude, many of the characters' traumatic manifestations are mediated through narratives bearing the hallmark of iconotexts with a high degree of pictorial saturation. In their iconic vividness, these narratives reflect how traumatised characters relapse into a mode of thought closely in agreement with preoperational thinking, and thereby buttress van der Kolk's claim about the straight connection between such a mode of thought and traumatic neuroses. As has been argued, preoperational thinking might be a defence mechanism whereby trauma victims evade openness to otherness, lest they reactivate their internal others—their traumatic memories. In doing so, and as will be detailed in the following subchapters, they end up facing an ethical crisis, as they become partly unresponsive to others, while leading a solipsistic life, or at least a life dominated by a repeated, partial, even at time failed attempt to access alterity.

2. Egocentric Space

The preoperational (iconic) thinking in egocentric agents, as well as in trauma victims, is the main characteristic of *egocentric space.* Piaget understands this to mean the inability of egocentric subjects, especially children under seven, to acknowledge the multiperspectival nature of each and every object of the world (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 209-46). "In order to see an object 'in perspective,' we have to view it from different angles. That is, we situate ourselves in successive positions of observation so that we become aware of the fact that, given a certain picture or situation, we may perceive it quite differently from different angles" (Lerner 251). However, by dint of their egocentric conception of space, egocentric individuals do not venture beyond the here and now. Instead, they reduce others to the way they instantaneously and spontaneously see them.

Among the many experiments typifying an egocentric agent's incapacity to recognise the multiperspectival nature of the world is the one in which Piaget places children of different ages in front of a model of three mountains, with each mountain readily distinguishable from the others in terms of shape, size and colour (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 209-10). These children are first asked to inspect the model from different perspectives. Next, each of them is shown different pictures, with each picture representing a distinct perspective of the three mountains. Finally, a doll is placed in some other position around the model, and each child is invited to select the picture which represents how the mountains appear from the doll's point of view. The result is that children over seven succeed in identifying the picture which illustrates how the model of the mountains looks from the doll's point of view. Meanwhile, children under seven, who are still at the egocentric phase of cognitive development, choose the picture which represents how the mountains appear from their own point of view:

> . . . . the children who invariably choose Picture I fail to realize that what they are expressing is actually their own viewpoint. 'That's the best one,' says Fer, 'he sees all three just as they really are!'. To see the mountains just as they really are—meaning to see them as one sees them oneself. The phrase illustrates perfectly . . . the unconscious character of the child's intellectual egocentrism.
>
> (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 210)

This experience illustrates that egocentric agents cannot recognize that other people, differently situated in space, have different perspectives of the same object. In other words, the whole

notion of a 'perspective' is not available to them, which is what Piaget terms *egocentric space* or *egocentric realism* (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 209-46).

According to Piaget, the main reason behind the manifestations of 'egocentric space' is the proclivity of egocentric agents for an overwhelming form of *assimilation*, the cognitive act of reducing "external processes to schemas arising from internal experiences" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 132). Meanwhile, these agents rarely show any hint of *accommodation*, the cognitive process whereby "internal schemes are modified in such a way as to fit reality" (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 6). Similarly, trauma victims avert accommodation, as underlined by van der Kolk when he states that "The capacity to accommodate, to self-correct, is markedly impaired in the abused group" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 100). One possible explanation for such a cognitive demeanour is that it is a defence mechanism whereby traumatised subjects ward off openness to the world, including and especially their frightening past experiences. In doing so, they backslide into an egocentric conception of space, and are thereby led to reduce each and every other to one perspective—their own.

Using an approach informed by the foregoing theoretical apparatus, it will be illustrated in this subchapter how certain constituents of McGregor's narratives, especially their *focalisation*, clearly illustrate how traumatised characters fall back on an egocentric version of space. In this statement, 'focalisation' refers to the breakthrough concept whereby Genette resolves the confusion between *seeing* and *telling*. Unlike other narratologists, such as Franz Karl Stanzel, Genette distinguishes between a narrator, the narrative agency whereby a story is *told*, and *focalisation*, i.e. "the different points of view from which the life or the action is *looked at*" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 161, emphasis added). He also adds a further distinction to 'focalisation' which, according to him, ramifies into three main subcategories. The first is *zero focalisation,* which is a neologism for the traditional idea of omniscience (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189). The second is *internal focalisation*, i.e. when one or several characters are the eyes of the story (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189).[92] And the third is *external focalisation*, i.e. a point of view which coincides neither with a character, nor with an omniscient reflector (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189). Rather, it best corresponds to what Friedman calls *camera eye*, "the ultimate in authorial exclusion. Here the aim is to transmit, without apparent selection or arrangement, a slice of life as it passes before the recording medium" (Freidman 1178).

[92] According to Genette, *internal focalisation* furcates into three subcategories: *fixed* (a story focalised by only one of its characters), *variable* (a story focalised by several characters) and *multiple* (a story in which one or several events are focalised by several characters) (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 189-90).

However distinct in many respects, the uses of focalisation in several of McGregor's trauma-laden narratives still share certain features, especially the fact that they evoke the proclivity of traumatised characters to revert to egocentric space. This is best illustrated by *Even the Dogs* which, as has been specified, is related by a choral narrator—the 'We.' What is remarkable about this impersonal narrator is that it focalises most of the novel's events, while remaining latent, since it sees and hears all of the novel's characters, without ever being seen or heard. The paradoxical phenomenality of the narrator is reminiscent of *subjective camera-work*, "the use of the camera to show events as if it were from a particular participant's visual point of view" (Chandler 412). Such a cinematic technique at times favours so much identification that viewers end up feeling like eyewitnesses to what is being focalised. This is the case of the present novel whose internal reflector, the 'We,' acts like a subjective camera, while focalising the traumatic life and miserable death of a group of homeless drug addicts. In doing so, this focalising agent retreats into anonymity, and thereby forces readers to vividly experience the traumas of the characters, which promotes sympathy for these outcasts of society.

Aside from its ethical potential, the subjective-camera technique requires "a consciousness that selects certain data and ignores others in the ever-flowing stream of sense impressions" (Casparis 58). Based on this definition, it can be said that the use of such a technique in the novel presupposes a plotting mind, an 'I,' who, while acting like a subjective camera, imposes an authoritative gaze over the whole of the events. What this 'I' sees is thereby what the reader, the 'you,' sees, in other words, what the 'we' see, hence the 'We' in the novel. One possible explanation why the narrator behaves like a subjective camera is that she has lost her sense of perspective, and thereby believes that others see things in the same way she does. In this regard, her cognitive demeanour may be evocative of that of an egocentric agent, especially a child under seven. In fact, "The young child has difficulty in discriminating between different perspectives of the same object. Piaget called this spatial egocentrism. An egocentric child thinks that hers is the only viewpoint. She just doesn't understand that things might look different from someone else's point of view" (Singer 85). In view of these considerations, it can be postulated that the choral narrator is actually an 'I' mentally unhinged by the traumatic events she focalises. She thereby relapses into an 'autistic' conception of space in line with that of egocentric subjects, and, as such, ends up thinking that what she sees is necessarily what others see.

One of the many instances from the novel buttressing the last statement is the second chapter of the novel which, as previously noted, is about the choral narrator depicting the

anonymous city through the window of the ambulance which carries Robert's corpse to the morgue. What is appealing about this chapter is that it presents space as a sequence of lefts, rights, ups, and downs, the following excerpt being a fair illustration of this claim:

> . . . *down* past the Lion and the newsagent's and the bookie's. *Straight* over the main road and *across* the roundabout and *round* the side of the old boarded-up warehouse to the hostel . . . *Down* the steps by the locks beneath the railway bridge . . . *turn left turn right, turn left turn right*.
>
> (*ED*, emphasis added)

Among the characteristic features of an egocentric space is its being body centred, in the sense that an egocentric agent, especially a child under seven, takes her body as the only benchmark of her geographical orientation (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space* 385). This is because she "conceives herself to be in the centre of a space (at its point of origin), with its coordinates given by the concepts 'up' and 'down,' 'left' and 'right,' and 'in front' and 'behind'" (Evans 49). The same applies to the previous passage where the choral narrator reduces space into sequences of lefts, rights, ups, and downs (italicised), which results in a form of spatial indeterminacy that prevails throughout the novel. It is true that there are some exceptions, since the narrator intermittently refers to the names of some streets, e.g. "Barford Street," "Exchange Street," "Royal Square," "Station Street," and "Forest Road" (McGregor 7, 20, 25, 26, 36). However, these streets do not map onto the actual cityscape of any English city. Rather, they offer "fleeting correspondences with more than one 'real' location in the English Midlands" (Alexander 745). This is arguably because the choral narrator thinks egocentrically about space, and is therefore "unable to deal with elements in their relationships to each other" (Sonnenfeld 69). Eventually, the narrator provides a distorted depiction of space by reducing it into a mere series of body-centred orientations.

Rhyming with the last extract, certain passages from McGregor's *If Nobody Speaks* carry an undercurrent of spatial egocentrism. This is underlined by one of the narrative fragments in which the impersonal narrator recounts the traumatic car accident of the young Shahid:

> **He** can ***see*** all of this, **the boy in the middle of the road**.
> **He** can ***see*** the street, ***and*** the people, ***and*** the sky.
> . . . **He *looks up***, the child ***looks up***, **he *sees*** the car, ***and*** **he *doesn't move***.
> ***And*** the young man in the car ***sees*** the child, and he ***slams on*** the brakes. He ***is*** in the driving seat, he ***wants*** to stop the car.
>
> (*INSRT* 252-3, underlining, italics and boldface added)

This passage uses a delegated focalisation, since its reflector, the disembodied narrator, reexperiences vicariously first what the young Shahid, then what the car driver, 'sees' in the split second before the car accident takes place. Besides, the passage displays a highly cinematographic character, as illustrated by five of its properties. The first is its typography, as it is introduced as a series of sentences set off by line breaks, with each line break probably signalling a *jump cut*, the editing technique used in films to break the continuity of a shot or a scene (Chandler 230). The second striking aspect of the passage is its first underlined sentence which most likely opens as a *back-to-the-camera-shot*, and thereby does not allow readers to identify the focalised person. The sentence then proceeds through Right Dislocation Construction (underlined and boldfaced) which emulates a *frontal shot* whereby readers are able to recognise who is being focalised: 'the boy in the middle of the road.'[93] Concerning the third remarkable property of the passage, it is the use of polysyndeton (boldfaced and italicised), which possibly signals a shift from one view to another, e.g. from 'the street' to 'the sky.' The fourth appealing element of the passage is the exclusive use of the present tense (underlined, italicised and boldfaced), which imbues the depicted scene with immediacy. As regards the fifth and last characteristic of the passage, it is its speed, or rather lack thereof, as the passage corresponds to a slowing down or a 'stretch.' In fact, although it describes the split second before Shahid is hit by a car, this passage seems to last several minutes, and thereby appears to occur in slow motion. By means of these five properties, the narrator's delegated focalisation gains vividness, and thereby makes Shahid's accident appear to take place before the readers' eyes. Under the sway of such an experience, readers are forced to admit to the fact that mishaps may strike at any moment and indiscriminately. They thereby awaken to their common ontological vulnerability, which is "the key step in developing consideration for the other vulnerable beings," hence the ethical end to which the author puts his use of trauma (Pelluchon 112, translation mine).

Still, despite its ethical import, the delegated focalisation in the last passage can be said to carry an undercurrent of spatial egocentrism. Indeed, it is arguably not so much about putting oneself in other people's shoes as about reducing what others experience to one's own viewpoint. This idea is corroborated by Levinas when he refers to "the *paradoxical* psychological possibilities of putting oneself in the place of another" (Levinas, *Otherwise* 146, emphasis added). According to Levinas, to substitute oneself for the other, especially she who is in pain, is the mainstay of any ethical experience (Levinas, *Otherwise* 99-129). However, this can at times be *egological*, motivated by the tendency of the ego towards *sameness*. Levinas uses

[93]See detailed definition of 'Right Dislocation Construction' on p.101.

'sameness' to refer to how the ego, in its propensity for power, does not conceive of the Other as an *Infinity*, an entity whose essence exceeds cognition (Levinas, *Totality* 103). Instead, it reduces each and every other to the terms of its solipsistic perception, and thereby persists in its *sameness*, "unaltered and unalterable in its relations with the other" (Levinas, *Totality* 126). Based on these considerations, the delegated focalisation in the last passage can be regarded as an expression of ethical openness to otherness. Conversely, it can also be an instance of the ego's proclivity for sameness, a proclivity in line with egocentric space which, as has been specified, involves egocentric agents' tendency to believe that what they see is necessarily what others see, and vice versa. In short, the narrator's delegated focalisation can be said to be a metaphorical expression of how, in response to their collective trauma, the characters demonstrate a persistent tendency to vacillate between openness to otherness and a form of sameness typical of spatial egocentrism.

What further corroborates the last statement is the egocentric demeanour of certain characters from the same narrative strand. Among these characters is 'the boy from number eighteen,' who is frequently depicted while stealthily taking pictures of his neighbours. His obsession with photography can be regarded as an index of his egocentric conception of space, the following narrative fragment being a fair illustration of this statement:

> The rain falls against the boy with the sore eyes, leaning out of his upstairs window taking polaroid photographs of it, shot after shot without moving the angle or changing the focus, plucking each newborn image from the camera and laying it wetly aside, the same frame changed each time.
>
> (*INSRT* 211, boldface and underlining added)

By virtue of certain of its lexical items (underlined), the passage transmutes the otherwise ordinary scene it reports into something extraordinary. Indeed, it depicts the protagonist while 'plucking' photographs from his polaroid in such a way as to make him look like a midwife assisting a woman in childbirth. Accordingly, this passage favours the practice of consideration of humble objects or spectacles, since it awakens readers to the deeply remarkable nature of the many things that are usually seen as unremarkable, and thereby trains them to attend to the ordinary and to invisibilities.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the last extract is also replete with evocations of egocentric space, as underlined by its thematic and syntactic properties. In thematic terms, the passage depicts how the young man takes photographs 'without moving the angle or changing the focus,' and thereby evokes motionlessness. This theme finds expression in the syntactic structure

of the excerpt which progresses through a single sentence made up of verbal phrases. Owing to these syntactic properties, the passage appears to be about a state of quiescence that expands *ad infinitum*. More particularly, it is a hyperbolic rendering of how the character spends a long time photographing his neighbourhood from the same angle. Eventually, the protagonist makes photographs not only taken from the same angle, but also capturing an extremely narrow view of the world. This is because they are framed by the photographer's eyes, his camera and the window of his flat. The narrow and restricted fashion in which the protagonist allows his pictures to be seen can be regarded as evidence of his tendency towards an egocentric conception of space. One possible reason why such a self-centred photographer is the linchpin character of a narrative triggered by Shahid's car accident is to underline how such a traumatic happening can make those it impresses regress into an egocentric conception of the world.

