A Time for Ethics:
Janet Frame and W. G. Sebald

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ABSTRACT

'A Time for Ethics: Janet Frame and W. G. Sebald' identifies how literary texts which both respond to a traumatic past and adopt an openness towards the future enact an ethical stance. The recent "ethical turn" in a range of disciplines, among them literary studies, has led to a renewed interest in the ethical dimension of literature. The recent readings suggest, however, that a traditional humanist ethics continues to rely on a metaphysics of presence that forecloses an encounter of the human subject with alterity: the Other's time as well as the very otherness of time itself. Responding to the time-bound limitations of a humanist model of ethics, where ethical regard is only extended to those whom the subject encounters in its own time, Emmanuel Levinas proposes a form of ethics which originates in a model of subjectivity where the ego cannot claim exclusive control over time but, instead, is subject to a time that is beyond its self: the time of the Other. Using Levinas's philosophy as a theoretical framework, I examine how literary texts which foreground a time that both thematically and structurally undermines presence—the presence of characters and of language—can demonstrate an ethical response to the Other's plight. More specifically, I focus on the ways in which Janet Frame's and W. G. Sebald's works produce an ethical response to key traumatic events of the twentieth-century: colonialism and the Holocaust. Both writers demonstrate that a deconstruction of presence, the time of the self, not only enacts an ethical response to the Other of the past but also ensures a more just future. As such, their work undermines the primary premise of a metaphysics of presence—the sovereign subject—and produces a form of ethical responsibility which can encompass past and future generations. Foregrounding in language the violence that attends the self's subjection to the Other's time, Frame and Sebald gesture to the way in which a time that is unforeseeable and even traumatising produces a more just self. Such a self is mandatory if literature's ethical turn is to speak to a time beyond its own.
Although the title page of this thesis only bears my name, its completion would not have been possible without the invaluable support—whether financial, conceptual, stylistic or emotional—that I received from a number of people and sources.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature as an Ethical Response to Trauma:

Janet Frame and W. G. Sebald

If I had to sum up the twentieth century, I would say that it raised the greatest hopes ever conceived by humanity, and destroyed all illusions and ideas.

(Menuhin qtd. in Hobsbawm 2)

This thesis offers a contribution to a strand of literary theory which identifies an ethical impetus in literature. The relationship between ethics and literature has a long tradition that harks back to Aesop's fables and literature's role as a tool of ethical instruction. However, from the 1960s to the 1980s—literature's "Theoretical Era" as Geoffrey Harpham describes it (387)—ethical readings of texts took a back seat. It was at this time that the relationship between literature and ethics became increasingly strained as remnants of Western post-Enlightenment thought—such as rationalism, humanism and ethics—fell under scrutiny. Literary-ethical inquiry was not only judged as outdated but also, and more importantly, as irrevocably tainted by the traumatic historical events of the last century. In accordance with the overhaul of post-Enlightenment thought, Nazi Germany's justification of the systematic and state-sanctioned extermination of the Jewish people was regarded as incontestable proof that rational thought—which was meant to be an indicator of human enlightenment—contained a repellent logic. Similarly, colonisation's self-proclaimed civilising mission—whereby the Western world was said to have accepted the 'noble burden' of educating and civilising its colonies—was severely criticised. The purported humanist motivations behind the colonial project of civilising the masses were rendered questionable not only by the financial profit that the West accrued from their colonies but also by the violent enforcement of colonial rule. Irreparably implicated in humanism's historical legacy, ethics, during literature's "Theoretical Era," was thoroughly discredited.

The reintroduction of ethics as a valuable tool for literary theory only occurred in recent years, or if we are to believe the audacious precision of Geoffrey Harpham, we can claim that "On or about December 1, 1987 the nature of literary theory
changed" (389).¹ Ethics' return as a lens through which to read literature, however, could not be unaffected by the preceding era's suspicion of ethics. Thus I suggest that in this new era—which Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack describe as subject to "the ethical turn that marks contemporary literary studies" (x)—one of the most fundamental elements of human existence, time, needs to be reconsidered. The assumption that time can be made subservient to humans is reflected in a humanist model of ethics which produces ethical judgments from the perspective of the individual who occupies an unchanging and timeless present moment. Denying the defining aspect of time, change, the individual positions itself as an unchanging presence, approaching objects of the external world, including people, as entities that draw their meaning from the individual's point of view. Acts of ethical reflection are thus always enacted from the individual's perspective. To reintroduce the notion of time as change into ethical enquiry is not only therefore to undermine the individual's hold on time but also to contest a form of subjectivity which supports a model of ethics where the individual's ethical reflection always originates from its own act of self-affirmation. There is something troubling, if not inherently unethical, in a model of ethics where the individual's display of ethical concern for other people is also always an enactment of its sovereignty over the external world. Building on Michael Eskin's assertion that "literature is capable of doing things ethical in an exemplary way" (574), this thesis's turn to ethics involves arguing that it is through the representation of time and subjectivity in language that literature performs ethical reflection. However, as I shall argue, the previous era's scepticism towards a post-Enlightenment humanist model of ethical thought means that concepts such as time and subjectivity need to be radically re-thought in order to lead to a type of ethics that will not be guilty of its predecessor's faults.

My identification of the representation of time and subjectivity in language as specific elements which reflect the overall ethical impetus of a literary text is an attempt to ascertain the particular characteristics of a text that lend themselves to ethics. While today it is readily accepted that literature's ethical role is more than that of "train[ing] ethical sensibility" (Newton 9) or of serving "pedagogical and

¹ Harpham identifies December 1, 1987 as a significant moment in the relationship between ethics and literature because it was on this date that a series of articles written by Paul de Man, which purportedly revealed his youthful fascist sympathies, were published. Harpham subsequently qualifies his own declaration that December 1, 1987 marks the return of ethics in literary theory and instead suggests that it was at this "approximate time when the large fact that all sorts of thinkers had for some time been heavily invested in ethics became inescapable" (392).
educational practices" (Eskin 576), the burgeoning field of ethical readings of literature remains diverse. Approaches to reading literature through an ethical lens can be divided into two general schools of thought: those that focus on the relationship between reader and text, and those that focus on the text. Despite their different foci, these two approaches are not in opposition with each other and, indeed, frequently overlap. In the first school, theorists identify the relationship between reader and literary text as exemplary of ethics. According to this approach, the reader's responsibility is invoked by the act of reading a text, inaugurating an ethical relationship. Providing a view of the reader's "textual encounter as a personal encounter" (Buell 13), theorists such as Wayne Booth and Derek Attridge argue that the reader of a literary text is not a passive recipient of its ideas. Instead, they suggest that the reader actively engages with literature which, for Booth, implies a model of the text as a companion and a relationship of familiarity. By contrast, for Attridge, the reader's engagement with the text is as if with a stranger and reflects their "full response to the otherness of the text" (25).

While I do not focus on the act of reading per se, my concern with time extends to the effect that literary stylistic techniques have on the reader's relationship with a text. More specifically, however, my examination of time and subjectivity is closely aligned with the second school of ethical readings of literature which focuses on the features of a literary text which, in Eskin's words, make it "capable of doing things ethical in an exemplary way." For Martha Nussbaum, literature offers an alternative to the priority that, she argues, philosophy affords to transcendence because it can provide "a way of being human and speaking humanely" (53). Nussbaum's argument implies that for the majority of readers literature is not only a more accessible genre than abstract philosophical works but it also provides the reader with a more identifiable human context than philosophy's generic image of 'man.' This approach then implicitly suggests that literature is capable of eliciting an ethical response when the reader is able to identify or relate to a literary text in a way that they cannot with philosophical texts. A further extension of Nussbaum's argument is suggested by Daniel Schwarz, who argues that the reader's process of identifying with a literary text provides them with "surrogate experiences" (5). However, both Schwarz's and, to a lesser extent, Nussbaum's arguments that the reader's process of identifying with a text leads to ethical reflection chimes uncomfortably with Adam Newton's description of 'sentimental fiction.' According to Newton, sentimental
fiction "instruct[s] response by inducing identificatory states of compassion and pity" (9). Replacing didactic literary forms of ethical instruction, sentimental fiction nevertheless still instructs the reader of the appropriate ethical behaviour but does so implicitly through evoking their pity for a particular character. Moreover, the problem with this technique is that it does not take account of the reader's possible bias or prejudice which may prevent them from identifying and empathising with a character's plight. While I am not claiming that either Nussbaum or Schwarz view sentimental fiction as an exemplary model of ethical literature, I argue that the qualities of a literary text which make it "speak humanly" and provide the reader with a "surrogate experience" should not presuppose the reader's identification with a text. By contrast, I suggest that it is when the reader is unable to identify with a text, or to borrow Robert Eaglestone's expression, is "made to feel not at home with the text" (Ethical Criticism 175), that literature enacts an ethical stance.