Based on what has been illustrated in this subchapter, it becomes clear how, by virtue of their focalisation and certain filmic devices, many passages from the author's narratives promote, among other things, consideration to what is usually seen as not worthy of attention. Yet, paradoxical as it may sound, the same narrative properties bear the hallmark of egocentrism, since they evoke how traumatised characters tend towards a self-centred view of the world characteristic of egocentric space. As has been specified, the traumatised characters' proclivity for egocentrism is probably a defence mechanism whereby they strive to eschew openness to their internal others—their traumatic memories. Nevertheless, such a defence mechanism does not resolve traumatic neuroses, but rather exacerbates them. In fact, it makes a trauma victim develop substitutive satisfactions, and "these either cause him suffering in themselves or become sources of suffering for him by raising difficulties in his relations with his environment and the society he belongs to" (Freud, "Civilization" 21: 108). This statement will be explored in the subsequent subchapter in which it will be evinced how, due their cognitive egocentrism, traumatised characters encounter an ethical crisis. In fact, their capacity to access alterity becomes considerably impaired, while they demonstrate, among other things, a clear-cut tendency towards *confabulation*, the unconscious process whereby "the memory of traumatic events is often confabulated with unconscious fantasies, making it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction and making the trauma worse" (Kalsched 71).

3. An Apathetic and Illusionary Existence

The aim of this subchapter is to demonstrate how, on account of their cognitive egocentrism, traumatised characters avert all forms of human responsiveness, and thereby become trapped in worlds of their own imagination. This claim is substantiated by many instances from the author's fiction which bear the hallmark of the *I-It attitude*. The Austrian philosopher, Martin Buber, understands this to mean the mode of thought whereby "the subject contemplates and experiences an object" (Buber vii). Buber contrasts this modality of thought with what he terms the '*I-Thou* attitude' which applies to an encounter between two subjects. In such an encounter, the 'Thou' is viewed as "a reality—that is, he is not bounded by me: 'Thou has no bounds;' the Thou cannot be appropriated" (Buber vii). Thus, the *I-Thou* mode entails an acknowledgement of individuals' irreducible otherness. There are, however, some interpersonal interactions in which the *I-It* mode takes the upper hand. This usually happens when a person denies individuals' inappropriable otherness. She thereby ends up seeing others as objects at worst unworthy of consideration, at best mere means to reach her egotistic ends (Buber 29-30). This is arguably the case of several traumatised characters who, as will be illustrated in this subchapter, draw heavily upon the *I-It* paradigm of thought, and thereby fail to acknowledge others' alterity. According to Buber, it is only "Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*" (Buber 28, emphasis in original). Thus, by being unable to envisage the alterity of others, traumatised characters lose their own sense of self. Eventually, they become lost in worlds of their own imaginations where access to the 'Thou' becomes problematical.

The last statement is validated by several narratives from McGregor's fiction, including *If Nobody Speaks* where many characters are not actively engaged with individuals around them. Rather, they tend towards an excessive form of the *I-It attitude* whereby they objectify others. Among these characters is 'the boy from number eighteen,' whose painstaking collection of discarded objects attests to his vehement desire "to control the world and reduce it from one incomprehensible mess to a structure which can be documented and understood" (Lea, "Jon" 209). This young man has a tragic end, as he dies alone in his flat of a heart attack after witnessing Shahid's accident, and his corpse is only discovered three days later. His twin brother, Michael, becomes so haunted by his untimely and solitary death that he ends up sharing his eagerness to assimilate the world's multiplicity. This is illustrated by the scene in which Michael goes to Kate's flat in order to show her part of his twin brother's collection:

> ***I*** pour another pot of tea, and ***I*** take it through to him, ***I*** put it down on the table ***next*** to the case of syringes and the pressed letter, ***next*** to the wine bottle and the keys, ***next*** to postcards covered in handwritten notes.
> . . . He picks more things out of the box . . . he holds each object and turns it over in the light, concentrating.
> . . . He says he was talking about that a lot, . . . he was trying to absorb some of it.
>
> (*INSRT* 216, boldface, emphasis and underlining added)

This passage has a paradoxical phenomenality, in that it evokes both consideration and its self-generated opposite—egocentrism. It is conducive to the practice of consideration because it brims with otherwise unremarkable objects which, in their overabundance, become remarkable. This is further highlighted by the deliberate repetition of both the same pronoun and adverb (boldfaced and italicised), which generates an exquisite sense of dramatic buildup. Subsequently, the many ordinary matters displayed in this passage appear to be even more numerous than they actually are, gain ineffable vividness, and thereby become worthy of consideration.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the extract also carries an overtone of cognitive egocentrism. This is exemplified by the first underlined sentence which suggests how Michael attempts to phenomenologise the many objects of his brother's collection: to reduce them to the way he instantly perceives them. Accordingly, his demeanour broadly ties in with preoperational thinking which, as has been indicated, involves an egocentric agent's proclivity to reduce worldly phenomena to the way she instantaneously sees them. As has been propounded, the reason why certain individuals resort to preoperational thinking is to deplete objects of their inherent liveliness in such a way as to make them easily assimilable. This is underlined by the second underlined sentence in which Michael refers to his brother's yearning to 'absorb' the world's multiplicity, which is obviously the same yearning he himself ends up developing.

Tapping into what has been illustrated, it can be propounded that certain thematic properties of the last passage testify to how, in response to his brother's untimely death, Michael backslides into a preoperational (iconic) thinking broadly in line with that of egocentric agents. Under the thrall of such a mode of thought, he does not welcome otherness, but rather attempts to phenomenologise each and every other. His demeanour is typical of the *I-It attitude* which is mainly characterised by many an individual's proclivity to objectify "particulars and arrange them as a scenery, to isolate them in observation without any feeling of their exclusiveness" (Buber 29-30).

Just as Michael tends towards an *I-It attitude*, so do many traumatised characters from McGregor's *Even the Dogs*. As has been illustrated, one of the most remarkable aspects of this novel is the 'We,' the choral narrator which looks like the spectral incarnation of a group of homeless and drug addicts. The use of such a narrating and focalising agent undermines the fabric of societies in which capitalist economies reign supreme. Indeed, what is usually conceived as 'We' in such societies, namely the upper and middle classes, comes to occupy the margins of the novel's narrative. Meanwhile, the 'They,' the homeless drug addicts who are commonly relegated to the fringes of society, are designated as 'We.' Accordingly, the novel's uncommon use of the first-person plural is both provocative and disconcerting, as it subverts the capitalist ideals upon which many societies rest. Readers belonging to such societies are thereupon impelled to overcome their prejudices regarding vagrant drug addicts and to welcome the novel's inverted expectation concerning the orientation of 'We' and 'They.'

Despite its ethical outcome, the 'We' still carries an overtone of egocentrism. More particularly, it is evocative of *Sociocentrism*, the tendency to identify oneself, in part or in whole, with the ideology of a group (Kesselring 335). Such a tendency explains why many adolescents become members of "mafia groups the members of which respect each other and cooperate successfully but commit crimes against people who do not belong to the group" (Kesselring 342). The same applies to the novel's characters who, ashamed of their own vulnerability and enraged about their lack of help from their society, join together to form a community of vulnerable citizens, translated into a 'We' in the novel. Any community rests upon sets of rules to which its members submit. And so is the 'We,' as underlined by the narrative which brims with deontic modal expressions like 'should' and 'shouldn't.'[94] Just as exclusionary as any form of collective identity, the 'We' identifies "self by denying the other, demarcating inside from outside, stretching a distance between 'us' and 'them'" (Easthope 220). This is made manifest through several scenes from the novel, including the one in which Danny and Steve wait for a drug dealer: "I tend to misinterpret people's faces Danny, that's my problem, that's one of my problems, I tend to see the worst in them pal and then it all kicks off. So like it's best all round if you do the sitting and I'll keep lookout and plus once we've got the cash I'll take care of the scoring is that cool with you?" (*ED* 89). In this extract, Steve shows two aspects of the *I-It attitude*. The first is his mistrust, and even animosity towards those who do

[94] The modal verb 'should' alone is mentioned sixty-six times in the novel (*ED* 18, 24, 25, 28, 32, 36*7, 39*3, 42*3, 44, 45, 50, 53, 59, 60*2, 64*2, 70, 75*2, 79, 82*4, 87, 90, 96, 97*2, 98, 99*2, 104*3, 122, 123, 130*2, 135*2, 136, 141, 142, 147, 148, 151*2, 153, 157, 160*2, 164, 169, 172).

not belong to the 'We,' the community of vagrant drug addicts to which he belongs. The second is how he does not rub shoulders with Danny out of solidarity, but rather to use him as a means to reach his egotistic end—to share his drug injection. Steve is not, however, an exception, in that all other members of his community do the same. This includes Laura, Robert's only daughter, who sympathises with her father only when she needs money: "she'd only ever touched him when she wanted money" (*ED* 143). Likewise, Heather does not open up to others unless she waits for something in return, as epitomised by the scene when she sexually abuses Ben in exchange for a drug injection (*ED* 146).

Relying on these examples, it can be concluded that, as result of their traumatic life experiences, the protagonists lose faith in other members of their society. They thereupon join together to form the 'We,' a community of homeless drug addicts. As has been specified, their demeanour is typical of sociocentrism in egocentric agents, including adolescents at the egocentric phase of their cognitive development. These characters are not an exception, since many trauma victims display a similar tendency. This is typified by van der Kolk when he states that many traumatised individuals report that "they formed stable, intensely loyal groups of up to seven or eight people, based on common origins or interests, with selfless mutual devotion to each other and apparent total disregard for all outsiders" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 156). Due to their egocentric reaction to their frightening pasts, the protagonists fall back on an excessive form of the *I-It attitude* whereby they do not display a tinge of sympathy towards others, but only a feverish desire to use their acquaintances as means for their egoistic ends.

By objectifying others, traumatised characters lose, to some extent, track of reality, as underscored by Buber when he postulates that:

> He who takes his stand in relation shares in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor lies outside him. All reality is an activity in which I share without being able to appropriate for myself. Where there is no sharing there is no reality. The more direct the contact with the *Thou*, the fuller is the sharing.
>
> (Buber 63)

Based on Buber's statement, it can be propounded that, by resorting to an extreme form of the *I-It attitude*, traumatised characters become nearly unable to open up to otherness, while mostly showing a propensity to confuse reality with fiction. This claim is validated by several narrative fragments from the author's fiction, such as the excerpt from *So Many Ways to Begin* about one of Eleanor's childhood experiences:

> Did it hurt? she whispered, and her mother laughed, a single hard snort of unamused laughter. ***Or*** she laughed long and hard, sarcastic but also genuinely entertained by her daughter's innocence. ***Or*** she didn't laugh at all, but stared and thought there's a lot I've got to teach you yet my girl.
>
> (*SMWB* 178, emphasis and boldface added)

This passage is about Eleanor who, when she was only seven years old, was told that, during parturition, all of a woman's "stomach comes out and they have to stick it back in again" (*SMWB* 177). She was so horrified that she dared to ask her overly severe mother about the validity of what she had heard. When reporting the mother's response, David does not give one but several versions of this past event, as underscored by his use of polysyndeton (boldfaced and italicised). His narrative invites opposite interpretations, in that it can be an index of disillusionment as well as an instance of self-deception. It is an index of disillusionment, since it possibly evokes how, due to his traumatic discovery of his adoption and failure to find his birth mother, David awakens to the fact that there is not any truth about the past, but only a myriad of interpretations. Contrariwise, the last passage can also be regarded as a form of illusion, since it likely shows how, unable to know for sure the way the event he reports actually happened, David indulges in an imaginary narrative in which he envisages 'So Many Ways' in which the mother could have reacted. This reading is substantiated by the entire narrative which is punctuated with David's anaphoric use of certain structures and conjunctions expressing probability, such as 'or,' 'could have,' and 'might have.'

It is true, though, that the many scenarios in the last passage point to a sense of openness, as David does not create one but 'So Many' possibilities, thus leaving his past open to several interpretations. Nevertheless, these interpretations do not have any realistic basis, but are rather figments of his imagination. Thus, the last passage exemplifies how David undergoes an internal turmoil in which he is torn between openness to otherness and *confabulation*, the defense mechanism whereby many neurotics fill in the gaps of their distressing memories with fabricated details (Kalsched 71). Confabulation is also common among egocentric agents, particularly children under seven, who frequently fail "to distinguish reality from the various fictions of play and of imagination" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 1). Thus, it can be said that the last extract attests to how David, like many trauma victims, makes up for what he does not know about his trauma with fictitious details. In doing so, he displays a cognitive attitude similar to egocentrism.

Like David, the characters of *Reservoir 13* do not concede to the fact that their collective trauma, namely Rebecca's disappearance, is an unsolvable mystery. Rather, they unwittingly try to imagine the young girl's fate, whether they are awake or asleep. This is exemplified by many narrative fragments from the novel, including the subsequent one: "**There were dreams about her** appearing on television again . . . **There were dreams about her** crawling through the caves . . . **There were dreams about her** held captive, in basements and isolated barns" (*Reservoir* 107, boldface added). Similar to the narrative in which it is embedded, this extract proceeds through sentences in the passive voice, which can be a metaphorical expression of the characters' passivity before their gnawing desire to know what could have happened to the young Rebecca. This interpretation is buttressed by the boldfaced expression, whose hyperbolic repetition elicits a sense of emotional buildup, and thereby echoes the characters' unremitting need to demystify Rebecca's disappearance. Their behaviour is typical, since neurotics, including trauma victims, display a compulsion for *compensation*, the defence mechanism whereby an individual attaches herself to "a distorted substitute of the repressed truth" (Freud, "Jensen's" 9: 80). In the last passage, the 'distorted substitute' are dreams about the girl's return whereby the protagonists offset the overwhelming sense of helplessness their collective trauma evokes.

In some cases, compensation results from the way in which some individuals experience their traumas as a narcissistic scar. This is most clearly evident in soldiers, who commonly react to "the death of a friend as a narcissistic injury rather than an object loss. In other words, they experience their friends as extensions of themselves rather as separate individuals (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 161). This is typified by certain elements of the author's narratives, most notably the 'We,' the focalising and narrating agent in *Even the Dogs*. This apparently spectral narrator might be in reality an 'I' who identifies so much with the traumatic life and dehumanising death of a group of dossers and drug addicts that she fails to conceive of them as separate beings. That is why this 'I' ends up experiencing these characters, the 'you,' as an extension of herself, which is translated as 'We' in *Even the Dogs.*

The tendency to identify almost entirely with others is common among egocentric agents, especially children under seven, who do not develop values specific to them. Instead, they usually introject their elders' ways and manners, since they conceive of them as "absolute and unalterable rules imposed from without" (Piaget, "The Spirit" 75-6). Thus, children at the egocentric phase of their cognitive development show a clear-cut tendency towards an extreme form of identification, on account of which the borders between self and other blurs. Based on

this, it can be propounded that the 'We' in *Even the Dogs* is a figurative expression of how many traumatised individuals, including the novel's characters, tend to identify almost completely with beloved individuals they accidently lost. Their demeanour corresponds, in many ways, to egocentrism, and can be regarded as a form of compensation whereby they try to deny their otherwise incommensurable losses.

In some extreme cases, compensation manifests itself in the proclivity of many neurotics towards delusions of grandeur, as underlined by van der Kolk when he states that several trauma victims counteract "their fears of helplessness and annihilation . . . with feelings of power and omnipotence" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 134). The hypertrophy of the ego is not only particular to trauma victims, but also common among adolescents, who behave in messianic ways, "thereby displaying a behaviour that is typical of an egocentric attitude. Thereafter, they enthusiastically promote socially important goals, such as justice, protection of the environment, etc." (Kesselring 342). Such a messianic zeal is usually what people experience when they are under the spell of *the archetype of the hero*.[95] Jung understands this to mean the archaic and typical figure which appears in every human being's dreams in the shape of an individual with superhuman powers fighting "evil in the form of dragons, serpents, monsters, demons, and so on" (Jung, *Man* 79). The hero archetype has a profound psychological significance, as it usually symbolises the "ego in its fight against regressive trends of the unconscious" (Jung, *Man* 120).

Some of the author's trauma-laden narratives are rife with evocations of the hero archetype. This is most clearly evident in the second chapter of *Even the Dogs* which is intercut with a narrative where the choral narrator imagines elaborate commemoration scenarios of Robert's death:

[95] Jung's 'archetype of the hero' is informed by the work of American anthropologist, Paul Radin, about the North American tribe of Winnebago Indians. For this tribe, the hero myth evolves through four main stages, each corresponding to a distinct stage of human mental development (Radin 17-55). The first and least developed stage is the *Trickster cycle* (Radin 17). At that stage, the hero emerges in dreams as a virile and cruel man who, like a young child, lacks any purpose beyond the gratification of his basic needs (Radin 17-30). The second stage in the evolution of the hero myth corresponds to the *Hare cycle* (Radin 30). At that phase, the hero manifests himself in dreams as an infant in late childhood who becomes a socialised being, controlling his instinctual and infantile urges (Radin 30-8). The third stage is the *Red Horn* (Radin 38). At this stage, the hero appears in dreams as a rebellious human being whose demeanour is deeply reminiscent of that of an adolescent who rebels against social norms and traditions. This is made manifest through certain dreams in which the hero challenges giants and beasts, defeats them, and thereupon becomes arrogant, conceiving of himself as a superhuman whose power far exceeds that of other mortal human beings (Radin 38-46). The next and final stage in the evolution of the hero myth is the *Twin cycle* (Radin 46). In this final phase, the hero appears as an extremely presumptuous human being. He oversteps all limits, and eventually defies the gods who, as a punishment, separate the hero's soul from its twin—the body (Radin 46-55).

> ***Or if*** we lived by the sea, if we were fucking Vikings or something, we'd put him in a boat and send him out on the water all ablaze and . . . and watch him burn as he drifts further . . . ***Or if*** we lived in a hot country we would more or less just roll him in sheets of sackcloth and put him on a funeral pyre made of olive branches.
>
> (*ED* 40-8, emphasis and boldface added)

The scenarios introduced in this extract are obviously figments of the narrator's imagination, as underlined by the hyperbolic use of the conditional structures (boldfaced and italicised). As is the case with the previously scrutinised passages, these scenarios are a signal example of how ambivalence is at the heart of McGregor's writings. Indeed, they can be seen as having both an ethical and anti-ethical significance. They are ethical when read as a eulogy whereby the choral narrator pays tribute to Robert, who has been forsaken by his entire society, including his own family and friends. Conversely, these imagined situations can be regarded as anti-ethical, since they have a mythical ring reminiscent of the *Twin cycle*. Jung understands this to mean the most evolved stage of the hero archetype. At this stage, the hero becomes so extremely presumptuous that he defies the gods, which makes "his sacrifice or death a necessary cure for *hybris,* the pride that has overreached itself" (Jung, *Man* 114, emphasis in original). As has been specified, the mythical figure of the hero is the unconscious incorporation of the ego. Concerning 'the gods,' they are, as *per* Jung, "regressive trends of the unconscious" (Jung, *Man* 120). In contradistinction to Jung, it will be assumed that the gods in the hero myth have the symbolic function of human beings' inherent vulnerability which, as has been detailed, is the key step towards welcoming alterity. In this regard, it can be propounded that the last passage carries an overtone of the hero archetype, and more specifically the *Twin cycle*. By way of this archetypal theme, the excerpt epitomises how trauma victims, including the novel's characters, develop a megalomaniac personality to counteract the overwhelming sense of vulnerability triggered by their traumatic experiences. In doing so, they do not put an end to their sufferings. Conversely, they make their traumas grow into harbingers of death and destruction.

Taking into account what has been demonstrated in this chapter, it can be concluded that the author's fiction underlines how characters fall back on cognitive egocentrism so as to avoid confronting their traumatic pasts. As has been detailed in the first subchapter, such a cognitive demeanour is mainly marked by preoperational thinking, the mode of thought whereby many egocentric agents reduce worldly phenomena to the way they instantaneously see them. This paradigm of thought finds expressions in several passages about the characters' traumas which are imparted through narratives bearing the hallmark of iconotexts with high

pictorial saturation. In their highly iconic nature, these narratives reflect how traumatised characters limit themselves to what they instantly see, which is typical of preoperational thinking

The preoperational mode of thought is the hallmark of egocentric space by dint of which certain individuals, especially children under seven, develop an autistic conception of the world, and thereby reduce worldly phenomena to one perspective—their own. Much like egocentric subjects, and as has been illustrated in the second subchapter, several traumatised characters have a blinkered conception of the world. This is epitomised by the focalisation of many of the author's writings which, however distinct in many respects, still have certain aspects in common, most importantly the fact that they are limited to the visual field of a single character. By means of such focalisations, along with several other elements, the author's fiction evidences how traumatised characters tend towards a self-centred view of the world broadly corresponding to egocentric space.

As has been demonstrated in the third subchapter, the egocentric conception of space is conducive to an extreme form of the *I-It attitude*, and thereby makes access to alterity problematical. This statement is exemplified by certain extracts which testify to how ambivalence lurks at the hub of the author's writings. Indeed, these passages evoke consideration for otherness, and therefore evince a clear ethical orientation. Paradoxical as it may sound, the same passages carry an undercurrent of egocentrism, and thereby typify how traumatised characters are miles away from ethical openness. In their ambivalent character, these passages typify how traumatised characters demonstrate a ceaseless impulse towards others, very much in line with a Levinasian conception of the ethical relation. Still, such an impulse is one which is inchoate, as it is persistently counteracted by the characters' proclivity for a cognitive demeanour reminiscent of egocentrism.

As has been postulated, egocentrism is probably a defence mechanism whereby these characters try to remain unresponsive to their internal others, their traumatic memories, for fear of the deep sense of fright such eerie mnemonic representations can readily generate. However, in doing so, they make their traumatisms worsen, as they subsequently become trapped in worlds of their own imagination. This is made manifest by many excerpts from the author's narratives where, in compensation for their profound sense of hopelessness, traumatised characters confabulate their horrible past experiences with fantasised details. They thereby blur boundaries between fiction and reality, which exacerbates their traumatisms by considerably inhibiting, among other things, their access to otherness.

General Conclusion

This thesis has interrogated Jon McGregor's trauma-laden writings by tapping into an approach informed by diverse psychological theories and the ethics of alterity. What it has aimed to demonstrate is how McGregor's poetics presents a traumatic memory as a mental phenomenon undermining the two mainstays of the ego—its cognitive powers and self-identity. To avoid confronting such an overwhelming memory, as the thesis has endeavoured to show, many traumatised characters demonstrate a proclivity for a cognitive demeanour very much in line with what Jean Piaget terms egocentrism.

In order to evidence these claims, it has been shown in the first part of the thesis how several aspects of McGregor's writings epitomise how a traumatic memory is beyond the cognitive capacities of the one it impresses. As has been specified, the hallmark of such a memory is the ample emotion it generates. This is typified by McGregor's poetics which is marked by four characteristic features. The first is the author's hyperbolic depiction of the minutiae of everyday life. The second, paradoxical as it may sound, is the paucity of details in some of McGregor's narratives. The third is the use of certain narrative elements that evoke water imagery. And the fourth is the musicality of certain of the author's narratives. As has been illustrated in the first chapter, these four properties of the author's poetics conjure up considerable emotion which approximates, but by no means equals, that which a trauma victim endures each time she remembers her frightening past. Under the sway of such an emotion, readers are driven, despite themselves, to vicariously experience some of the distress that traumatised characters suffer, and are thereby impelled to be considerate of those in pain, hence the ethical import of the author's poetics.

By dint of its excessive emotion, a traumatic memory does not fade or even change over time. Conversely, it persists as a memory alien to time, i.e. as a vivid reminder of a traumatic past. This is made manifest by numerous instances from the author's fiction which, as elucidated by the second chapter, are marked by their unhinged chronology and solecistic syntactic structures. By drawing heavily on these elements, the author presents traumatic memory as an atemporal mental phenomenon, on account of which a traumatised subject always experiences her eerie past as a simultaneity, i.e. as a past that keeps happening, each time as if for the first time. As has been postulated, one plausible reason why such a past is always experienced as a simultaneity is because it always manifests itself by means of a traumatic memory which, owing to its intense emotion, disrupts the traumatised subject's consciousness. This statement is exemplified by diverse narrative elements of McGregor's fiction, mainly certain metaphors,

whereby the author shows how trauma victims cannot assimilate their traumatic experiences. Instead, such frightening events persist as a future past, a past event that can be retained as past only in a perpetually deferred future.

Since a traumatic memory cannot be temporalised, it endures as a saying without a said, i.e. as a semantic surplus recalcitrant to any plain linguistic representation. This is exemplified by some passages about the characters' traumas which, as detailed in the third chapter, abound with certain rhetorical devices, especially aposiopesis and non-sequitur. The hyperbolic use of these devices illustrates how a traumatic saying, the very meaning of a traumatic event, not only resists language, but actively destroys it. Because of their incapacity to convey their traumas in a lucid linguistic configuration, traumatised subjects usually resort to language muting, an abstract and indirect language whereby a traumatic past is communicated through certain circumlocutions. This claim is evidenced by McGregor's narratives which brim with certain figures, notably euphemism and metalepsis. The hyperbolic use of these underscores how a traumatic saying can only be imparted in a negative language, an allusive language which does not so much elucidate as obfuscate the eerie past it attempts to communicate. The incapacity of a traumatised individual to convey her trauma in an intelligible linguistic representation reflects the inassimilibility of such a frightening past. This is made manifest by several constituents of McGregor's writings, especially the author's frequent use of camera-eye narrators. Acting like a mere camera, recording without thinking, many a narrator evokes how a trauma reduces the one it impacts to a state of sheer passivity in which she intermittently relives her frightening past, without being able to make sense of it.

More than just being unassimilable, and as has been specified in the second part of the thesis, traumatic memories unhinge the ego's self-identity. As has been advanced, 'self-identity' is a mental phenomenon made up of the different objects, with which the ego identifies, and which shape the ego's perception of itself, as well as the entire world. Among the main reasons why a traumatic memory wreaks havoc on the self-identity of the one it affects features its uncanniness, in the Freudian conception of the term, i.e. its eerie strangeness. This is most evident in McGregor's fiction which, as specified in the fourth chapter, displays three of the uncanny aspects that traumatic memories assume. The first is the paradoxical phenomenality of these memories, i.e. their being a peculiar commingling of the known and the unknown. This is epitomised by some of McGregor's narratives which perform certain cinematic techniques through the unwonted use of some syntactic structures. By dint of these techniques, including

jump cuts, the author presents traumatic memory as a paradoxical phenomenality: a mental phenomenon partly accessible but mostly inaccessible to the human consciousness. Another uncanny aspect of a traumatic memory is its latency, in the sense that, even when under the threshold of consciousness, such a memory still breathes its spirit into some non-traumatic content. This finds expression in many a narrative in which traumatic experiences are rarely addressed in a straightforward fashion. Instead, such frightening events are mostly demonstrated surreptitiously through certain metaphors. This, in turn, evinces how a traumatic memory is not always a replica of the eerie event with which it is originally associated. Rather, it intermittently cloaks itself in a plethora of untraumatic representations, hence the latent character of such a memory. In addition to its latency and paradoxical phenomenality, a third uncanny aspect of traumatic memory is its being contagious. This is clearly illustrated by the author's fiction which is peppered with certain narrative ingredients, including splintered subordinate clauses, direct speech unmarked by speech markers and second person narratives. Through such means, the author's fiction epitomises how traumatic memories are not only intrapersonal but also interpersonal phenomena—mental representations communicable from one individual to another, hence their uncanniness.

Due to its uncanny nature, a traumatic memory disrupts the ego's self-identity, the lens through which the ego is readily able to find its bearings in the world. This is evidenced by McGregor's writings which, as illustrated in the fifth chapter, demonstrate how trauma memories engender both derealisation and depersonalisation, the two symptomatic expressions of the critical disturbance that traumatic memory causes to the traumatised person's self-identity. As has been specified, what is meant by 'derealisation' is the experience of the unreality of surroundings that traumatised individuals intermittently suffer. This is exemplified by the author's narratives which are rife with certain narrative and figurative devices, most notably what Genette has defined as 'narrative metalepsis.' By means of these figures, the author's narratives become conducive to derealisation, and thereby unhinge many a reader's self-identity. These narratives are also marked by other constituents, notably narrators who appear to be incorporeal. This element of the author's fiction, along with several others, typify how traumatic memory intermittently degenerates into 'depersonalisation': the trauma symptom which involves a trauma victim's intermittent feeling of being detached from many constituents of her self-identity, including her body.

Since it lays waste to the self-identity of the one it impresses, traumatic memory appears to be essentially deleterious. However, and as evinced in the sixth chapter, this mental phenomenon is deeply ethical, from a Levinasian perspective. Indeed, it favours a form of 'excendance,' in Levinas's acceptance of the term, i.e. the ethical impulse to transcend oneself, especially one's self-identity, so as to open up to the irreducible otherness of other beings in the world. This idea is exemplified by McGregor's writings which rely upon traumatic memory in order to subvert many negative stereotypes upon which the ego's self-identity rests. Among these stereotypes is the deprecation of individuals whose collective identities, including their religions, do not align with the prevailing identity of their societies. Many a form of collective identity, such as ethnicity, is a key constituent of the ego's self-identity, and arguably explains why the ego is unresponsive to those who are not members of its identity group. Thus, by unhinging the ego's self-identity, traumatic memory compels the ego to transcend the various collective identities upon which its self-identity rests. The ego is thereby driven to overstep the negative stereotypes entrenched in these collective forms of identity, and thereby becomes open to otherness. This statement finds expression in McGregor's narratives which use traumatic memory in order to abuse stereotypes firmly established in four forms of collective identity: nationality, ethnicity, race and gender. In doing so, these narratives underline how traumatic memory is a form of excendance. In addition to collective forms of identity, traumatic memory also disrupts a stereotype upon which many a human being's self-identity is based: human superiority over non-humans. This idea is substantiated by McGregor's fiction, which is dotted with narrative elements, including the choral 'We' in *Even the Dogs*. By way of this element, along with several others, the author's narratives demonstrate how a traumatic memory undermines the myth of human hegemony over non-humans. Thus, these narratives typify how a trauma is conducive to excendance, in the sense that it impels the one it affects to overstep negative stereotypes around which her self-identity hinges. In doing so, such a memory favours openness to the Other in her irreducible alterity, hence its potential ethical yield.