The argument I present in this thesis is that postmodern literature can represent ethical encounters that are not premised on acts of identification, which are carried out within a timeless present moment, in two significant ways. First, I suggest that literary texts' 'disruptive' stylistic techniques facilitate the reader's ethical awareness and, second, that literature's representation of 'disrupted' models of subjectivity and time is a thematic means through which texts represent their characters' ethical awareness. The reader's experience of not being at home in a text is an example of a literary effect which exemplifies ethics because it disturbs the reader's equanimity through undermining their faith in their own centrality. When a text does not present itself as an authoritative site of meaning, the reader is abruptly made aware of the text's construction and their position vis-à-vis the text changes from one that is located within the text to one that is outside the text. Like the text, the reader's overall position as the centre that produces meaning is challenged and they may begin to question the assumption that the world before them can be made known. The reader's potential exposure to other ways of defining the world than from their own point of view suggests the possibility of a model of ethics that does not originate from the ego's understanding of the world. This is a model of ethics that can elevate the needs of other people above those of the self.

While for the reader their symbolic experience of time is disrupted when they are no longer made to feel at home in the text, for characters their inability to feel at home in themselves is sparked when they are no longer able to claim sovereign
control over the ordering of their own experience of time. This can occur when a character's memory of the past is proved to be inaccurate by others' accounts of past events or when the future, despite a character's attempts to anticipate it, remains unforeseeable. Like the reader, a character in such a vulnerable position queries their own abilities to define the world before them and is thus subjected to a time that does not affirm their presence.

In literature, stylistic techniques which undermine the sovereignty of the text, and representations of subjectivity which are unable to 'tame' time, are key elements which can create an experience of not being at home for both the reader and characters. In this position of vulnerability, both the reader and characters find their centrality undermined. The main contention of this thesis is that it is through such encounters that an ethics which places the needs of other people above the self is made possible. Nevertheless, in accordance with Lawrence Buell's argument that the sustainability of literature's ethical turn "will depend in no small measure on [...] its emphasis on [an] interhumanity for example better synthesized with a social and/or political ethics" (16), I also seek to address the way in which literary-ethical inquiry speaks from, and to, specific historical and social contexts. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on how such ethical encounters can be viewed as a response to trauma. While the twentieth-century's traumatic historical legacy was initially used as evidence for why literary theory must discard ethics, it is, I suggest, the same legacy that has ignited literature's ethical turn and made ethical readings of literature all the more pressing and urgent.

The twentieth-century has bequeathed a legacy which philosopher Emmanuel Levinas identifies in his essay "Peace and Proximity" with a generation of Europeans who are left unable to make the balance sheets of historical events tally into a conceivable order. Levinas argues that despite the ethical impulse which motivated humanism and liberalism, their advocacy of the greater human good produced unethical results. The primary question that Levinas sets out to answer is how the overarching ethical impetus that informs these discourses could have produced such inhumane results. Using Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy as a conceptual framework, I attempt to answer the related question of how those who received this legacy can respond and, more specifically, what may constitute an ethical response to this traumatic legacy. This thesis singles out Janet Frame and W. G. Sebald as two inheritors of the twentieth-century's legacy who have formulated their own unique
literary responses to trauma. My main contention is that both writers respond to this traumatic legacy through advocating within their texts a form of ethics that places the needs of the Other above those of the self.²

While Janet Frame's last novel was published in 1988, when W. G. Sebald was only just beginning his literary career, both writers' works are informed by an ethical urgency which springs from their diverse historical contexts. On the one hand, Frame, a Pakeha New Zealander, responds to the trauma of colonisation; on the other hand, Sebald, a German who was born during the later stages of World War II, responds to the trauma of the Holocaust. Their historical contexts, although certainly diverse, nevertheless share a common inheritance: a traumatic past and the ongoing currency of a Western post-Enlightenment tradition of thought which presumes the centrality of the self. Their responses to their traumatic legacies are indirectly framed through their criticism of a mode of thought which they both suggest has supported unethical historical actions. For this reason, my focus is not a specific analysis of how Frame represents colonisation and how Sebald depicts the Holocaust but, instead, how their literary projects involve interrogating and challenging a mode of (unethical) thought that they suggest legitimised these historical events. At the crossroads of both writers' ethical projects rests their ongoing preoccupation with the priority that discourse—whether literary, historical or philosophical—affords to the self at the expense of the Other. In this thesis I address how both writers' ethical response to trauma is enacted through their representation of a model of time that challenges the centrality of the self.

Although the issue of what constitutes a responsible response to trauma has been an ongoing concern in various academic disciplines, Andreas Huyssen argues that it was taken up with renewed urgency in the 1990s by an emerging interdisciplinary preoccupation with trauma. Psychoanalytical models of memory, which derived from Sigmund Freud's work on repression and the unconscious, were at the forefront of individual and national-based analyses of narratives of trauma and

² Throughout this thesis I draw attention to Levinas's distinction between the unknown Other and the other that has been identified and categorised through the discourse of the Same by capitalising the first letter of the former group. While Levinas uses a similar system in French in order to distinguish between different forms of otherness, his emphasis, although inconsistent, tends to address the difference between the human other and the divine other, capitalising the first letter of the latter group. In accordance with the conventional practices of Levinas scholars, I have capitalised all instances in which I refer to a human Other who remains beyond the ego's comprehension. However, I have also taken the additional step of not capitalising the term when I am referring to a readily identifiable historical or political category of the other, such as the colonial other.
saw, as Huyssen suggests, "history entering through the back door" (9). Trauma has become the unacknowledged 'buzz-word' which presides over what Huyssen describes as our era's "culture of memory" (15). Nonetheless, I suggest that the ethical impetus driving these discussions of trauma remains closely tied to a model of thought which presumes the centrality of the self. This is because, if we examine one of the examples that Huyssen provides, the use of the Holocaust as the master trope of trauma to which other genocides are compared, the emphasis still rests on the self's ability to define and identify with another's trauma. In this case, acts of genocide only receive the public's empathy when they have been comprehended through the master lens of the Holocaust. My own interest, by contrast, is in the nature of ethical encounters where the self is unable to identify with or relate to the Other. Indeed, examining what is at stake in an ethics of "those who have nothing in common" has become, I suggest, increasingly urgent as each new generation loses any form of direct and personal connection with the traumatic events of the twentieth-century.3

The readiness with which trauma has been embraced as an interdisciplinary concern resonates with literature's turn to ethics. However, my concern is that the prevalent use of trauma's rhetoric in such a vast range of contexts is undermining the specificity of the victim's plight. Trauma's prevalence is illustrated in the emergence of trauma studies as a discipline but it is also more generally evident in the way in which trauma terminology is used to describe the current cultural milieu—as seen in, for example, Fredric Jameson's description of the postmodern condition as "schizophrenic" ("Postmodernism" 72). If, as Huyssen's argument suggests, trauma has achieved the status of being the prerequisite for all discussions of the historical events of the twentieth-century, then there is a disciplinary necessity, if not an ethical requirement, to ensure that what is meant by trauma is clearly defined. For historian Dominick LaCapra, the concept of trauma should first and foremost address the victim's position. However, in his article "Trauma, Absence, Loss," LaCapra identifies the emergence of a general theoretical trend whereby critics conflate trauma with absence which, as he argues, overlooks an ethical responsibility to the specific traumatic experience of victims. The practical consequence of this process, as LaCapra suggests, is that "vicarious" victims have proliferated and we appear to have entered an historical milieu where we all claim the status of other (699). Following

3 I have borrowed the phrase "those who have nothing in common" from the title of Alphonso Lingis' work The Community of those who have Nothing in Common.
LaCapra, we can draw the conclusion that responsibility has become everyone's right and no-one's due, that is to say, the traumas of the twentieth-century are everyone's traumatic inheritance but no-one's legacy.