Although profoundly ethical, and as has been demonstrated in the first two parts of the thesis, a traumatic memory brings about critical disturbance to the backbones of the ego—its cognitive powers and self-identity. That is why the ego loses its bearings, and thereby becomes a stranger to itself, as well as to the world around it. In response to such an overpowering memory, as illustrated in the third part of the thesis, many traumatised subjects turn in on themselves, while displaying a cognitive demeanour in line with what Jean Piaget terms egocentrism. As has been specified, such a cognitive behaviour is common among preoperational agents,

namely children under seven. What is most remarkable about these agents is that they rarely show any tendency towards the accommodation of their preconceptions of the world to new life experiences. Instead, they usually display a predominant form of assimilation, the cognitive act of reducing "external processes to schemas arising from internal experiences" (Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* 132). Interestingly enough, several traumatised characters demonstrate a similar cognitive behaviour which, as has been indicated, is an overarching feature of a preoperational child's conception of the world. Indeed, it not only covers the way such a child conceives of time and space, but also her use of language.

Linguistically speaking, and as highlighted by the seventh chapter, many traumatic happenings in McGregor's writings are conveyed through narratives dotted, among other things, with the hyperbolic repetition of the same expressions, questions for the air and indefinite referents. What is striking about these narrative ingredients is that they are the hallmarks of the three forms of egocentric language: echolalia, monologue and collective monologue. Accordingly, it has been postulated that the reason why several traumatic occurrences in the author's fiction are mediated through narratives displaying many aspects of egocentric language is to suggest that, due to such eerie events, trauma victims regress into egocentric phases of cognitive development. Subsequently, these victims end up employing language in a way which squares, in many ways, with egocentrism. According to Piaget, egocentric forms of language are the outcome of two paradigms of thought—syncretism and juxtaposition. As has been indicated, these two modes of thinking are, as *per* Piaget, antithetical. Juxtaposition involves the tendency to focus on details at the expense of the whole, which accounts for the fragmentation of a preoperational subject's utterances. Conversely, syncretism results from the concentration on the whole to the detriment of details. This thought pattern finds expression in many excerpts from the author's narratives which are dotted, among other things, with solecistic punctuation, the hyperbolic repetition of the same structures and the monoliths of prose whereby some of these narratives proceed. Owing to these elements, the author's narratives, especially those about the characters' traumas, are introduced as a jumble of incongruent details, which is profoundly reminiscent of the language that an egocentric subject produces when resorting to syncretism. Aside from providing evidence of the traumatised characters' syncretistic thinking, certain passages from the author's fiction are also an epitome of juxtaposition. Marked by their unwonted typography and clauses set side by side without being logically connected, these passages display characteristic features of the language through which an egocentric agent communicates

when she falls back on juxtaposition. Accordingly, it has been propounded that such passages typify the inclination of the author's traumatised characters for juxtaposition.

Since language, as *per* Chomsky, is *a mirror of mind*, the characters' egocentric language arguably mirrors their egocentric mental state (Chomsky 4). According to Piaget, such a mental state is "a general feature of the young child's conception of the world, not confined to one area of thought. So temporal thinking, too, can be egocentric" (Le Poidevin 20-1). This statement is substantiated by some of McGregor's narratives which, as has been detailed in the eighth chapter, are distinguished by their anachronistic representation of many a character's traumas. Thus, these narratives illustrate how these characters lose their qualitative understanding of time, i.e. their cognitive capacity to chronologise events, which is the hallmark of what Piaget identifies as egocentric time. What further evidences the traumatised characters' proclivity for an egocentric conception of time are certain passages distinguished, among other things, by the hyperbolic use of some expressions and unwonted punctuation. As has been shown, these passages give the impression that time is elastic, i.e. speeding up, slowing down, and even stopping. This, in turn, reflects how traumatised characters, like preoperational agents, lose quantitative understanding of time, i.e. the cognitive capacity to conceive of time as a constant flow, which is, as *per* Piaget, one of the characteristic features of egocentric time.

The reason why traumatised characters resort to egocentrism is arguably to avoid confronting their traumatic past. This claim is elucidated by the ninth chapter, in which it has been shown how traumatised individuals develop an egocentric conception of space. As has been specified, Piaget understands 'egocentric space' to mean the cognitive incapacity to have a multiperspectival view of the world. The characteristic feature of egocentric space, according to Piaget, is preoperational thinking, the mode of thinking whereby many preoperational agents reduce worldly phenomena to the way they instantaneously see them. This paradigm of thought finds expression in several passages about the characters' traumas which are articulated through narratives bearing the hallmark of iconotexts with high pictorial saturation. In their highly iconic nature, these narratives reflect how traumatised characters limit themselves to what they instantly see, which is typical of preoperational thinking. On account of this paradigm of thought, preoperational agents demonstrate an autistic conception of the world, as they unwittingly reduce worldly phenomena to one perspective—their own. Interestingly enough, many traumatised characters display the same cognitive behaviour. This statement is mainly underlined by the focalisation of many of the author's writings which, however distinct in many

respects, still have certain aspects in common, most importantly the fact that they are limited to the visual field of a single character and/or narrator. Such a focalisation evokes, among other things, how traumatised characters tend towards a self-centred view of the world largely in line with egocentric space. As has been conjectured, such a cognitive way of viewing space favours an extreme form of the *I-It attitude*, understood by Martin Buber to mean the inclination to see others as objects at worst unworthy of consideration, at best mere means to reach one's egotistic ends. This postulate is corroborated by certain extracts from the author's fiction which testify to how ambivalence is at the heart of his writings. In fact, these passages elicit two antithetical impressions—consideration for otherness and self-centredness. They thereby epitomise how traumatised protagonists are riven between openness to alterity and its self-generated opposite—unresponsiveness to otherness. As has been propounded, the reason why these characters are reluctant to welcome otherness is because of their cognitive egocentrism, which is arguably a defence mechanism. Indeed, trauma victims arguably resort to such a cognitive demeanour in order to remain unresponsive to their internal others, their traumatic memories, for fear of the deep sense of fright such eerie mnemonic representations can readily generate. Nevertheless, in doing so, they make their traumatisms worsen, as they become trapped in worlds of their own imagination. This is exemplified by certain extracts from McGregor's writings which show how, in a way typical of egocentrism, certain characters unwittingly confabulate their traumatic pasts with fantasised details. As a result, many of their psychological faculties become impaired, including especially their capacity to access otherness.

Based on what has been illustrated, it can be said that this thesis brings, among other things, two main contributions to the study of Jon McGregor's writings in particular and trauma fiction in general. Firstly, it shows the ethical end to which writers, like McGregor, put their use of trauma. Indeed, and as demonstrated throughout the thesis, McGregor's poetics is conducive to the disruptive effects that trauma has on cognition and self-identity. Readers, as has been shown, are consequently compelled to own up to their inherent vulnerability, which is the key step towards being considerate of other beings in the world, including the most minuscule and the apparently frivolous. The second contribution of the thesis is the relationship it establishes between what Piaget terms egocentrism and trauma in McGregor's fiction. But in doing so, it also raises a question regarding the place egocentrism can hold in trauma studies. One possible answer to this is that such a cognitive demeanour is part and parcel of *acting out*. Freud understands this to mean:

> . . . the compulsion to repeat, which replaces [in a trauma victim] the impulsion to remember, not only in his personal attitude to his doctor but also in every activity which may occupy his life at the time . . . The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering.
> (Freud, "Remembering" 12:151)

When acting out their eerie pasts, trauma victims, as advanced by van der Kolk, demonstrate "an inadequate assimilation of reality. What they take in, digest, and change depends on their idiosyncratic history and biology and on their specific fears and needs, not on real world demands" (van der Kolk, *Psychological* 94). Their behaviour tallies closely with egocentrism in preoperational agents, who only rarely attempt to accommodate themselves to worldly phenomena. Instead, and as has been specified, these agents, especially children under seven, mostly tend towards an extreme form of assimilation whereby they reduce whatever they experience to one perspective—their own. Based on the parallel drawn between egocentrism and trauma victims' compulsion to act out their frightening accidents, it can be assumed that such a compulsion is conducive to an egocentric form of cognition.

Although acting out intermittently predominates, especially at the onset of traumatic neuroses, it does not prevent trauma victims from showing signs of *working-through*. Freud understands this to mean the psychological process whose purpose is to achieve "reconciliation with the repressed material" (Freud, "Remembering" 12:152). This does not, however, imply that such a process should be associated with definitive healing. "A far cry from the image of working-through peddled in everyday parlance, resolution or healing are a moot point in most theoretical and fictional evocations" (Ganteau, "Working Through" 137). As advanced by several scholars, notably Dominick LaCapra and Robert Eaglestone, working-through should be viewed as a spiral process, in the sense that it winds around recovery, while constantly receding from it. This is mainly because it is always enmeshed with *acting out*, which precludes the resolution of traumatic neuroses.

In short, acting out and working-through are two intertwined processes, none of which annuls the other. When acting out overshadows working-through, traumatised subjects become virtually unable to welcome otherness, as they fall back on a cognitive behaviour reminiscent of egocentrism in preoperational subjects. Conversely, when working-through preponderates, trauma victims show a stronger tendency towards accommodating to new life experiences, and thereby become more actively engaged with others. These claims are substantiated by several fictional works, such as Graham Swift's *Last Orders*.

As its title suggests, this novel revolves around the 'Last Orders' of its central character, Jack Dodds, a Bermondsey butcher and a veteran of the Second World War, who asked that his ashes be scattered off the end of Margate pier. One of the critics claims this novel to be a turning point in Swift's fiction, as it abandons "the exploration of trauma and traumatic time, and is therefore exempt from the most gratuitous proliferation of traumas, which threatened to suffocate [Swift's] previous novels" (Bényei 52). This statement is, however, only partly true, as the novel is replete with evocations of traumatic neuroses. Among the many instances corroborating this is the very narrative stream through which the story is told. As it chronicles the characters' journey from Bermondsey to Margate to carry out their friend's last wish, the narrative is broken by flashbacks about these characters' harrowing pasts. Thus, this narrative dovetails with traumatic time, since its shipwrecked chronology is typical of the testimonies of trauma victims, especially when they are under the compulsion to act out their frightening experiences.

As has been postulated, when acting out overshadows working-through, traumatised subjects display a cognitive behaviour in line with egocentrism. They thereby face an ethical crisis, as they become virtually unable to open up to otherness. This is exemplified by several passages from *Last Orders*, including those about Romany Jim, the gypsy whom Amy fancied when she was still a young single woman (Swift 235, 238). In these excerpts, Amy's sexual attraction to Romany is perpetually counteracted by her prejudiced conception of gypsies, whose lifestyle remains "in the popular imagination as a disruptive alternative to the Western culture" (Trumpener 820). "To repress her desire for the gypsy, Amy begins a relationship with a boy" from her own culture, Jack Dodds, whom she later on marries (Craps 162). Her demeanour is reminiscent of egocentrism in preoperational agents, who share "primitive societies' fear of all innovations (their misoneism)" (Piaget, "The Spirit" 77-8). Seen in this light, Amy's struggle and failure to accept her sexual desire for Romany Jim can be regarded as a figurative expression of her struggle and failure to overcome her compulsion to act out her trauma, namely how her husband has disowned their daughter because she is developmentally disabled. On account of such a compulsion, Amy falls back on a form of cognitive egocentrism, develops a rigid conception of the world, and eventually does not succeed to forgive her husband. These claims are substantiated by the many scenes in the novel about Amy taking the bus for Blackfriars mental hospital where her daughter June has been institutionalised for fifty years. In a fashion typical of acting out, she keeps on believing that someday her daughter will recognise her. This does not, however, invalidate the fact that Amy displays signs of working through, and thus of openness to otherness. Among the scenes underlining this claim are those in which

Amy transcends the grudge she holds against her husbands, and thereby shows concerns for his deteriorating health conditions. Still, her tendency to work through her trauma seems to be always inchoate, as epitomised when she declines to pay a last tribute to her husband by not contributing to the fulfilment of his last wish.

As the novel nears its end, it becomes increasingly replete with evocations of working-through. This is most clearly evident in the last scene where, just after scattering Jack's ashes, Ray, for instance, starts to think about beginning his life anew. Although it appears to end on a hopeful note, the novel does not promote a possible resolution to traumatic neuroses. Among the many instances evidencing this statement is the anachronistic narrative whereby the last scene is conveyed. As has been specified, anachronism is the hallmark of egocentric language, as well as survivors' testimonies when they are under the compulsion to act out their horrible experiences. Thus, the unhinged chronology of the last scene arguably carries an overtone of both acting out and egocentrism, and thereby shows how the characters' endeavour to work through their traumas never comes to fruition.

Drawing on what has been shown in the last few pages, it can be said that the thesis opens up new research avenues by virtue of the relationship it establishes between acting out, working through and egocentrism. As has been advanced, egocentrism can be regarded as part and parcel of acting out which is, in turn, enmeshed with working through. This statement is exemplified by Swift's *Last Orders* in which characters strive but fail to overcome their traumatic neuroses, as they intermittently fall under the compulsion to act out their harrowing experiences. On account of such a compulsion, they demonstrate a mode of thought typical of egocentrism, which inhibits their tendency to work through their traumas, thus preventing the resolution of their traumatic neuroses.

According to LaCapra, it is only "via working through that one acquires the possibility of being an ethical and political agent" (LaCapra 144). That is why it has been propounded that, by counteracting working-through, acting out triggers an egocentric demeanour, and thereby impairs a trauma victim's capacity to be actively engaged with otherness. Paradoxical as it is may sound, and in order to question one's own assumptions, it can be said that acting out and egocentrism turn trauma into an ethical experience, from a Levinasian perspective, i.e. an experience in which a subject becomes a "hostage to and for the other, for the other's needs, for the other's life, to be sure, but also for the other's responsibility" (Levinas, *Otherwise* xii). This statement is exemplified by Swift's *Last Orders* in which four characters served as British

soldiers during World War Two. Haunted by images of mutilated corpses, these protagonists are intermittently compelled to act out their appalling war experiences. They thereby pay tribute, even though unwittingly, to the millions who lost their lives in one of the most dehumanising experiences of modern human history. Had they succeeded to work through their traumatic pasts, these characters would have experienced a sense of complacency, and would have subsequently ignored their responsibility towards those who they witnessed dying. Thus, by impeding working through, acting out, including the egocentric demeanour it generates, precludes any definitive solutions to traumatic neuroses. In doing so, it impels trauma victims to be obsessed with their responsibility towards their eerie pasts, hence its ethical yield.