Assuming responsibility for the inheritance of the twentieth-century, Frame and Sebald are also committed to shouldering its legacy. For both writers this entails exposing the fundamental ontological and temporal premises of Western thought: first, that the self's presence (or self-certainty) requires the Other's absence and second, that the present's fullness requires the past's pastness. This second temporal feature of Western thought reveals that the self presumes its centrality when it can claim mastery over time. Conversely, when the self cannot 'comprehend' the past, the past emerges as an ongoing disruptive force which undermines the self's centrality. Both Frame and Sebald suggest that an ethical response to the past cannot originate from the presence of the self but must turn to the plight of the Other. In their works, Frame and Sebald thus both enact a form of time that is not subservient to their characters but, instead, subjects them to their ethical responsibility. The view of the self as a presence from which meaning originates is the primary premise of a metaphysics of presence. Moreover, it is this particular branch of philosophy which Levinas's work, and, as I shall argue, Frame's and Sebald's, overtly challenges in order to suggest an ethics that is turned to the plight of the Other. The urgency of both writers' ethical projects is their response to a legacy (of Western thought) that they suggest must not become an heirloom bequeathed to, and used to furnish, the future. Through their writing, they both suggest that our collective future will depend on how we approach our ethical responsibility to the Other of the past. They both demonstrate that a deconstruction of the present moment will not only produce an ethical response to the past Other but will also ensure a more just future. For it is only when time is realised beyond the ambit of the self that the unforeseeable future can remain open to generations yet to come.

In order to outline the theoretical framework which structures my overall argument that Frame's and Sebald's works can be viewed as ethical responses to trauma, I have divided this introduction into four sections. In section one I outline the logic underpinning a metaphysics of presence and discuss its effect on how we define time and subjectivity. In particular, I focus on Levinas's argument that a metaphysics of presence enacts violence through prioritising the centrality of the self at the expense of the Other. In section two, I suggest that postcolonial and Holocaust
literatures' ethical commitment to re-presenting the plight of the other must inevitably involve a confrontation with a model of thought where the self’s presence is prioritised at the expense of the other. In section three I outline how Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy interrupts the discourse of presence and provides an alternative mode of conceiving of human relations through prioritising the ethical relationship. Levinas proposes that a traumatised subject can enact ethical responsibility and suggests a model of language that, instead of reaffirming presence, interrupts its own articulations. Such a model of language interrupts a metaphysics of presence and shares an affinity with postmodern literary strategies—more specifically, with 'disruptive' stylistic techniques—which undermine the reader's centrality, a point I will return to in my conclusion. In section four I briefly outline the structure of this thesis which reveals the way in which Janet Frame's and W. G. Sebald's ethical literature exemplifies Levinas' requirement that ethics begins from the time of the Other rather than the time of the self, that is to say, a position of self-doubt rather than a position of self-certainty.

**A Metaphysics of Presence**

The issue of what constitutes an ethical response to trauma hinges on exposing the priority afforded to presence in Western thought structures. Using Levinas's philosophy to frame my approach, I suggest that a response that remains tied to a metaphysics of presence is not ethical. In this section I outline what is meant by presence, how it relates to subjectivity, time and representation, and how these concepts enact violence against the Other. Levinas's ethics originate as a response to the privilege afforded to the concept of presence in Greek philosophical thought—of which he argues Western philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl are direct descendants. Levinas was not the only twentieth-century philosopher to respond to the problem of presence; Jacques Derrida's works, in particular, will act as a further important point of reference throughout this thesis. Described by Eaglestone as "wounding philosophers" (*Holocaust* 10), both Levinas and Derrida celebrate, through their critiques of a metaphysics of presence, the ethical potential that is harboured in moments of interruption.

In his introduction to *Modernism/Postmodernism*, Peter Brooker defines a metaphysics of presence as "the idea that reality is given immediately to consciousness" (14). In this thesis's theoretical framework, a metaphysics of presence
is metaphorically enacted by the reader of a literary text who assumes their own
centrality as the origin of meaning, and is furthermore illustrated by characters who
presume a similar sovereignty in their respective fictional worlds. Both Derrida and
Levinas emphatically argue that a metaphysics of presence is not only the
fundamental tenet of all Western philosophy but that its prevalence is evident in how
Western societies understand time, identity and even thought itself. More specifically,
a metaphysics of presence produces the sovereign subject of a humanist model of
ethics and creates history: a linear account of temporality which translates the past
into the known and representable. Diagnosing the priority that Western thought
affords to presence, Derrida argues:

From Parmenides to Husserl, the privilege of the present has never been put
into question. It could not have been. It is what is self-evident itself, and no
thought seems possible outside its element. Nonpresence is always thought in
the form of presence […] or as a modalization of presence. The past and the
future are always determined as past presents or as future presents ("Ousia"
34).

Derrida's diagnosis reveals that "the privilege of the present" not only encourages the
construction of reality in terms of binary oppositions but also translates time from the
perspective of presence into variations of the present: past-presents and future-
prese...
present in terms of the past and future. The ego produces, thus, its stronghold on presence where time is reduced to an unchanging timeless present moment over which the ego presides. Levinas names the ego's process of identification the 'Same': "[consciousness] is the identity of the Same, the presence of being, the presence of presence" ("God" 133). For Levinas, herein lies the problem of Western philosophical thought: it must reduce everything to the Same.

Levinas argues that the ego's reduction of the external world to the Same is ontology in action: "the ontological event accomplished by philosophy consists in suppressing or transmuting the alterity of all that is Other, in universalizing the immanence of the Same" ("Transcendence" 11). In Levinas's account of the ontological event, the I only ever encounters other objects and people through its own terms. The key tool that the self uses to carry out the reduction of alterity to an entity that appears on the horizon of being, or to what is known, is comprehension or knowledge. Throughout his oeuvre, Levinas metaphorically re-presents the self's knowledge of all that is other as the light that illuminates or the hand that grasps. Thus, he writes in Totality and Infinity, for example, that "the neutralisation of the other who becomes a theme or an object—appearing, that is, taking its place in the light—is precisely his reduction to the same" (43) and that "to know amounts to grasping being out of nothing, […] removing from it its alterity" (44). The former parallel emphasises that knowledge is all-encompassing, all that is other can be seen and identified, while the latter metaphor implies that the ego's reduction of alterity is an act of violence, it is the hand that seizes and possesses, but never gives. Levinas's metaphors assert that the ego's process of illuminating and grasping all that is other and translating it into the known comes at a cost. Indeed, his use of the term ego to designate the self or consciousness emphasises that the egocentric practices of the ego are self-serving. The translation of all that is Other into the Same maintains the ego's sovereignty and produces its freedom. However, as Levinas warns, the ego's freedom depends on the Other's non-freedom:

Such is the definition of freedom: to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to ensure the autarchy of an I. Thematization and conceptualization, which moreover are inseparable, are not peace with the other but suppression or possession of the other. For possession affirms the other, but within a negation of its independence. (Totality 46)
If we rephrase Levinas's comments through the ontological concept of presence, we can conclude that the ego's presence is maintained through the other's non-presence. Never encountering the Other in his or her singularity, the ego translates the Other into an entity that is known and defined from its own perspective, and in doing so both practises and affirms its sovereignty over the present.