While this conclusion was being drafted, *Lean Fall Stand*, McGregor's new novel, saw the light. The author started working on it in 2014 when he was travelling to the Antarctic Peninsula. The expedition was partly unsuccessful, as the ship on which McGregor was sailing could not carve its way through the thick ice, and could not therefore make it to Antarctica (McGregor, "*Lean*" 00:01:52 - 00:03:40). Although the author had to sail back to England, he was extremely excited by the immense and featureless Antarctic landscape that he saw in the distance. He then spent several years trying to put that experience into words, until the day he read about *aphasia*, the cognitive impairment which mainly includes the loss of the capacity to process language due to brain damage (McGregor, "*Lean*" 00:04:50 - 00:06:40). This medical condition provides the author with enough thread to weave throughout his novel the theme of the failure of language to capture certain experiences, including his own trip to Antarctica.[96]

Unlike McGregor's other works, *Lean Fall Stand* is only partly set in the British Isles, as most of its events take place either in Antarctica or in Chile. The story proper belongs to Robert Wright, nicknamed Doc, a general technical assistant supporting the visiting scientists during their stay in the Antarctic Peninsula. In short, the novel traces Robert's long and arduous journey to acquire extralinguistic communication strategies in order to alleviate the impact of the aphasia that he has developed following a stroke. However distinct in many respects, this novel is still replete with evocations of the author's former writings, both in terms of form and content. Concerning its form, *Lean Fall Stand* is mediated through a narrative marked by its distorted chronology and unhinged typography, which, as has been shown, is typical of the author's writings. True to the author's style, the novel is distinguished by its syntactic and

[96] Noteworthy is the fact that McGregor is not the first to be preoccupied with language loss, as many modernist writers, notably James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, have already tackled this topic in many of their works (Harris n.p.).

semantic ambiguity, e.g. “Tell him to conserve the banteries. Panteries. Batteries,” and “Do—you—want—me—to—drive?” (*Lean* 76, 77). Just like its form, the novel’s content is reminiscent of the author’s previous works, especially *Even the Dogs*. Among the many instances underlining this statement is the fact that the central characters in the two novels share the same Christian name: Robert Radcliffe in *Even the Dogs* and Robert Wright in *Lean Fall Stand*. Furthermore, these two protagonists, unlike others from the author’s fiction, do not suffer from a psychological trauma. Instead, the aetiology of their traumatic neuroses is one of neurobiological nature: a stroke in *Lean Fall Stand*, and a brain lesion caused by a piece of shrapnel in *Even the Dogs*.

As has been demonstrated, McGregor presents trauma throughout his former works as being in excess of human cognitive capacities and self-identity. The same applies to his new novel which epitomises how Robert’s neurological trauma challenges his individual capacities. Among the many elements highlighting this claim is the iteration of the novel’s title, or close variants of it, throughout the narrative, e.g. “Lean. Fall. Up now, stand” and “Stand. Lean. Fall” (*Lean* 77,78). The repetitive use of such expressions typifies how Robert has been struggling to regain his capacity to walk and speak. Nevertheless, his recovery is one which is always inchoate, since, until the end of the novel, he cannot fully recover his verbal capacities. In order to offset his linguistic impairment, he develops extralinguistic communication techniques. This is, among other things, metaphorically expressed through the unwonted punctuation which figures in the titles of the novel’s three parts: “Lean /,” “Fall—” and “Stand |.” What is noticeable about such a punctuation is that it is reminiscent of sign languages. More particularly, it evokes the system of visual gestures that Robert has developed in order to “fill in the gaps when he couldn’t quite get to the words” (*Lean* 254).

According to the author, the extralinguistic techniques that aphasic individuals develop are evidence of the remarkable human capacity *to adapt* to all sorts of situations (McGregor, “*Lean*” 00:25:30 - 00:26:20). However, adaptation, at least in the Piagetian conception of the term, constitutes “an equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation” (Piaget and Inhelder, *The Psychology* 58). Simply put, adaptation, as *per* Piaget, implies a state of cognitive stability, which is not obviously the case of Robert, who strives but fails to regain his cognitive powers, especially his capacity to speak. His mental condition is typical, since a complete recovery from aphasia is virtually impossible (National Aphasia Association n.p.). This is evident in the last chapter which is headed with a sign-language translation of the novel’s

title: "/ — |." One possible rendering of such a title is that it evokes how Robert is afflicted with an incurable brain disorder, and is thereby destined to an existence of endless toil. He Leans /, Falls —, and Stands |, only to fall back again. This reading is further underlined by the analeptic narrative through which the last chapter proceeds. Indeed, such a narrative can be seen as an index of regression, and thereby evokes how Robert's complete recovery is unlikely. Thus, and in contradistinction to the author's former statement, it can be advanced that the novel is not so much about adaptation as about perpetual struggle. Seen in this light, the novel not only allows "us to perceive the Other's suffering, it also awakens us to our own precariousness" (Onega, "Victimhood" 97-8).

As has been indicated, the awareness of one's ontological vulnerability is the key step towards being considerate of other beings in the world. This is evidenced by the novel in which the author taps into the traumatic effects of aphasia in order to compel readers to open up to otherness, notably their ecological environment. Indeed, in a fashion redolent of *Reservoir 13*, the novel is punctuated with passages evoking the interdependence of human beings and their natural world. Among these passages, the following one features prominently: "He felt a part of everything surrounding. Everything surrounding felt a part of him"(*Lean* 275). This excerpt is about Robert who, while having a stroke, awakens to the fact that "the human emanates from the natural, in the same way as the natural elements of the landscape are tightly intertwined with the human" (Ganteau, "Diffracted" n.p.). Thus, such a passage further evidences the ethical end to which the author puts his use of traumatic experiences.

Another ethical dimension of the novel consists in its promotion of an *ethics of care*. The American philosopher Virginia Held understands this to mean the act of "attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility" (Held 10). According to her, care is not a moral code, but a spontaneous *practice* which involves "attentiveness, sensitivity, and responding to needs" (Held 39). Such a practice is exemplified by the character of Anna, Robert's wife, and a climate change scientist. Anna has not been the sort of wife who accepts "to see all her ambition shrink in the shadow of her husband" (*Lean* 88). That is why she has not objected to her husband's annual absences. However, on account of Robert's stroke, she has been forced to do "the exact opposite of what she wanted: her husband is always at home and she is full-time carer" (Myerson n.p.). As the repetitive routines of care start to take over, the narrative becomes increasingly peppered with deontic modal expressions, especially 'had to.' The hyperbolic repetition of such expressions elicits a sense of emotional buildup,

which arguably evokes how Anna grudgingly performs her role as a carer. Nevertheless, and until the end of the novel, she has never waived her responsibility towards her husband, and thereby stands as a signal practitioner of what Held terms the ethics of care.

What has been illustrated so far is that *Lean Fall Stand* tallies closely with the author's former works, especially in terms of the ethical treatment of its use of trauma. That being said, this novel may be viewed as a turning point in McGregor's fiction. Among the many elements corroborating this claim is the optimistic note on which the novel closes. Indeed, in *Lean Fall Stand*, and unlike the author's other writings, the major character, Robert, does not attempt to preclude his trauma by way of an egocentric demeanour, and does not therefore show clear signs of an ethical crisis. This is most evident in the novel's last chapter, including the following excerpt: "His lack of words was so absolute . . . there was only the silence of his brain, and silence was a tremendous relief . . . He didn't even know the word for red, but he knew this as the small far-off beginning of something new" (*Lean* 278). This passage, like the rest of the chapter in which it is embedded, is an analeptic account of Robert when he has a stroke, and is lying under a tent during an Antarctic snowstorm. Although he cannot move or even talk and is on the verge of death, he does not panic. Conversely, he shows a deep sense of serenity in the face of his trauma, since he welcomes it as 'the beginning of something new.' His reaction is typical of an ethical experience, in the Levinasian conception of the term, i.e. an experience in which an ethical subject shows unfettered openness to the Other, *the absolutely new* (Levinas, *Totality* 219).

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Résumé détaillé en français

Cette thèse interroge les écrits de Jon McGregor en s'appuyant sur une approche fondée sur diverses théories psychologiques et l'éthique de l'altérité. Ce qu'elle vise à démontrer, c'est comment la poétique de McGregor présente le souvenir traumatique comme un phénomène mental qui compromet les deux piliers du Moi, à savoir ses pouvoirs cognitifs et son identité personnelle. Pour éviter de se confronter à un souvenir si submergeant, de nombreux personnages traumatisés manifestent une propension à un comportement cognitif proche de ce que Jean Piaget appelle l'égocentrisme.

Afin d'étayer ces hypothèses, on a montré dans la première partie de la thèse comment plusieurs aspects des écrits de McGregor illustrent la manière dont un souvenir traumatique dépasse les capacités cognitives de celui qu'il affecte. Comme on l'a précisé, la caractéristique principale d'un tel souvenir est l'ample émotion qu'il génère. C'est ce que souligne Freud lorsqu'il déclare que les souvenirs traumatiques sont *cathectés*, c'est-à-dire intensément chargés d'émotion (Freud, "Inhibition" 20 : 137). Il est à noter qu'un souvenir, qu'il soit traumatique ou non, est un amalgame d'éléments distincts codés dans différentes parties du cerveau. Cet amalgame comprend principalement les éléments visuels, auditifs, olfactifs, kinesthésiques et émotionnels qui forment, à des degrés divers, chaque souvenir. Ces composantes mnémoniques, à l'exception de l'émotion, sont encodées dans le cortex, le tissu neuronal responsable des fonctions cognitives supérieures, à savoir le langage et la raison (Kolb 447-608). Contrairement à ces composantes, l'élément émotionnel d'un souvenir est codé dans le système limbique, également appelé cerveau primitif, car il est phylogénétiquement antérieur au cortex (Cory 102).

En comprenant cela, il devient évident qu'un souvenir est formé à l'origine de deux types d'éléments phylogénétiquement distincts. Le premier type, le plus évolué, comprend, entre autres, les composantes visuelles, auditives, olfactives et kinesthésiques d'un souvenir qui sont formées dans le cortex, le tissu neuronal responsable de chaque type d'activités neuronales de nature consciente. Ces composantes mnémoniques prennent donc des formes non équivoques. Ils se manifestent comme des quantités (énergies neuronales) avec des qualités définies (représentations mentales conscientes). Contrairement aux éléments susmentionnés, la composante émotionnelle d'un souvenir est formée dans le système limbique primitif et, en tant que telle, elle prend une forme équivoque. Elle se manifeste comme une énergie neuronale sans qualité identifiable (image mentale consciente). C'est pourquoi l'émotion ne peut pas être classée en types distincts comme l'amour ou la haine, et elle est donc utilisée tout au long de la thèse au singulier.

Il convient toutefois de noter que certaines personnes peuvent s'opposer à cette hypothèse. Pour eux, une émotion n'est pas une quantité neuronale amorphe sans qualité identifiable. Elle possède au contraire des traits distinctifs, comme l'effroi dans le cas de la névrose traumatique. Il est donc nécessaire d'établir une distinction claire entre émotion et sentiment. Un sentiment, qu'il soit négatif ou positif, émane du Moi. Comme la pensée, c'est un acte conscient de jugement de quelque chose de connu ou d'inconnu (Jung, *The Basic* 183-240). Contrairement aux sentiments, une émotion est essentiellement une énergie neuronale nébuleuse, dépourvue de toute représentation consciente ; et donc, lorsqu'elle est abondante, elle échappe à l'emprise du Moi. Ainsi, l'effroi, la principale caractéristique de la névrose traumatique, n'est pas une émotion, mais plutôt un sentiment. Ce sentiment émane du Moi qui, face à un souvenir traumatique fortement chargé d'une énergie émotionnelle amorphe, réagit avec frayeur. Une telle réaction est typique, car l'humain éprouve d'habitude un profond sentiment de misonéisme chaque fois qu'il est confronté à quelque chose qui le dépasse.

Quatre traits caractéristiques de la poétique de McGregor suscitent une émotion considérable qui se rapproche, sans toutefois égaler, celle qu'endure une victime de traumatisme chaque fois qu'elle se souvient de son passé effrayant. Le premier trait est la description hyperbolique de détails frivoles de la vie quotidienne. Le deuxième, aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, est la rareté des détails dans certains récits de McGregor. Le troisième est l'utilisation de certains éléments narratifs qui évoquent des images d'eau. Et le quatrième est l'aspect musical de certains des récits de l'auteur. Comme nous l'avons illustré dans le premier chapitre, ces quatre propriétés de la poétique de l'auteur évoquent une émotion qui conduit le lecteur, malgré lui, à éprouver une partie de la détresse des personnages traumatisés. Le lecteur se trouve ainsi poussé à être attentif à ceux qui souffrent, d'où la portée éthique de la poétique de l'auteur.

En raison de son émotion excessive, un souvenir traumatique ne s'estompe pas, ni même ne se modifie avec le temps. Au contraire, il persiste comme un souvenir *étranger au temps*, c'est-à-dire perdure comme un rappel vivace d'un passé traumatique. Ceci est rendu manifeste par de nombreux exemples tirés de la fiction de l'auteur qui, comme l'explique le deuxième chapitre, sont marqués par une chronologie désordonnée et des structures syntaxiques solécistiques. En s'appuyant fortement sur ces éléments, l'auteur présente la mémoire traumatique comme un phénomène mental atemporel, en raison duquel un sujet traumatisé vit toujours son passé terrifiant comme une *simultanéité*, à savoir comme un passé qui continue à se produire, chaque fois comme si c'était la première fois. Une raison plausible pour laquelle un tel passé

est toujours vécu comme une simultanéité est qu'il se manifeste toujours à travers un souvenir traumatique qui, en raison de son émotion intense, perturbe le conscient du sujet traumatisé. Cette affirmation est illustrée par divers éléments narratifs de la fiction de McGregor, principalement certaines métaphores, par lesquelles l'auteur montre comment les victimes de traumatismes ne peuvent pas assimiler leurs expériences traumatiques. Au contraire, ces événements effrayants persistent comme un *passé futur*, un événement passé qui ne peut être retenu comme passé que dans un futur perpétuellement différé.

Puisqu'un souvenir traumatique ne peut être temporisé, il perdure comme un *Dire sans Dit*, comme l'entend Lévinas, c'est-à-dire comme un surplus sémantique récalcitrant à toute représentation linguistique claire. Ceci est illustré par certains passages sur les traumatismes des personnages qui, comme le montre le troisième chapitre, abondent de certains procédés rhétoriques, en particulier l'aposiopèse et le *non-sequitur*. L'utilisation hyperbolique de ces procédés illustre la manière dont un Dire traumatique, le sens même d'un événement traumatique, non seulement résiste au langage, mais le détruit activement. En raison de leur incapacité à transmettre leurs traumatismes dans une configuration linguistique lucide, les sujets traumatisés recourent généralement au *mutisme linguistique*, un langage abstrait et indirect par lequel un passé traumatique est communiqué par le biais de circonlocutions. Cette affirmation est attestée par les récits de McGregor qui regorgent de certaines figures, notamment l'euphémisme et la métalepse. L'utilisation hyperbolique de ces figures souligne la façon dont le Dire traumatique ne peut être transmis que dans un *langage négatif*, un langage allusif qui n'élucide pas tant qu'il obscurcit le passé sinistre qu'il tente de communiquer. L'incapacité d'une personne traumatisée à transmettre son traumatisme dans une représentation linguistique intelligible reflète l'inassimilabilité d'un passé aussi effrayant. Cette incapacité est rendue manifeste par plusieurs éléments constitutifs des écrits de McGregor, en particulier l'utilisation fréquente de narrateurs qui apparaissent comme une caméra, comme ils rapportent ce qu'ils perçoivent d'une façon irréfléchie. Agissant ainsi, de nombreux narrateurs évoquent la façon dont un traumatisme réduit la personne qu'il touche à un état de pure passivité dans lequel elle revit son passé effrayant, sans pouvoir lui donner un sens.