Significantly, even the production of discourses that emphasise the Other's difference—such as on racial, economic or ethnic grounds—are examples of the ego's translation of the Other's radical alterity into identifiable and categorisable differences. For Levinas, a "second characteristic of the philosophy of the same [is] its recourse to neuters" ("Philosophy" 50). Using a priori ideas, the ego possesses the Other and "complete[s] the identification of the diverse" ("Philosophy" 50). Levinas argues that, within Western thought, the ontological affirmation of presence at the expense of the Other is not simply one way of being but the only way of being. Moreover, the process of translating radical alterity into the Same is replicated in Western modern thought, which Levinas baptises an "egology" (Totality 44).

Writers and not philosophers, Frame and Sebald are able to transgress a metaphysics of presence through depicting characters that are unable to illuminate or comprehend the world before them. In his short essay "The Other and Proust," Levinas indirectly acknowledges literature's potential to problematise the concept of presence when he identifies the way in which Marcel Proust in À la recherche du temps perdu undermines the protagonist's ability to know the elusive Albertine. Notwithstanding this example of a writer's thematic representation of interrupting presence, Levinas would object that writers cannot overcome the problem that the medium they must use to disturb presence—language—presupposes a metaphysics of presence. For Levinas, the model of re-presentation carried out through language's designation of an immediate relationship between signifier and signified and its production of meaning through the unity of narrative is identical to the process through which the ego translates the external world into known entities. According to Levinas, art—whether literature, painting or sculpture—is "the pre-eminent exhibition in which the said is reduced to a pure theme, to absolute exposition" (Otherwise 40). The Said, Levinas's term for language that thematises, cannot depict the Other's radical alterity but, instead, reduces the Other to the known. The Said is unable to represent what is beyond being—which Levinas names infinity: the "uncontained" ("God" 133).
Levinas's model of language as the Said implies that literary narratives cannot re-present the radical alterity of the Other but, rather, will always translate and contain. As such, literature risks negating the specific trauma of the Other which, as I suggested, encourages the proliferation of discourses on trauma which reduce it to a universal and collective condition, negating its specificity. Instead of containing responsibility, literature, Levinas argues, entails "the very event of obscuring" which ignores the specific Other's plight—and which can even lead to "egoist and cowardly" enjoyment or to what he describes as "feasting during a plague" ("Reality" 12). Levinas's criticism of art echoes the sentiment that fiction, and more specifically postmodern literature, evades issues of responsibility through its playful experimentation with language. However, in my discussion of Levinasian ethics I will suggest that my project of identifying an ethical impetus in postmodern literature finds an unlikely ally in Levinas's philosophy. The difficulty of articulating a philosophy not tied to a metaphysics of presence also haunts Levinas's own philosophical endeavours and led to his rethinking of language as a medium that enacts two simultaneous functions with every pronouncement: thematisation and interruption. In his later work, in particular in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas identifies a second function of language—language as approach—which will form the theoretical framework for my discussion of the ethical potential of disruptive stylistic techniques. For Levinas, a metaphysics of presence ensures that time is a linear continuum, subjectivity is an ego which demonstrates a stronghold on presence and language—as the Said—is the promise that everything can be re-presented.

Confronting and challenging these primary tenets of a metaphysics of presence, both postcolonial and Holocaust literature struggle with their commitment to respond ethically to the Other.

**Postcolonial and Holocaust Literatures' Response to Presence**

Postcolonial and Holocaust studies exist alongside their respective subjects in a position of unease. They both seek to address the plight of specific groups of people who have suffered as a consequence of their subjection to the status of other. However, their primary tool for contesting the ideologies which perpetuate the victimisation of specific ethnic and religious groups, a metaphysics of presence, is also the conceptual framework which legitimised these ideologies in the first place. Postcolonial studies contests the ongoing influence of colonial ideologies and the
political consequences of colonisation. However, its attempts to highlight the
oppression suffered by the colonial other are articulated within a model of Western
ontological thought that continues to enact binary oppositions. The priority afforded
to presence over absence is reflected in postcolonial studies' struggle to break with the
ideal that its goal is the production of an all-encompassing knowledge. Like the
coloniser, postcolonial studies appears to be enacting its own form of epistemic
violence against the other when it presumes the capacity to speak on the other's
behalf. Similarly, Holocaust studies grapples with its desire to represent the plight of
the victims of the Holocaust while also seeking to ensure that its methods of
remembrance do not enact a form of epistemic violence. In particular, Holocaust
studies, as a field, is wary that its representational practices do not normalise the
suffering of World War II victims which would allow the trauma of the Holocaust to
be resolved, leading to forgetting. Postcolonial and Holocaust studies' unsettling
relationship with their subject reveals both an ethical commitment to respond to
trauma and an uncertainty over how to break free of a metaphysics of presence which
would render their response unethical.

Postcolonial studies and postcolonial literature respond to the problem of how
to re-present the colonial other who has been silenced by Western colonial discourse
either through being relegated to the peripheries or through being represented as
inherently inferior to the coloniser. Both of these acts of silencing use the structure of
a metaphysics of presence to contain and reduce the Other to the known. On the one
hand, the absence of the Other affirms the priority afforded to a specific subject's
presence—in this case the coloniser. On the other hand, the representation of the
Other through discourses such as primitivism reduces the Other's alterity to
recognisable and classifiable differences. In turn, the subject's identification of these
differences establishes a hierarchical relationship between a subject who is superior
and civilised and the colonial other who, by contrast, is inferior and uncivilised.
Levinas views postcolonialism as an off-shoot of Europe's desire to correct the
traumatic tally of the historical events of the twentieth-century which, as he suggests,
"is perhaps explained by a remorse nourished by the memory of colonial wars and of
a long oppression to those who were once called savages" ("Peace" 163).
Postcolonialism's struggle to overcome the West's indifference to the colonial other's
plight leads to a direct confrontation with a metaphysics of presence. However, Simon
Featherstone's diagnosis of postcolonialism's "nervous conditions" (10)—which
centre on the discipline's uncertainty over its strategies for responding to the diverse historical, cultural and ideological faces of colonialism—are an indication that, as a discipline, it remains uncertain whether it has broken with a metaphysics of presence or has merely re-propagated it in another guise.

In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said identifies the process through which colonialism metaphorically relocated the colonial other to the peripheries. He argues that this relocation was carried out both through the construction of imaginary geographical borders, which established a "hierarchy of spaces," with the metropolitan centre assuming sovereignty over the Other (69), and through the enactment of symbolic divisions, which marginalised the Other within literature. Canonical texts by British and French writers were instrumental, according to Said, in obscuring the process through which the "metropolis gets its authority […] from the devaluation as well as the exploitation of the outlying colonial possession" (70). In order to counter canonical literature's marginalisation of the Other—a process, moreover, that affirms the sovereignty of the subject (coloniser) through a reduction of the Other's alterity to the Same—Said suggests that the "cultural archive" and, in particular, texts, should be read "contrapuntally" (*Culture* 59). A contrapuntal reading reveals the colonial ideologies which are perpetuated within canonical literature through using the marginalised's perspective as a counterpoint to the text's representation, and indeed naturalisation, of the dominant colonial perspective. In literature, Said's strategy of reading texts contrapuntally has been adopted and translated into a stylistic technique. Postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie undermine the unity of official accounts of history, which legitimise colonial ideologies, through presenting the past from the point of view of the marginalised. Nevertheless, while a contrapuntal reading and contrapuntal literary strategies are an example of an ethical response to the other of the past, Said advocates the production of an account of history that, in his words, is "concert and order" (59). Said thus presumes the authority of the present generation, despite different accounts of the past, to produce an authoritative and unified narrative of the past. Thus the present remains the ground from which the past is defined and the subject (the present generation) continues to assert its sovereignty through reducing all difference to the Same.

One postcolonial literary response to the colonial ideological process of thematising the colonial other's difference in derogatory terms is to invert
colonialism's ontological hierarchy and suggest the positive attributes of the other's difference. Colonial discourse's construction of a hierarchical relationship between the coloniser and colonised imposed, according to Helen Tiffin, a "'reading' [of] their [the others'] alterity assimilatively in terms of their [the colonisers'] own cognitive codes" ("Post-colonial" 22). Examining the literary archive of colonial ideologies, Tiffin argues that "explorers' journals, drama, fiction, historical accounts, [and] 'mapping' enabled conquest and colonization and the capture and/or vilification of alterity" (22).

Thus, a common strategy in postcolonial literature is to respond to the vilification of the colonial other through turning what the colonial literary archive constructed as the other's primitivism into a signifier of spiritualism and authenticity. However, these reversals, which are also utilised by contemporary commercial industries such as tourism, are yet another example of the process through which alterity is assimilated and contained. Responding to Keri Hulme's Booker Prize winning novel *the bone people*, Ruth Brown, for example, argues that "Maori spirituality as Pakeha construct derives from a need to locate spirituality *somewhere* in a world dominated by capitalist practices" (253). Reduced to a source of spirituality for a nostalgic Western centre, the Other remains the destination and site of the subject's translation of alterity into the Same. Whether vilified or celebrated, the colonised other remains defined by, and subject to, the coloniser's presence.

The postcolonial, as both a signifier of an academic discipline and a genre of literature that attempts to respond ethically to the colonial other's difference, runs the risk of being encompassed by a postmodern global rhetoric of heterogeneity. Postmodernism, "the enemy of totalising vision" (Brooker 13), dismantles the master narratives of modernity, such as colonial ideologies, and in their place emphasises difference and fragmentation. However, as Elizabeth Ferrier observes, "in spite of the identification of post-modernism with difference, discontinuity and fragmentation, it tends to be marketed globally as a general movement which addresses global concerns" (qtd. in Tiffin, Introduction xi). Under a postmodern rhetoric, the specific plight of the colonial other is reduced to a global and universal condition of discontinuity and it seems that yet again the Other is subjected to "the control Western intellectuals exercise over communication systems and regimes of truth" (Brooker

Encapsulating postcolonialism's 'nervous conditions,' Gayatri Spivak's influential and ground-breaking essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" serves as an important warning against the drive to encompass postcolonialism under the umbrella of a specific application of postmodern theory. While the focus of the essay is postcolonial theorists' dilemma of attempting to ethically respond to the Other from a position that does not adopt the stance of the sovereign subject, Spivak's observations can equally be applied to the position of the postcolonial writer. Concluding that the subaltern, a term that denotes the colonised other, cannot speak, Spivak's essay has been interpreted as an act of further silencing the other. However, this overlooks, according to Simon Featherstone, that "a primary condition of subalternity, […] is, in fact, a lack of a position of speaking" (10). If the subaltern were to speak, their alterity would be lost through adopting the speaking position of the subject. Thus, the Western desire to make the subaltern speak in familiar terms remains tied to the ontological assumption of a metaphysics of presence that everything can be represented from the point of view of the Same. If the subaltern's specific identity and concerns are misrepresented when voiced by the Western academic, we can equally ask the question of postcolonialism, as a field of academic enquiry: what happens when its concerns are encompassed by a postmodern rhetoric which views 'difference' as a global phenomenon? This perhaps somewhat specific and abstract academic debate over postcolonialism's and postmodernism's theoretical parameters is also played out, as Spivak's observations in an interview exemplify, indirectly in the political sphere. Noting that "many people want to claim subalternity," Spivak warns that such people "are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being in a discriminated against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word subaltern" ("Interview" 46). Spivak's complaint reverberates with my specific concern that colonisation's traumatic legacy is being conflated and consumed by the postmodern era's propensity to establish victimhood as a universal speaking position.

In order to respond ethically to the Other, postcolonialism adopts a continuous process of questioning its own speaking position. According to Featherstone, it is a discipline that recognises that the Other's freedom is a "gift [that] cannot be made because the performance of the giving perpetuates the very condition that it appears to negate" (4). An ethical response cannot be framed within the logic of a metaphysics of presence and, as Levinas's philosophy attests, this means that the Other's freedom is
never the subject's gift but, rather, "the unlimited responsibility in which I find myself [and which] comes from the hither side of my freedom" ("Essence" 117).

Like postcolonial studies, theoretical analyses of Holocaust literature are deeply concerned with the ethics of representing the trauma of the Other. Theodor Adorno's famous pronouncement that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Prisms 34) continues to act as a dictum which signals the ethical problems of attempting to represent the Holocaust. As our era's symbol of the unspeakable or unrepresentable, the Holocaust is also that which, according to Adorno, through the "abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting" (Can One live After Auschwitz 252). Both measures of responding to the Holocaust—whether through representation or through honouring its legacy through silence—are problematic because they remain tied to a metaphysics of presence. On the one hand, to represent the Holocaust is to translate its unspeakable horrors into the Said—that form of language which reduces difference into a synthesised and thematised narrative. On the other hand, not to speak of the Holocaust is tantamount to forgetting its victims and thus affirming the subject's autonomy through denying its obligations or responsibilities to any other. Thus both strategies for responding to the Holocaust affirm the subject's own future through 'taking care' of the past. The dedication which Levinas includes in Otherwise than Being "to the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the Nationalist Socialists" indicates that, for Levinas, silence is never an ethical response. Indeed, critics such as Robert Eaglestone and writers such as Maurice Blanchot argue that Levinas's philosophy is an attempt to respond to the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust. As Blanchot surmises, the "thought that traverses, that bears, the whole of Levinas' philosophy" is "how can one write within the memory of Auschwitz of those who have said, oftentimes in notes buried near the crematoria: know what has happened, don't forget, and at the same time, you won't be able to" (50).

The problem of how to respond ethically to the Holocaust highlights and confronts the ontological premises produced by a metaphysics of presence. According to Eaglestone, identification—whether personal or communal, produced from within or outside—"has an strong ethical significance, especially in relation to the Holocaust, not least in that, as a process, it often leads to the 'consumption' and reduction of otherness, the assimilation of others' experience into one's own frameworks" (Holocaust 6). In his book-length study The Holocaust and the Postmodern—which
examines how literature, historical accounts and philosophers, such as Levinas and Derrida, approach the problem of thematising the Holocaust—Eaglestone distinguishes between two different forms of identification. On the one hand, the reader identifies with a text's characters and presumes understanding of their trauma through sympathetic imagination. On the other hand, the text identifies or thematises historical events and presumes an immediate and direct relationship between an historical event and its literary referent. Both of these processes of identification ignore what is considered the defining element of the Holocaust: its resistance to being encompassed by conventional representational strategies.

Indeed, Eaglestone's further criticism of the process of identification, which is carried out through academic analysis of Holocaust literature, reveals why the Holocaust must remain unrepresentable. Observing that discussions of Holocaust literature are increasingly filtered through a psychoanalytical model of trauma, Eaglestone warns that this approach carries out a process of identification which "will overcode the accounts of the Holocaust with a discourse of healing analysis or therapy […] and [thereby] 'work through' or finish with the ethical obligation to recall the events" (33). All three of these forms of identification—the text with the past, the reader with the victim, and the Holocaust with psychoanalytical trauma—presume a model of ethics which prioritises the position of the self as the centre from which meaning originates and from which a response to the Holocaust can be undertaken. Bringing these processes together, we can see how one mode of responding to the Holocaust is to produce a mnemonic narrative of recovery through a strategy of identification. Such a narrative would suggest that following a momentary disturbance of the subject's presence, the subject translates an historical event into a past-presence and a victim into a known other: the subject's production of the Same restores the unity of the present. Accordingly, because a text makes the past known, the reader has direct access to the past and can empathise with the victim, which then allows trauma to be worked through and, as a consequence, fosters what Adam Phillips identifies as the "redemptive myth of memory" (36).