En plus d'être inassimilables, et comme cela a été précisé dans la deuxième partie de la thèse, les souvenirs traumatiques ébranlent l'*identité personnelle* qui, comme cela a été avancé, est, dans une certaine mesure, ce que Freud appelle le *Surmoi* (Freud, "Three" 7:129). Il s'agit surtout d'un phénomène mental inconscient par lequel un sujet est conditionné par un ou

plusieurs objets. Ainsi, l'identité personnelle n'est pas propre à chaque individu, mais marque plutôt la fin de l'individualité. À titre d'exemple, un fils qui s'identifie à ses parents ne forme pas une personnalité autonome. Il suit plutôt leurs traces, adoptant, de manière presque irréfléchie, leurs manières et comportements. En bref, l'identité personnelle est principalement un phénomène mental inconscient par lequel le Moi vit à travers certains objets qui conditionnent sa façon d'être dans le monde.

Comme nous le détaillons dans la deuxième partie de la thèse, l'identité personnelle procure également un sentiment de sécurité, ce qui explique l'attachement du Moi à ce phénomène mental. Cependant, l'identité personnelle n'est pas toujours possible, surtout pour une personne qui est hantée par un souvenir traumatique. En effet, un tel souvenir ne peut pas toujours être refoulé par l'identité personnelle du Moi—son Surmoi. Il perdure plutôt sous la forme d'un *double*, une psyché dissociée qui surmonte les défenses inconscientes du Moi (Rank, *The Double* 30). Ce faisant, la mémoire traumatique fait éprouver au Moi un profond sentiment d'insécurité.

Aussi effrayante soit-elle, cette expérience s'apparente à l'expérience de l'altérité telle que présentée par Emmanuel Lévinas, le célèbre philosophe français qui a posé les bases d'une nouvelle perception de l'Autre. Pour Lévinas, l'Autre est un infini, une entité dont l'essence dépasse les capacités cognitives du Moi et sa volonté de persister dans son identité (Lévinas, *Totality* 103). Chaque fois que le Moi fait l'expérience de l'Autre dans son altérité irréductible, il devient animé par l'*excendance*, la compulsion spontanée et immédiate qui implique inéluctablement une ouverture inconditionnelle à l'Autre (Lévinas, *Cultural* 49-73). En bref, l'excendance signifie l'évasion. Plus spécifiquement, il désigne la compulsion intermittente de l'humain à transcender son identité personnelle et, par conséquent, à faire l'expérience du monde dans son étrange et imprévisible singularité (Gibson 30). Cette pulsion éthique rappelle l'effet produit par la mémoire traumatique, sous l'influence de laquelle le Moi est contraint de s'ouvrir à l'altérité irréductible du monde. Et comme il n'existe pas de mot en psychanalyse qui exprime l'effet éthique d'un souvenir traumatique, il est nommé 'excendance' dans cette thèse.

En somme, un souvenir traumatique, en raison de son émotion abondante, devient propice à l'excendance, la pulsion éthique par laquelle le Moi est poussé à dépasser non seulement ses capacités cognitives, mais aussi son identité personnelle. Ainsi, un tel souvenir fait du traumatisme une expérience éthique, car le Moi est contraint de s'ouvrir à l'irréductible altérité du

monde, y compris de tout autre. Cette affirmation est corroborée par de nombreux chercheurs en littérature, notamment Jean-Michel Ganteau et Susana Onega, mais aussi Stef Craps, qui se sont penchés sur la dimension éthique du traumatisme. Tout au long de leurs travaux, ces chercheurs ont démontré que le traumatisme est une expérience bouleversante qui pousse l'individu à renoncer à sa souveraineté et à s'ouvrir éthiquement à l'Autre (Ganteau, "The Powers" 447).

Toutefois, face aux souvenirs écrasants de leurs traumatismes, les individus traumatisés ne manifestent pas une tendance nette à l'ouverture à leurs souvenirs traumatiques. Ils oscillent plutôt entre la *perversion* et la *capitulation* (Ghent 108). Dans le présent contexte, la 'capitulation' n'est pas synonyme de défaite ou de soumission. Il s'agit plutôt d'une forme de libération, comme elle pousse les traumatisés à reconnaître leur incapacité à assimiler leurs souvenirs traumatiques (Ghent 134). Ces victimes sont ainsi forcées à céder leurs superstructures protectrices et ainsi s'ouvrent à l'altérité irréductible de leurs souvenirs traumatiques.

Contrairement à la capitulation, la perversion est le résultat du déni (Ghent 110). Dans la perversion, les individus traumatisés ne s'ouvrent pas à leurs souvenirs traumatiques. Au lieu de cela, ils se rabattent sur leurs superstructures protectrices, se replient sur eux-mêmes et rechutent ainsi dans un *narcissisme secondaire* (Freud, *Introductory* 16: 424). Par 'narcissisme secondaire', Freud entend l'état mental dans lequel les frontières entre le subjectif et l'objectif deviennent floues ("Mourning" 14: 249). Un tel état mental est, selon Freud, le résultat d'une régression dans le *narcissisme primaire*, le stade précoce du développement mental dans lequel les jeunes enfants et les primitifs sont incapables de faire la différence entre le Moi et l'autre ("Mourning" 14: 249). Le narcissisme secondaire, selon Freud, n'est pas pathologique en soi. Au contraire, il est le complément libidinal de l'instinct de conservation (Freud, "On Narcissism" 14: 73-4). Cependant, un tel état mental devient pathologique lorsqu'il persiste.

Parmi les principales raisons pour lesquelles un souvenir traumatique fait des ravages sur l'identité personnelle de celui qu'il affecte, il y a son *inquiétante étrangeté*, dans la conception freudienne du terme, c'est-à-dire le fait qu'il soit en partie connu, mais en grande partie inconnu (Freud, *An Infantile* 17: 224). Ceci est particulièrement évident dans la fiction de McGregor qui, comme le précise le quatrième chapitre, présente trois des aspects de l'inquiétante étrangeté qui revêtent les souvenirs traumatiques. Le premier est la *phénoménalité paradoxale* de ces souvenirs, c'est-à-dire le fait qu'ils soient un mélange étrange du connu et de l'inconnu. Ceci est illustré par certains des récits de McGregor, qui utilisent certaines techniques cinématographiques par le biais de certaines structures syntaxiques. Grâce à ces

techniques, l'auteur présente la mémoire traumatique comme une phénoménalité paradoxale : un phénomène mental partiellement accessible mais surtout inaccessible à la conscience humaine. Un autre aspect de l'inquiétante étrangeté d'un souvenir traumatique est sa *latence*, dans le sens où, même lorsqu'il est sous le seuil de la conscience, un tel souvenir insuffle son esprit dans un contenu non traumatique. Ce phénomène s'exprime dans de nombreux récits dans lesquels les expériences traumatiques ne sont pas abordées de manière directe. Au contraire, ces événements effrayants sont le plus souvent montrés subrepticement par le biais de certaines métaphores. Cela montre qu'un souvenir traumatique n'est pas toujours une réplique de l'événement effrayant auquel il est initialement associé. Il se dissimule plutôt par intermittence dans une pléthore de représentations non traumatiques, d'où le caractère latent d'un tel souvenir. En plus de sa latence et de sa phénoménalité paradoxale, un troisième aspect de l'inquiétante étrangeté du souvenir traumatique est le fait qu'il soit *contagieux*. Ceci est clairement illustré par la fiction de l'auteur qui est parsemée de certains ingrédients narratifs, notamment des phrases subordonnées éclatées, un discours direct non marqué par des marqueurs de discours et des récits à la deuxième personne. Par ces moyens, la fiction de l'auteur illustre comment les souvenirs traumatiques ne sont pas seulement des phénomènes intrapersonnels, mais aussi interpersonnels—des représentations mentales communicables d'un individu à l'autre, d'où leur inquiétante étrangeté.

En raison de sa nature étrange, un souvenir traumatique perturbe l'identité du Moi, la lentille à travers laquelle le Moi est facilement capable de trouver ses repères dans le monde. C'est ce que soulignent les écrits de McGregor qui, comme l'illustre le cinquième chapitre, montrent comment les souvenirs traumatiques engendrent à la fois une *déréalisation* et une *dépersonnalisation*, les deux expressions symptomatiques de la perturbation critique que la mémoire traumatique cause à l'identité personnelle du sujet traumatisé. Comme nous l'avons précisé, la 'déréalisation' est l'expérience de l'irréalité de l'environnement dont souffrent les personnes traumatisées. Ce phénomène est illustré par les récits de l'auteur qui sont truffés de certains dispositifs narratifs et figuratifs, notamment ce que Genette a défini comme la *métalepse narrative*. Par le biais de ces figures, les récits de l'auteur deviennent propices à la déréalisation et, de ce fait, ils ébranlent l'identité personnelle du lecteur. Ces récits sont également marqués par d'autres constituants, notamment des narrateurs qui semblent être incorporels. Cet élément de la fiction de l'auteur, ainsi que plusieurs autres, illustrent la façon dont la mémoire traumatique peut dégénérer en 'dépersonnalisation' : le symptôme traumatique qui implique le

sentiment d'être détachée de nombreux éléments constitutifs de son identité personnelle, y compris son corps.

Puisqu'elle ravage l'identité personnelle, la mémoire traumatique semble être essentiellement délétère. Cependant, et comme le montre le sixième chapitre, ce phénomène mental est profondément éthique, dans une perspective lévinassienne. En effet, il favorise une forme d'*excendance*, dans l'acception Lévinassienne du terme, c'est-à-dire l'impulsion éthique à se transcender, notamment à transcender son identité personnelle, pour s'ouvrir à l'altérité irréductible des autres êtres du monde. Cette idée est illustrée par les écrits de McGregor qui s'appuient sur la mémoire traumatique afin de renverser de nombreux stéréotypes négatifs sur lesquels repose l'identité personnelle. Parmi ces stéréotypes figure la dépréciation des individus dont l'identité collective, y compris leurs religions, ne correspond pas à l'identité dominante de leur société. De nombreuses formes d'identité collective, telles que l'ethnicité, constituent un élément clé de l'identité personnelle du Moi, et expliquent pourquoi le Moi ne s'ouvre pas à ceux qui ne sont pas membres de son groupe identitaire. Ainsi, en ébranlant son identité personnelle, la mémoire traumatique oblige le Moi à transcender ses identités collectives, y compris les stéréotypes négatifs ancrés dans ces formes collectives d'identité. Cette affirmation trouve son expression dans les récits de McGregor qui utilisent la mémoire traumatique afin d'abuser des stéréotypes fermement établis dans quatre formes d'identité collective : la nationalité, l'ethnicité, la race et le genre. Ce faisant, ces récits soulignent comment la mémoire traumatique est une forme d'excendance. Outre les formes collectives d'identité, la mémoire traumatique perturbe également un stéréotype sur lequel se fonde l'identité de nombreux êtres humains : la supériorité des humains sur les non-humains. Cette idée est corroborée par la fiction de McGregor, qui est parsemée d'éléments narratifs, notamment le narrateur choral, 'We,' dans *Even the Dogs*. Grâce à cet élément, ainsi qu'à plusieurs autres, les récits de l'auteur montrent comment un souvenir traumatique ébranle le mythe de la supériorité de l'humain sur les non-humains. Ainsi, ces récits illustrent comment un traumatisme est propice à l'excendance, dans le sens où il pousse la personne qu'il affecte à dépasser les stéréotypes négatifs autour desquels s'articule son identité personnelle. Ce faisant, une telle mémoire favorise l'ouverture à l'Autre dans son altérité irréductible, d'où son potentiel éthique.

Bien que profondément éthique, et comme cela a été démontré dans les deux premières parties de la thèse, un souvenir traumatique entraîne une perturbation critique des 'colonnes vertébrales' du Moi—ses pouvoirs cognitifs et son identité personnelle. C'est pourquoi le Moi

perd ses repères et devient par conséquent étranger à lui-même, ainsi qu'au monde qui l'entoure. En réaction à leurs traumatismes, comme l'illustre la troisième partie de la thèse, de nombreux sujets traumatisés se replient sur eux-mêmes, tout en affichant un comportement cognitif presque conforme à ce que Jean Piaget appelle l'*égocentrisme*. Comme il a été précisé, un tel comportement cognitif, selon Piaget, se caractérise par l'absence de frontières claires entre le Moi et le monde (Kesselring 328). Piaget (1896-1980) était un psychologue suisse qui a fondé les bases d'une nouvelle compréhension du développement cognitif humain et de l'impact que certains événements extrêmement effrayants, en particulier les traumatismes, ont sur les enfants. Dans son étude du développement cognitif humain, Piaget n'applique pas une approche empirique, car il ne conçoit pas l'acquisition de connaissances comme un processus passif et simplement additif (Schmidt 165). Il n'applique pas non plus une approche nativiste, puisqu'il ne considère pas la connaissance humaine comme essentiellement biologique (Sampson 4). Au contraire, Piaget développe une approche constructiviste, selon laquelle la connaissance humaine est le résultat d'une interaction continue entre l'organisme et son environnement par le biais des processus d'adaptation (assimilation et accommodation) (Schmidt 166). Piaget est généralement associé à l'égocentrisme, un concept qu'il a introduit dans les années 1920. Dans ses premiers écrits, Piaget concevait l'égocentrisme comme étant particulier au stade préopératoire, où l'enfant d'âge préscolaire (2 à 7 ans) est incapable de reconnaître la nature multiperspective du monde extérieur (Kesselring 329). Cependant, au milieu des années trente, la conception de l'égocentrisme de Piaget avait subi des changements importants. Plutôt que d'être propre à l'enfant d'âge préscolaire, l'égocentrisme est devenu un phénomène qui se reproduit plusieurs fois : au début du stade sensorimoteur (naissance-2 ans), au début du stade préopérationnel du développement (2-7 ans), au début du stade des opérations concrètes (7-11 ans) et au début du stade formel-opérationnel (11-15 ans) (Kesselring 332).