Critical of the "redemptive myth of memory" that circulates within psychoanalytical approaches to trauma, Phillips, nonetheless, argues that memory can still play a vital role in an ethical response to the Other. However, he argues that this will require a form of "non-compliant, unmanufactured memory" (37). Although Phillips' approach closely parallels my own attempt to identify what is at stake in a
form of ethics that begins with a concern for the Other, my focus is on ethical encounters in literature that emerge from a position of interruption. By contrast, Phillips' description of a form of memory that is non-compliant and unmanufactured while contesting social memorial practices, does not contest or interrupt the self's centrality. Indeed his presumption that the self can resist communal memorial practices and thus produce its own unique account of the past through individual memory only further serves to strengthen a view of the self as a centre of meaning. For the purposes of this thesis, I am interested in exploring a model of ethics where the self's identification with the Other does not take place. In addition, I suggest that as the survivors of the Holocaust become fewer and fewer in number with each passing year, such a model of ethics is itself an urgent project.

Inherent to the process of identifying with the Holocaust is the translation of what historian Dominick LaCapra calls a specific and particular historical loss into a general absence. The conflation of loss with absence, LaCapra argues, produces "the dubious ideas that everyone (including perpetrators or collaborators) is a victim, that all history is trauma, or that we all share a pathological public sphere or 'wound culture'" ("Trauma" 712). LaCapra's argument that the translation of loss into absence or the Same is ethically dubious is evident in both literary and historical representations of the Holocaust. Literary works which create parallels between the specific loss of the Holocaust and other more general forms of absence undermine the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Perhaps the most notorious example of this practice is Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy," which draws a parallel between an oppressive father and a Nazi. As R. Clifton Spargo observes, Plath's 'Holocaust poetry' has "often been taken as proof of the ahistorical and thus ethically inappropriate nature of a personal, emotional, and imaginative response to the Nazi genocide" (245). South-African writer J.M. Coetzee fictionalises the terms of this ethical debate in his novel Elizabeth Costello, where his eponymous protagonist, an advocate of animal rights, compares the industrial mass-slaughtering of animals to the suffering of the victims of the concentration camps. Such an equation, as Elizabeth Costello emphasises through the indignant reaction of the academic audience who attend Costello's talks, undermines and demeans the memory of the victims' suffering. Similarly, within the discipline of history, Huyssen argues that the reduction of the Holocaust to a "universal trope for historical trauma" (13) has led to it being positioned in comparison to other traumatic histories. While Huyssen suggests that this may "block insight into specific local
We also need to address how the specificity of the Holocaust is being irreparably generalised and collectivised.

In her careful analysis of what she calls the "'Schreiben nach Auschwitz' debate," Charlotte Ryland suggests that Adorno's argument has been frequently misinterpreted as a "prohibition of post-Holocaust poetry" (144). Ryland argues, however, that Adorno instead "asks his readers to accept two conflicting propositions, lending neither of them prominence: that art both defies and demands its own continued existence" (144). Thus, on the one hand to write poetry is to perpetuate barbarity; however, on the other hand, "not to write poetry is to fail to attempt to counter that barbarism" (144). Ryland's dialectical interpretation of Adorno's dictum implies that language simultaneously performs two functions. First, it is the medium through which a violent assertion of presence is enacted at the expense of the Other, which potentially leads to the voyeuristic step of aestheticising the Holocaust or to what Levinas describes as "feasting during a plague" ("Reality" 12). However, Ryland's interpretation of Adorno's argument also emphasises the necessity of art so that a second function of language is its ability to simultaneously undercut its own affirmative articulation. While the aestheticisation of the Holocaust encourages and maintains the subject's voyeurism and suggests that no-thing and no-one can elude the illuminating light of the ego, language may also be the medium through which the subject's mastery over presence is disturbed. Exactly how language can undercut its own enunciatory properties and how a disturbance of the subject's presence can lead to ethics are the questions that inform a Levinasian ethics. Turning now more directly to Levinas's philosophy, I suggest that at the heart of postcolonialism's nervous conditions and Holocaust fiction's commitment to re-present the unrepresentable lies an ongoing and unsettling responsibility to the Other.

**Levinasian Ethics**

In response to the problem of a metaphysics of presence, Levinas's philosophy enacts an interruption of the Same. Levinas proposes that while philosophy can never abandon its ontological premises, these premises need to be subjected to ethical interrogation. In the place of a philosophy which is egology, Levinas argues for ethics' position as first philosophy. Levinasian ethics is not what one usually understands by ethics: it provides no moral guidelines or set of universal principles that people must abide by. Rather, Levinas's original contribution to philosophy is an ethics which "is
more concerned with questioning than with providing answers" (Bernasconi, "Ethics" 8). Before addressing how literature can articulate ethical responses, I shall examine how in Levinas's work primary philosophical concepts—such as subjectivity, time and language—are disturbed by his model of ethics which insists on the "need to be on our guard against the way general principles can be perverted in the course of their application" (Bernasconi, "Ethics" 15).

For Levinas, an ethical response to the Other's plight cannot originate from consciousness because it is the primary mechanism which thematises, contains and tames alterity. At an individual level, a response of empathy still remains tied to a process of identification, such that the ego only ever empathises with an Other who is either like itself or whose suffering is imaginable. The ego's expression of empathy is thus always a product of the ego's commitment or decision in the present to identify with the Other which, in turn, can be withheld due to bias, ignorance or even the ego's own vicarious need to reclaim the centre stage from the Other through assuming the role of victim. At the collective level, Levinas argues that "the social ideal will be sought for in an ideal of fusion" (Time 93). As a collective model of egology, the community, like the ego, seeks to translate the Other's alterity into familiar terms in order to restore its collective image of unity. Under political theories of government which are premised on promoting the individual's freedom, the ego accepts responsibility for the Other only to the degree it does not infringe on the ego's "incontestable right of freedom" ("Philosophy" 57). However, such a restricted and egocentric notion of the scope of responsibility, as defined by the extent to which it does not impede on the ego's freedom, leads Levinas to ask whether this is all that we mean by responsibility, goodness and ethics. Declaring his attention to break with a metaphysics of presence, Levinas asserts: "it is toward a pluralism that does not merge into unity that I should like to make my way, and, if this can be dared, break with Parmenides" (Time 42).

Interrupting philosophy's ontological premises, Levinas argues that "the freedom of another could never begin in my freedom, that is, abide in the same present" (Otherwise 10). Instead, Levinas requires that "the responsibility for the other cannot have begun in my commitment, in my decision" and rather must result from the Other's command (Otherwise 10). Upsetting the hierarchy which the philosophy of the Same enacts between the self and the other, Levinas proposes that the ego is positioned in an asymmetrical relationship with the Other whereby it is the Other who
commands, subjects and accuses the ego. However, Levinas is not suggesting a simple reversal of the primary ontological relationship; rather, the priority that he affords to the plight of the Other at the expense of the ego's presence signals transcendence and the infinite. The meaning of infinity for Levinas is found in "the social relationship" ("Philosophy" 54), which "puts a stop to the irresistible imperialism of the same and the I" ("Philosophy" 55), and thus transcends the thought that begins from the ego and signals the uncontained. In an asymmetrical relationship of subjection to the Other, the ego finds its presence interrupted and is moved by an 'otherwise than being' that it cannot translate and reduce into a 'being otherwise.' The ego is no longer the source of the containment of the Other's alterity but, instead, through its subjection to the Other becomes the site of ethical responsibility.

Declaring his own work to be a "defense of subjectivity" (Totality 26), Levinas implicitly responds to theoretical movements that suggest that, following the inhumane events of World War II, the category of man, human or self is morally suspect. Instead, Levinas argues that ethical responsibility must begin from the self but that this is a self which is stripped of its egoistic process of encompassing the Other through the Same. Levinas uses various terms interchangeably to denote the ego in its subjected state: the oneself, the self, and subjectivity. Through using the term 'oneself' Levinas emphasises that it is the singular I who is accountable to the Other. The singularity of the I does not refer to the I's uniqueness through a conceptual construction of individuality—such as through sex or race—but rather, according to Alphonso Lingis, "means being held to be oneself, being passive with regard to oneself" (Introduction xxxvi). It is the self that is commanded by the Other, and no one else can take its place. Through the concept 'subjectivity' Levinas emphasises the self's subjection to the Other. He characterises this "defeat of the ego's identity" as "vulnerability, exposure to outrage, to wounding, passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form" and even goes so far to as to describe the ego's subjection to the Other as "trauma of accusation suffered by a hostage to the point of persecution" (Otherwise 15). As a hostage to the Other's command, the subject is rendered passive and unable to translate the Other's alterity into the Same. Moreover, Levinas's use of terms such as vulnerability, wounding, exposure and trauma emphasise that the self experiences the command of the Other at the site of the body as an intense sensibility which renders it vulnerable.
Rendered vulnerable and reduced to its embodied state, the ego cannot claim mastery over the present. For Levinas, the ego's translation of time into "time past and time future […] [produces] merely modifications of the present […] [which] reinforces the ontology of presence as a seizure and appropriation of what is other or transcendent" ("Interview" 62). In the place of "temporalisation," which Levinas equates with the "verb form to be" (Otherwise 35), the Other interrupts the present and heralds a time that is out of joint or diachronic. The Other cannot be reduced through the imperialism of the Same into a presence because, as Levinas explains, "The non-simultaneous and non-present is my primary rapport with the other in time" ("Interview" 57). In order to describe the Other's unique relationship with the ego, Levinas uses the term "proximity." In proximity to the ego, the Other cannot be comprehended or reduced to the same; instead, the Other "puts into question the ego's natural position as subject" ("Diachrony" 108). Unable to assume mastery over the present and its derivatives, past-present and future-present, the ego is exposed to the "dia-chrony of a past that does not gather into re-presentation," which, Levinas moreover proposes, is "the time of my responsibility for the Other" ("Diachrony" 112). This responsibility extends to a past that is not remembered by the ego and to a future which is beyond the ego's own death. In the place of the ego's past-present, Levinas describes an "immemorial past" which "signified without ever having been present, [and] signified starting from the responsibility 'for the Other'" ("Diachrony" 113). The ego is thus subjected to a time that is beyond its recall and anticipation. This is a time where the ego's presence is interrupted and where ethical responsibility is evoked. Indeed, Levinas argues that the self's "way of being avowed—or this devotion—is time" ("Diachrony" 115). To summarise, Levinasian ethics prescribes the ego's responsibility as originating from an immemorial past which transcends or is beyond the ego's present. Positioned in an asymmetrical relationship of subjection to the Other, the ego is rendered vulnerable, passive and even traumatised. However, this is not a trauma which focuses attention on the ego's vulnerability but one that signifies the ego's insurmountable obligation to the Other. This then suggests that the expression of trauma in certain contexts in literature may be capable of signalling the ego's ethical responsibility rather than its vicarious victimhood.

Viewing aesthetic re-presentation through a variety of media as a process that enacts the Same, Levinas's philosophy appears opposed to locating ethics in literature.
Nonetheless, I argue that Levinas's proposal that language is both a means of signifying (the Saying) and of thematising (the Said) suggests that literature may also perform dual functions. Responding in an interview to the question of whether language can be ethical, Levinas stresses language's dual functions: "language as saying is an ethical openness to the other; as that which is said—reduced to a fixed identity or synchronized presence—it is an ontological closure to the other" ("Interview" 65). Levinas's theory of language both models the subject—who as an ego enforces the Same and as a self responds to the Other—and is enacted within his works. In Otherwise than Being Levinas's stylistic experiments with language, whereby he unsettles his own articulations, parallel his thesis that the Saying circulates within the Said, interrupting its representations.

Levinas's philosophical model of language finds a surprising ally in the genre of postmodern fiction. Through stylistic experiments with language, postmodern literature undermines and undercuts its fictional world. My specific focus is on 'disruptive' stylistic techniques which disturb the integrity of the text's virtual world and force the reader into a position outside the text. Such disruptions of the reader's centrality occur when a writer refers to the text itself, when the text poses questions to the reader and, as is often the case with such texts, when they fail to provide the sense of an ending which, as Frank Kermode argues, the reader expects. Moreover, a text can disturb the reader's presence through its subversive treatment of the conventions of a particular genre, as well as through the inclusion of visual images, as in the case of Sebald's work, or through the establishment of multiple narrative frames, as seen in Frame's novels. Thus literary forms which interrupt their own articulations and undermine the writer's sovereignty over the text resemble Levinas's account of the dual functions of language. However, while postmodern fiction undercuts the tenets of a metaphysics of presence, this does not mean that all postmodern fiction is ethical. In accordance with Levinas's philosophy, to be ethical, literature must both interrupt a metaphysics of presence and signal the ego's ongoing responsibility to the unknown Other. Herein lies the problem of reading literature through a Levinasian framework: how can texts re-present the ego's ethical responsibility for the Other without translating the Other into the known?

Despite being offered the opportunity in interviews to identify the Other, Levinas, as Robert Bernasconi observes, adheres to his "blunt refusal to apply the discourse of alterity to cultural or ethnic designations" ("Who is my Neighbour?" 6).
For Levinas, the identification of the Other with a specific social group would undermine his philosophical break with a metaphysics of presence. Although Levinas describes the Other as the "the weak, the poor, the widow and the orphan" (Time 83), these categorical identifications pertain to the Other's destitution and not his or her social or economic position in society. For Levinas, the Other is "without any cultural ornament" ("Meaning" 53) and, like a face, first and foremost functions as expression. Levinas's philosophy thus appears incompatible with postcolonial and Holocaust literatures' project of ethically responding to a particular historical Other. Yet, in the dedication of Otherwise than Being, Levinas is prepared to identify the victims of the Holocaust with the Other and point to the urgent need for ethical responsibility. Rather than view this as an inconsistency, I argue that Levinas's philosophical project allows this identification of the Other to occur because it remains dedicated to political justice. For Levinas, ethics does not replace the need for the political realm which enacts a return to the Same through thematising the Other's identity or producing a Said. Instead, particularly in his later essays, Levinas argues that "the relation with the other and the unique […] comes to demand a reason that thematizes, synchronizes and synthesizes" ("Peace" 168). This means that while Levinas accepts that the state plays a vital role in implementing and applying justice, the concept of justice cannot derive from a theoretical ground of what is considered right or wrong but instead "begins with the other" ("Philosophy" 56). For Levinas, the state must always be subjected to ethical interpretation and thus also to a requirement of responsibility of the one for the other, in order to prevent injustice. Ethics not only "delineates the limits of the State" but also, according to Levinas, "does not cease to appeal to the vigilance of persons who would not be satisfied with the subsumption of cases under a general rule" ("Peace" 169). This means that the identification of the Other with a specific group of people, a political manifestation, must always remain subject to "the relation that I have with the Other and in the unique demand that is placed upon me by him or her" (Critchley, Ethics of Deconstruction 17).

While the Said may be unavoidable, Levinas argues that the Said must be continuously interrupted and the uniqueness of the ego's responsibility sustained. Therefore, I suggest that despite Levinas's criticisms of the unity of meaning conferred by narration, literature is an appropriate medium to stage ethics. In particular, postmodern literary texts which use disruptive stylistic techniques to interrupt the Said produce a form of language that complements the thematic
depiction of the uniqueness of the ethical encounter which undermines the ego's presence. Thus while Frame and Sebald are prepared to identify the Other with specific categories of people, this identification is always secondary to an ethical encounter which calls the ego into question. They prioritise the uniqueness of the ego's ethical commitment through representing the trauma and vulnerability of individual characters whose presence is irreparably interrupted by their experience of being held ethically accountable for the Other's plight. Like Levinas, both writers view ethics as the key to a sociality with the Other which does not begin from presence.