Il est intéressant de noter que plusieurs personnages traumatisés présentent un comportement cognitif similaire qui, comme nous l'avons indiqué, est une caractéristique essentielle de la conception du monde d'un enfant préopérationnel. En effet, il ne s'agit pas seulement de la façon dont un tel enfant conçoit le temps et l'espace, mais aussi de son utilisation du langage. Sur le plan linguistique, et comme le souligne le septième chapitre, de nombreux événements traumatiques dans les écrits de McGregor sont véhiculés par des récits parsemés, entre autres, de la répétition hyperbolique des mêmes expressions et de référents indéfinis. Ce qui frappe dans ces ingrédients narratifs, c'est qu'ils sont aussi les caractéristiques des trois formes de langage égocentrique : l'*écholalie*, le *monologue* et le *monologue collectif*. En conséquence, il

a été postulé que la raison pour laquelle plusieurs événements traumatiques dans la fiction de l'auteur sont communiqués à travers des récits présentant de nombreux aspects du langage égocentrique est de suggérer que, en raison de ces événements effrayants, les victimes de traumatismes régressent dans des phases égocentriques du développement cognitif. Par la suite, ces victimes finissent par employer le langage d'une manière qui correspond, à bien des égards, à l'égocentrisme. Selon Piaget, les formes égocentriques du langage sont le résultat de deux paradigmes de pensée—le *syncrétisme* et *la juxtaposition*. Comme nous l'avons indiqué, ces deux modes de pensée sont, selon Piaget, antithétiques. La 'juxtaposition' implique la tendance à se concentrer sur les détails au détriment de l'ensemble, ce qui explique la fragmentation des énoncés d'un sujet préopérationnel. À l'inverse, le 'syncrétisme' résulte de la concentration sur l'ensemble au détriment des détails. Ce schéma de pensée s'exprime dans de nombreux extraits de récits de l'auteur qui sont parsemés, entre autres, de ponctuations solécistiques, de la répétition hyperbolique des mêmes structures et des monolithes de prose. Grâce à ces éléments, les récits de l'auteur, surtout ceux qui concernent les traumatismes des personnages, se présentent comme un enchevêtrement de détails incongrus, ce qui rappelle profondément le langage que produit un sujet égocentrique lorsqu'il a recours au syncrétisme. Outre le fait qu'ils témoignent de la pensée syncrétique des personnages traumatisés, certains passages de la fiction de l'auteur sont également un exemple de juxtaposition. Marqués par une typographie inhabituelle et des phrases juxtaposées sans être logiquement reliées, ces passages présentent des traits caractéristiques du langage par lequel un agent égocentrique communique lorsqu'il recourt à la juxtaposition. En conséquence, il a été avancé que ces passages soulignent la tendance des personnages traumatisés pour la juxtaposition.

Puisque le langage, selon Chomsky, est le miroir de l'esprit, le langage égocentrique des personnages reflète leur état mental égocentrique (Chomsky 4). Selon Piaget, un tel état mental est une caractéristique générale de la conception du monde du jeune enfant, qui ne se limite pas à un seul domaine de la pensée. Ainsi, la pensée temporelle, elle aussi, peut être égocentrique (Le Poidevin 20-1). Cette affirmation est corroborée par certains des récits de McGregor qui, comme cela a été détaillé dans le huitième chapitre, se distinguent par leur représentation anachronique des traumatismes de nombreux personnages. Ainsi, ces récits illustrent comment ces personnages perdent leur *compréhension qualitative* du temps, c'est-à-dire leur capacité cognitive à chronologiser les événements, ce qui est la marque de ce que Piaget identifie comme le *temps égocentrique*. Certains passages, qui se distinguent, entre autres, par l'utilisation hyperbolique de certaines expressions et par une ponctuation inadaptée, témoignent également de la

propension des personnages traumatisés à adopter une conception égocentrique du temps. Comme nous l'avons montré, ces passages donnent l'impression que le temps est *élastique*, c'est-à-dire qu'il accélère, ralentit, voire s'arrête. Ceci reflète la façon dont les personnages traumatisés, comme les agents préopérationnels, perdent la *compréhension quantitative* du temps, à savoir la capacité cognitive de concevoir le temps comme un flux constant, qui est, selon Piaget, l'un des traits caractéristiques du temps égocentrique.

La raison pour laquelle les personnages traumatisés ont recours à l'égocentrisme est d'éviter de se confronter à leur passé traumatique. Cette affirmation est élucidée par le neuvième chapitre, dans lequel il a été montré comment les individus traumatisés développent une conception égocentrique de l'espace. Comme nous l'avons précisé, Piaget entend par 'espace égocentrique' l'incapacité cognitive d'avoir une vision multiperspectiviste du monde. Le trait caractéristique de *l'espace égocentrique*, selon Piaget, est la *pensée préopérationnelle*, c'est-à-dire le mode de pensée par lequel de nombreux agents préopérationnels réduisent les phénomènes du monde à la façon dont ils les voient instantanément. Ce paradigme de pensée s'exprime dans plusieurs passages sur les traumatismes des personnages qui sont articulés par des récits portant la marque d'iconotextes à forte saturation picturale. Dans leur nature hautement iconique, ces récits reflètent la façon dont les personnages traumatisés se limitent à ce qu'ils voient instantanément, ce qui est typique de la pensée préopérationnelle. En raison de ce paradigme de pensée, les agents préopérationnels font preuve d'une conception autistique du monde, car ils réduisent involontairement les phénomènes du monde à une seule perspective—la leur. Il est intéressant de noter que de nombreux personnages traumatisés présentent le même comportement cognitif. Cette affirmation est principalement soulignée par la *focalisation* de nombreux écrits de l'auteur qui, bien que distincts à de nombreux égards, ont tout de même certains aspects en commun, le plus important étant le fait qu'ils sont limités au champ visuel d'un seul personnage et/ou narrateur. Une telle focalisation évoque, entre autres, la façon dont les personnages traumatisés sont centrés sur eux-mêmes, ce qui correspond largement à l'espace égocentrique. Une telle façon cognitive de voir l'espace favorise une forme extrême de l'attitude *Je-tu*, comme l'entend Martin Buber, c'est-à-dire l'inclination à voir les autres comme des objets au pire indignes de considération, au mieux comme de simples moyens d'atteindre des fins égoïstes. Ce postulat est corroboré par certains extraits de la fiction de l'auteur qui témoignent de la manière dont l'ambivalence est au cœur de ses écrits. En effet, ces passages suscitent deux impressions antithétiques : la considération de l'altérité et l'égocentrisme. Ils illustrent ainsi comment les protagonistes traumatisés sont déchirés entre l'ouverture à l'altérité et

l'enfermement sur soi. Comme cela a été avancé, la raison pour laquelle ces personnages sont réticents à accueillir l'altérité est due à leur égocentrisme cognitif, qui est un mécanisme de défense. En effet, les victimes de traumatismes ont recours à un tel comportement cognitif afin de rester insensibles à leurs *autres intérieurs*, leurs souvenirs traumatiques, par crainte du profond sentiment d'effroi que de telles représentations mnésiques sinistres peuvent facilement générer. Néanmoins, ce faisant, ils aggravent leurs traumatismes, car ils se retrouvent piégés dans les mondes de leur propre imagination. C'est ce qu'illustrent certains extraits des écrits de McGregor qui montrent comment, d'une manière typique de l'égocentrisme, certains personnages confabulent involontairement leur passé traumatique avec des détails fantasmés. En conséquence, nombre de leurs facultés psychologiques sont altérées, notamment leur capacité à accéder à l'altérité.

Sur la base de ce qui a été illustré, on peut dire que cette thèse apporte, entre autres, deux contributions principales à l'étude des écrits de Jon McGregor en particulier et de la fiction traumatique en général. Premièrement, elle montre la finalité éthique à laquelle les écrivains, comme McGregor, mettent leur utilisation du traumatisme. En effet, et comme cela a été démontré tout au long de la thèse, la poétique de McGregor est propice aux effets perturbateurs que le traumatisme a sur la cognition et l'identité personnelle. Les lecteurs, comme on l'a montré, sont par conséquent contraints d'admettre leur vulnérabilité inhérente, ce qui constitue l'étape clé vers la prise en compte des autres êtres du monde, y compris les plus minuscules qui d'habitude paraissent insignifiants. Le deuxième apport de la thèse est la relation qu'elle établit entre ce que Piaget appelle l'égocentrisme et le traumatisme dans la fiction de McGregor. Mais ce faisant, elle soulève également une question concernant la place que l'égocentrisme peut occuper dans les études sur le traumatisme. Une réponse possible à cette question est qu'une telle attitude cognitive fait partie de la *compulsion de répétition* qui remplace chez la victime d'un traumatisme l'impulsion à se souvenir. Plus la résistance est grande, plus la compulsion de répétition remplace le souvenir (Freud, "Remembering" 12:151). Quand ils sont dans la compulsion de répétition, les victimes de traumatismes, comme l'explique van der Kolk, font preuve d'une assimilation inadéquate de la réalité. Ce qu'ils assimilent dépend de leur histoire et de leur biologie idiosyncrasique, de leurs peurs et de leurs besoins spécifiques, et non des exigences du monde réel (van der Kolk, Psychological 94). Leur comportement correspond étroitement à l'égocentrisme des agents préopérationnels, qui ne tentent que rarement de s'adapter aux phénomènes du monde. En effet, comme nous l'avons précisé, ces agents, surtout les enfants de moins de sept ans, tendent le plus souvent vers une forme extrême d'assimilation

par laquelle ils réduisent tout ce qu'ils vivent à une seule perspective—la leur. Sur la base du parallèle établi entre l'égocentrisme et la compulsion de répétition chez les victimes de traumatismes, on peut supposer qu'une telle compulsion est propice à une forme de cognition égocentrique.

Bien que la compulsion de répétition prédomine, surtout au début des névroses traumatiques, cela n'empêche pas les victimes de traumatismes de montrer des signes de *perlaboration*. Freud entend par là le processus psychologique dont le but est de parvenir à une réconciliation avec le matériel refoulé (Freud, "Remembering" 12:152). Cela n'implique cependant pas qu'un tel processus doit être associé à une guérison définitive. Loin de l'image de la perlaboration colportée dans le langage courant, la résolution ou la guérison sont un point discutable dans la plupart des évocations théoriques et fictionnelles (Ganteau, "Working Through" 137). Comme ont avancé plusieurs chercheurs, notamment Dominick LaCapra et Robert Eaglestone, la perlaboration doit être considérée comme un processus en spirale, dans le sens où elle s'enroule autour de la guérison, tout en s'en éloignant constamment. Cela est dû principalement au fait qu'elle est toujours liée la compulsion de répétition, ce qui empêche la résolution des névroses traumatiques.

En bref, la 'perlaboration' et la 'compulsion de répétition' sont deux processus entrelacés, dont aucun n'annule l'autre. Lorsque la compulsion de répétition prend le dessus sur la perlaboration, le sujet traumatisé devient quasiment incapable d'accueillir l'altérité, comme il développe un comportement cognitif semblable à l'égocentrisme des sujets préopérationnels. À l'inverse, lorsque la perlaboration est prépondérante, les victimes de traumatismes montrent une plus forte tendance à s'adapter aux nouvelles expériences, et s'engagent ainsi plus activement avec les autres. Ces affirmations sont corroborées par plusieurs œuvres, telles que *Last Orders* de Graham Swift.

Comme son titre l'indique, ce roman tourne autour les dernières volontés (*Last Orders*) de son personnage central, Jack Dodds, un boucher de Bermondsey et un vétéran de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, qui a demandé que ses cendres soient dispersées au bout de la jetée de Margate. L'un des critiques affirme que ce roman marque un tournant dans la fiction de Swift, car il abandonne l'exploration du traumatisme et du temps traumatique, et est donc exempt de la prolifération des traumatismes, qui menaçait d'étouffer les romans précédents de Swift (Bényei 52). Cette affirmation n'est toutefois que partiellement vraie, car le roman regorge d'évocations de névroses traumatiques. Parmi les nombreux exemples qui corroborent ce point

de vue, on trouve le flux narratif à travers lequel l'histoire est racontée. Alors qu'il relate le voyage des personnages de Bermondsey à Margate pour accomplir la dernière volonté de leur ami, le récit est entrecoupé de flashbacks sur le passé douloureux de ces personnages. Ainsi, ce récit s'inscrit dans le temps traumatique, puisque sa chronologie fragmentée est typique des témoignages des victimes de traumatismes, surtout lorsqu'elles sont dans la répétition compulsive de leurs expériences effrayantes.

Comme cela a été postulé, lorsque la compulsion de répétition prend le pas sur la perlaboration, les sujets traumatisés présentent un comportement cognitif presque conforme à l'égocentrisme. Ils sont alors confrontés à une crise éthique, car ils deviennent quasiment incapables de s'ouvrir à l'altérité. C'est ce qu'illustrent plusieurs passages de *Last Orders*, notamment ceux concernant Romany Jim, le gitan dont Amy était amoureuse lorsqu'elle était encore une jeune femme célibataire (Swift 235, 238). Dans ces extraits, l'attirance sexuelle qu'éprouve Amy pour Romany est perpétuellement contrecarrée par sa conception préjudiciable des gitans, dont le mode de vie reste dans l'imagination populaire comme une alternative perturbatrice à la culture occidentale (Trumpener 820). Pour refouler son désir de gitan, Amy entame une relation avec un garçon de sa propre culture, Jack Dodds, qu'elle épouse par la suite (Craps 162). Son comportement rappelle l'égocentrisme des agents préopérationnels, qui partagent la peur de toute innovation (leur misonéisme) des sociétés primitives (Piaget, "The Spirit" 77-8). Vu sous cet angle, la lutte et l'incapacité d'Amy à accepter son désir sexuel pour Romany Jim peuvent être considérées comme une expression figurative de sa lutte et de son incapacité à surmonter sa compulsion de répétition, à savoir le fait que son mari a renié leur fille parce qu'elle est atteinte de troubles du développement. À cause de cette compulsion, Amy retombe dans une forme d'égocentrisme cognitif, développe une conception rigide du monde et ne parvient finalement pas à pardonner à son mari. Ces affirmations sont corroborées par les nombreuses scènes du roman où Amy prend le bus pour aller à l'hôpital psychiatrique de Blackfriars où sa fille June est institutionnalisée depuis cinquante ans. D'une manière typique de la compulsion de répétition, elle continue à croire qu'un jour sa fille la reconnaîtra. Cela n'invalide pas pour autant le fait qu'Amy présente des signes de perlaboration, et donc d'ouverture à l'altérité. Parmi les scènes qui soulignent cette affirmation, on peut citer celles où Amy transcende la rancune qu'elle éprouve à l'égard de son mari en se préoccupant de la détérioration de son état de santé. Cependant, sa tendance à surmonter son traumatisme semble toujours inchoative, comme en témoigne le fait qu'elle refuse de rendre un dernier hommage à son mari en ne contribuant pas à l'accomplissement de sa dernière volonté.

Quand le roman approche de sa fin, il devient de plus en plus riche en évocations de perlaboration. Ceci est particulièrement évident dans la dernière scène où, juste après avoir dispersé les cendres de Jack, Ray, par exemple, commence à penser à recommencer sa vie. Bien qu'il semble se terminer sur une note d'espoir, le roman ne promeut pas une résolution possible des névroses traumatiques. Parmi les nombreux exemples qui illustrent cette affirmation figure la narration anachronique de la dernière scène. Comme nous l'avons précisé, l'anachronisme est la marque du langage égocentrique, ainsi que des témoignages des survivants lorsqu'ils sont contraints de revivre leurs horribles expériences. Ainsi, la chronologie désordonnée de la dernière scène porte en elle une connotation à la fois de la compulsion de répétition et d'égocentrisme, et montre ainsi comment les efforts des personnages pour surmonter leurs traumatismes n'aboutissent jamais.

En s'appuyant sur ce qui a été montré dans les dernières pages, on peut dire que la thèse ouvre de nouvelles voies de recherche en vertu de la relation qu'elle établit entre la compulsion de répétition, la perlaboration et l'égocentrisme. Comme nous l'avons avancé, l'égocentrisme peut être considéré comme faisant partie intégrante de la compulsion de répétition qui, à son tour, est imbriquée dans la perlaboration. Cette affirmation est illustrée par *Last Orders* de Swift, dans laquelle les personnages s'efforcent de surmonter leurs névroses traumatiques, mais n'y parviennent pas, car ils sont contraints par la compulsion de répétition de leurs expériences douloureuses. En raison de cette compulsion, ils font preuve d'un mode de pensée typique de l'égocentrisme, qui inhibe leur tendance à surmonter leurs traumatismes, empêchant ainsi la résolution de leurs névroses traumatiques.

Selon LaCapra, ce n'est que par le biais de la perlaboration que l'on acquiert la possibilité d'être un agent éthique et politique (LaCapra 144). C'est la raison pour laquelle il a été avancé qu'en inhibant la perlaboration, la compulsion de répétition déclenche un comportement égocentrique et réduit ainsi la capacité d'une victime de traumatisme à s'engager activement dans l'altérité. Aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, et afin de remettre en question ses propres hypothèses, on peut dire que la compulsion de répétition et l'égocentrisme transforment le traumatisme en une expérience éthique, dans une perspective lévinassienne, c'est-à-dire une expérience dans laquelle un sujet devient un otage de et pour l'autre, pour les besoins de l'autre, pour la vie de l'autre, certes, mais aussi pour la responsabilité envers l'autre (Lévinas*, Otherwise* xii). Cette affirmation est illustrée par le roman *Last Orders* de Swift, dans lequel quatre personnages étaient des soldats britanniques pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Hantés par des images de cadavres mutilés, ces protagonistes revivent d'une manière compulsive leurs expériences effroyables de guerre. Ils rendent ainsi hommage, bien qu'involontairement, aux millions de personnes qui ont perdu la vie dans l'une des expériences les plus déshumanisantes de l'histoire moderne. S'ils avaient réussi à surmonter leur passé traumatique, ces personnages auraient éprouvé un sentiment de complaisance et auraient ensuite ignoré leur responsabilité envers ceux qu'ils ont vu mourir. Ainsi, en empêchant la perlaboration, la compulsion de répétition, y compris l'attitude égocentrique qu'elle génère, exclut toute résolution définitive des névroses traumatiques. Ce faisant, elle incite les victimes de traumatismes à être obsédées par leur responsabilité vis-à-vis de leur sinistre passé, d'où sa portée éthique.

Alors que cette conclusion était en cours de rédaction, *Lean Fall Stand*, le nouveau roman de McGregor, a vu le jour. L'auteur a commencé à y travailler en 2014, alors qu'il était en voyage dans la péninsule antarctique. L'expédition a en partie échoué, car le bateau sur lequel McGregor voyageait n'a pas pu se frayer un chemin à travers l'épaisse glace, et n'a donc pas pu se rendre en Antarctique (McGregor, "Lean" 00:01:52 - 00:03:40). Bien que l'auteur ait dû rentrer en Angleterre, il a été extrêmement enthousiasmé par l'absence de relief et l'immensité du paysage antarctique qu'il voyait au loin. Il a ensuite passé plusieurs années à essayer de mettre des mots sur cette expérience, jusqu'au jour où il a lu un article sur l'*aphasie*, le trouble cognitif qui comprend principalement la perte de la capacité à traiter le langage en raison de lésions cérébrales (McGregor, "Lean" 00:04:50 - 00:06:40). Cette condition médicale fournit à l'auteur un fil conducteur, suffisant pour tisser tout au long de son roman le thème de l'incapacité du langage à rendre compte de certaines expériences, notamment son propre voyage en Antarctique.

Contrairement aux autres œuvres de McGregor, *Lean Fall Stand* ne se déroule qu'en partie dans les îles britanniques, comme la plupart de ses événements se déroulant en Antarctique ou au Chili. Son principal protagoniste, Robert Wright, surnommé Doc, est un assistant technique général qui assiste les scientifiques pendant leur séjour dans la péninsule antarctique. En bref, le roman retrace le long et pénible parcours de Robert pour acquérir des stratégies de communication extralinguistique afin d'atténuer l'impact de l'aphasie qu'il a développée à la suite d'un Accident Vasculaire Cérébral. Bien que distinct à bien des égards, ce roman regorge d'évocations des anciens écrits de l'auteur, tant sur le plan de la forme que du contenu. Sur le plan de la forme, *Lean Fall Stand* est communiqué à partir d'un récit marqué par une chronologie déformée et une typographie déréglée qui, comme on l'a montré, est typique des écrits de

l'auteur. Fidèle au style de l'auteur, le roman se distingue par son ambiguïté syntaxique et sémantique, par exemple : "Tell him to conserve the banteries. Panteries. Batteries," and "Do—you—want—me—to—drive?" (*Lean* 76, 77). Tout comme sa forme, le contenu du roman rappelle les œuvres précédentes de l'auteur, notamment *Even the Dogs*. Le fait que les personnages centraux des deux romans partagent le même nom est l'un des nombreux exemples qui soulignent cette affirmation : Robert Radcliffe dans *Even the Dogs* et Robert Wright dans *Lean Fall Stand*. En outre, ces deux protagonistes, contrairement aux autres personnages de la fiction de l'auteur, ne souffrent pas d'un traumatisme psychologique. En effet, l'étiologie de leurs névroses traumatiques est de nature neurobiologique : une attaque cérébrale dans *Lean Fall Stand*, et une lésion cérébrale causée par un éclat d'obus dans *Even the Dogs*.

Comme nous l'avons démontré, McGregor présente le traumatisme tout au long de ses œuvres antérieures comme dépassant les capacités cognitives et l'identité personnelle. Il en va de même pour son nouveau roman, qui illustre la façon dont le traumatisme neurologique de Robert remet en question ses capacités individuelles. Parmi les nombreux éléments qui soulignent cette affirmation figure l'itération du titre du roman, ou de variantes proches de celui-ci, tout au long du récit, par exemple : "Lean. Fall. Up now, stand" and "Stand. Lean. Fall" (*Lean* 77,78). L'utilisation répétitive de ces expressions illustre la lutte de Robert pour retrouver sa capacité à marcher et à parler. Néanmoins, son rétablissement est toujours inchoatif, puisque, jusqu'à la fin du roman, il ne peut pas récupérer complètement ses capacités verbales. Afin de compenser son handicap linguistique, il développe des techniques de communication extralinguistiques. Cela s'exprime, entre autres, de manière métaphorique par la ponctuation qui figure dans les titres des trois parties du roman : "Lean /," "Fall—" and "Stand |." Ce qui est remarquable dans une telle ponctuation, c'est qu'elle rappelle les langues des signes. Elle évoque plus particulièrement le système de gestes visuels que Robert a développé pour combler les vides quand il n'arrivait pas à trouver les mots.

Selon l'auteur, les techniques extralinguistiques que les personnes aphasiques développent témoignent de la remarquable capacité humaine à s'adapter à toutes sortes de situations (McGregor, "Lean" 00:25:30 - 00:26:20). Cependant, l'adaptation, du moins dans la conception piagétienne du terme, constitue « un équilibre entre l'assimilation et l'accommodation » (Piaget et Inhelder, *The Psychology* 58, ma traduction). En d'autres termes, l'adaptation, selon Piaget, implique un état de stabilité cognitive, ce qui n'est manifestement pas le cas de Robert, qui s'efforce, mais ne parvient pas à retrouver ses pouvoirs cognitifs, notamment sa capacité à

parler. Son état mental est typique, car une récupération complète de l'aphasie est pratiquement impossible (National Aphasia Association n.p.). Cela est évident dans le dernier chapitre qui est intitulé par une traduction en langue des signes du titre du roman : "/ — |". L'une des interprétations possibles d'un tel titre est qu'il évoque le fait que Robert est atteint d'un trouble cérébral incurable et qu'il est donc destiné à une existence de labeur sans fin. Il se penche /, tombe—, et se relève |, pour retomber ensuite. Cette lecture est encore soulignée par la narration analeptique du dernier chapitre. En effet, un tel récit peut être considéré comme un indice de régression et évoque ainsi l'improbabilité d'une guérison complète de Robert. Ainsi, et en contradiction avec la déclaration antérieure de l'auteur, on peut avancer que le roman ne porte pas tant sur l'adaptation que sur la lutte perpétuelle. Vu sous cet angle, le roman ne nous permet pas seulement de percevoir la souffrance de l'Autre, il nous éveille aussi à notre propre précarité (Onega, "Victimhood" 97-8).

Comme nous l'avons indiqué, la prise de conscience de sa vulnérabilité ontologique est l'étape clé pour être attentif aux autres êtres du monde. C'est ce que démontre le roman dans lequel l'auteur exploite les effets traumatiques de l'aphasie afin d'obliger les lecteurs à s'ouvrir à l'altérité, notamment à leur environnement écologique. En effet, à la manière de *Réservoir 13*, le roman est ponctué de passages évoquant l'interdépendance de l'être humain et de son environnement naturel. Parmi ces passages, celui qui suit figure en bonne place : "He felt a part of everything surrounding. Everything surrounding felt a part of him" (*Lean* 275). Cet extrait parle de Robert qui, lors d'une attaque cérébrale, se rend compte que l'humain émane du naturel, de même que les éléments naturels du paysage sont étroitement liés à l'humain (Ganteau, "Diffracted" n.p.). Ainsi, un tel passage témoigne encore de la finalité éthique que l'auteur donne à son utilisation des expériences traumatiques.

Une autre dimension éthique du roman consiste en sa promotion d'une *éthique du care*. La philosophe américaine Virginia Held entend par là l'acte de s'occuper et de répondre aux besoins des autres dont nous prenons la responsabilité (Held 10). Selon elle, le 'care' n'est pas un code moral, mais une pratique spontanée qui implique l'attention, la sensibilité et la réponse aux besoins des autres (Held 39). Une telle pratique est illustrée par le personnage d'Anna, épouse de Robert et scientifique spécialiste du changement climatique. Anna n'a pas été le genre d'épouse qui accepte de voir toute son ambition se réduire à l'ombre de son mari (Lean 88). C'est pourquoi elle ne s'est pas opposée aux absences annuelles de son mari. Cependant, en raison de l'attaque cérébrale de Robert, elle a été contrainte de faire le contraire de

ce qu'elle voulait : son mari est toujours à la maison et elle s'occupe de lui à plein temps (Myerson n.p.). Alors que les routines répétitives des soins commencent à prendre le dessus, le récit est de plus en plus truffé d'expressions modales déontiques, en particulier 'had to.' La répétition hyperbolique de ces expressions suscite un sentiment d'accumulation émotionnelle, qui évoque la façon dont Anna s'acquitte à contrecœur de son rôle de soignante. Néanmoins, jusqu'à la fin du roman, elle n'a jamais renoncé à sa responsabilité envers son mari, ce qui fait d'elle une praticienne exemplaire de ce que Held appelle l'éthique du *care*.

Ce qui a été illustré jusqu'à présent, c'est que *Lean Fall Stand* se rapproche des œuvres précédentes de l'auteur, notamment en ce qui concerne le traitement éthique de son utilisation du traumatisme. Cela dit, ce roman peut être considéré comme un tournant dans la fiction de McGregor. Parmi les nombreux éléments qui corroborent cette affirmation figure la note optimiste sur laquelle se termine le roman. En effet, dans *Lean Fall Stand*, et contrairement aux autres écrits de l'auteur, le personnage principal, Robert, ne tente pas de refouler son traumatisme par le biais d'un comportement égocentrique, et ne montre donc pas de signes clairs de crise éthique. Cela est particulièrement évident dans le dernier chapitre du roman, notamment dans l'extrait suivant : "His lack of words was so absolute . . . there was only the silence of his brain, and silence was a tremendous relief . . . He didn't even know the word for red, but he knew this as the small far-off beginning of something new" (*Lean* 278). Ce passage, comme le reste du chapitre dans lequel il est inséré, est un récit analeptique de Robert lorsqu'il a eu une attaque cérébrale et qu'il était allongé sous une tente pendant une tempête de neige en Antarctique. Bien qu'il ne puisse ni bouger ni même parler et qu'il soit au bord de la mort, il ne panique pas. Au contraire, il fait preuve d'une profonde sérénité face à son traumatisme, car il l'accueille comme 'le début de quelque chose de nouveau'. Sa réaction est typique d'une expérience éthique, dans la conception lévinassienne du terme, à savoir d'une expérience dans laquelle un sujet éthique fait preuve d'une ouverture sans entraves à l'Autre, à l'absolument nouveau (Lévinas, *Totality* 219).

Résumé :

Cette thèse interroge les écrits de Jon McGregor en s'appuyant sur une approche fondée sur diverses théories psychologiques et l'éthique de l'altérité. Ce qu'elle vise à démontrer, c'est comment la poétique de McGregor est évocatrice des effets perturbateurs du traumatisme sur la cognition et l'identité personnelle qui sont les deux piliers du moi. C'est pourquoi on a postulé que les récits de l'auteur ont un potentiel éthique. En effet, en exposant les lecteurs à un matériel traumatique dépassant leurs capacités cognitives et leurs identités personnelles, ces récits servent de révélation. Ils éveillent les lecteurs à leurs vulnérabilités ontologiques, ce qui est la clé pour être attentif aux autres êtres du monde, y compris les plus minuscules qui d'habitude paraissent insignifiants.

Aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, la fiction de l'auteur est aussi un exemple d'égocentrisme, au sens où Jean Piaget l'entend, c'est-à-dire la propension cognitive des agents préopérationnels, en particulier des enfants de moins de sept ans, à réduire tout ce qu'ils vivent à une seule perspective, la leur. Comme le propose la thèse, ce comportement cognitif est un mécanisme de défense par lequel les personnages traumatisés tentent d'échapper à leur passé étrange, ce qui rend problématique leur capacité à accéder à l'altérité. En effet, ils font preuve d'une impulsion incessante d'ouverture à l'autre qui correspond tout à fait à la conception lévinassienne de la relation éthique. Cependant, cette impulsion est toujours inchoative, car elle est constamment contrecarrée par la propension des personnages à adopter un comportement cognitif qui rappelle l'égocentrisme.

Mots clés : traumatisme, éthique, cognition, identité de soi, égocentrisme, vulnérabilité.

Abstract:

This thesis interrogates Jon McGregor's trauma-laden writings by tapping into an approach informed by diverse psychological theories and the ethics of alterity. What it has aimed to demonstrate is how McGregor's poetics is evocative of the disruptive effects that trauma has on cognition and self-identity—the two mainstays of the ego. That is why it has been postulated that the author's narratives have an ethical potential. Indeed, by exposing readers to traumatic material beyond their cognitive powers and self-identities, these narratives serve as eye-openers. They awaken readers to their ontological vulnerability, which is the key step towards being considerate of other beings in the world, including the most minuscule and the apparently frivolous.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the author's fiction is also an epitome of egocentrism, in Jean Piaget's acceptance of the term, i.e. the cognitive propensity among preoperational agents, especially children under seven, to reduce whatever they experience to one perspective—their own. As propounded in the thesis, such a cognitive demeanour is a defence mechanism whereby traumatised characters attempt to eschew their eerie pasts, which makes their capacity to access otherness problematical. Indeed, they demonstrate a ceaseless impulse towards openness to alterity, very much in line with the Levinasian conception of an ethical relation. Still, such an impulse is one which is always inchoate, as it is persistently counteracted by the characters' proclivity for a cognitive demeanour reminiscent of egocentrism.

Key Words: trauma, ethics, cognition, self-identity, egocentrism, vulnerability