Although Frame's and Sebald's works can be identified as literary responses to postcolonial and Holocaust studies' desire to speak for the Other, the specific historical contexts of both disciplines are not foregrounded. Both writers' indirect handling of these historical legacies suggests that it is only through first addressing this trauma ethically that society at large can turn to the issue of the possible forms that a political response might take. Both postcolonial and Holocaust studies struggle with their desire to speak for the Other but find their political projects undercut by the violence of their own articulations. Staging ethical encounters within literature, Frame and Sebald can be seen as providing both postcolonial and Holocaust studies with the means to ethically respond to the Other through prioritising ethics (responsibility) over and above political manifestations. Despite the fact that political forms of manifestation rely on presence and strategies of identification, an ethically informed political response can emerge when politics are made subject to a policy that invites and encourages ongoing interruption. In accordance with Levinasian ethics, the project of postcolonial and Holocaust studies should not be to re-present the past and the Other once and for all but, instead, to prioritise the ongoing need for responsibility which requires that every re-presentation is subject to interruption.

**Interrupting Presence: Janet Frame & W. G. Sebald**

This thesis is divided into two sections with the first focusing on two of Janet Frame's novels and the latter examining two of W. G. Sebald's works. Although both writers' works are analysed separately, the two sections employ the same structure. This parallel structure implicitly reveals the similarities and differences of both writers' respective approach to responding ethically to trauma. The overall Levinasian framework which informs my readings of both writers' works is not only reflected in
the general focus of each chapter within these sections but also in the subsequent division of each chapter's main points of analysis. Each section begins with an examination of the problem each writer faces in expressing their ethical message through language, a medium predisposed to violence. I then consider how each writer presents the problem of a metaphysics of presence in terms of time and subjectivity. The final chapter in each section focuses on each writer's thematic re-presentations of ethical responsibility.

In *The Adaptable Man* Janet Frame depicts Little Burgelstatham as an 'olde English' village which is struggling for its survival as a range of economic, social and technological developments threaten to expose it to the outside world. Frame introduces an array of characters from Greta and Russell, a house-wife and a dentist—whose household includes Russell's visiting minister brother, Aisley, and their son, Alwyn, who has returned from university for the summer—to Vic and Muriel Baldrey, who at the end of the novel are the victims of a chandelier accident which kills Muriel, Greta and Aisley and leaves Vic a tetraplegic. Superficially adopting the narrative plot of a murder-mystery, Frame presents the villagers' total disregard for the murder of newly arrived immigrant, Botti Julio, as symptomatic of the community's hostility towards outsiders. Published in 1965, *The Adaptable Man*, like a number of novels Frame wrote in the 1960s, lacks overt biographical references to her own life. However, in comparison with the novels that preceded and followed it, *The Adaptable Man* is a more conventional work. *The Adaptable Man* stands at an interesting junction in Frame's literary career where she appears to be torn between allowing her reader to feel at home in the text and experimenting with disruptive literary techniques. The end result, *The Adaptable Man* produces a restricted form of literary experimentation: Frame questions literary conventions, such as the role of the omniscient narrator and the assumptions of the murder-mystery genre, but is unable to point to possible alternatives. Her final novel *The Carpathians* (1988), by contrast, demonstrates Frame at the height of her experimental literary style. Through a series of imploding narrative frames, Frame not only disturbs conventional literary techniques but also suggests that this disturbance can produce its own unique form of articulation. In *The Carpathians* Frame once again returns to the insular dynamics of a small town community but, in this novel, Puamahara, the New Zealand equivalent of Little Burgelstatham, initially appears to welcome its foreign visitor Mattina. Visiting countries in order to quell the sense of self-loss that paradoxically ensues from her
immense wealth, Mattina is attracted to the destination of Puamahara by the town myth of the Memory Flower. Her attempt to gain spiritual sustenance from Puamahara's 'exotic' past is repeatedly thwarted throughout the novel as the townsfolk both refuse to accede to Mattina's desire to truly know them and disregard the Memory Flower as a mere tourism gimmick. Delving deeper into the fantastical possibilities of fiction, Frame presents Puamahara as under threat from an astrological phenomenon which will destroy established means of communication, time and even lives. However, in this destruction, which the narrative frames also carry out through destroying the reader's stable points of reference—such as the identity of the narrator, the time of the story and the existence of Mattina—Frame suggests there also lies an opportunity for humanity. I have chosen to examine these two novels in order both to explore a critical shift that occurs in Frame's writing style and to respond to a general trend in postmodern literary criticism of Frame's works, which continues to view postmodern literary techniques as unable to convey ethical concerns. By contrast, I suggest that the development of Frame's postmodern experiments with language reveal the ethical potential that lies in a poetics of interruption.

Section One begins with an examination of Janet Frame's ambivalent relationship to language. Frame's use of language as a tool to criticise the conformist practices of societies is always tempered by her scepticism towards a medium which is utilised by these societies in order to produce the Same. In such societies, as is illustrated in the two novels by Frame that I examine, ethical regard for the Other is non-apparent. This is evident in The Adaptable Man, where the murder of an immigrant is overlooked by the small English community of Little Burgelstatham, and in The Carpathians, where an entire street of residents can disappear and no-one asks any questions. In Chapter One I examine how Frame challenges such acts of social conformity through interrupting the discourse of the Said. In both novels, Frame undermines the language of presence, the Said, through unsettling genre conventions and developing stylistic techniques which undercut the sovereignty of her own writing. Refusing conjunction, her writing thus performs the time of diachrony. In what is widely acknowledged as her more conventional work, The Adaptable Man, Frame's disturbance of the Said is largely limited to a narrator who interrupts the integrity of her fictional world through directly challenging, questioning and critiquing Little Burgelstatham's social policy of excluding people who are different. By contrast, in her later and more experimental work The Carpathians, Frame creates
a series of imploding narrative frames which destabilise the presence of the text. Frame thus shifts from expressing a critique of conformity, which is articulated through the Said, to performing a critique which embodies the disruptive and ethical potential of the Saying.

Chapter Two then turns to Frame's critique of societies that abide by the philosophy of the Same and produce non-unique individuals in order to maintain the authority and unity of presence. In both works discussed here, Frame's depicts her characters' autonomy as dependent on their ability to achieve stasis within the flow of time through reducing their experience of the present to an all-encompassing moment which originates from their consciousness. Seeking to maintain their autonomy, her characters enter into communities which protect the autonomy of their members through exclusionary social policies. For Frame, communities, and in particular their values and ideologies, are the fixed centre from which people navigate and affirm their own sense of self, thus maintaining their stronghold on presence. In order to highlight the role that conformist societies play in an individual's construction of their identity, the chapter is divided into three parts which specifically focus on how time— as present, past and future—is conceived by individuals in such communities. In accordance with communities' prioritisation of presence, characters define the future and past from the point of the present. Frame's works represent characters' construction of the present through their adherence to ideologies, such as religion and colonial discourse, which legitimise their view of time as their own ontological adventure. In turn, the future and past are depicted as derivatives of the present. In particular, Frame focuses on how characters overcome the unpredictability of the future through conceding to a social preference for progress and how they render the past familiar through constructing a sanitised and commodified account of the past. Frame's depiction of the process through which characters affirm their presence in accordance with conformist societies' construction of time as synchrony demonstrates that the presence of the self is enacted at the expense of the Other.

In the final chapter in Section One I examine how Frame thematically represents an ethical response to the Other. Focusing on the body as a site of openness, Frame depicts her characters as in a state of vulnerability and no longer able to maintain their stronghold on presence. Through bodily illness and the representation of skin as a site of contact, Frame suggests that the ego cannot ignore the Other. Frame's depiction of her characters' vulnerability before the Other takes on
a greater urgency across the publication of both novels, since, in her later work, this state of vulnerability is not just experienced by isolated characters but by an entire community. Similarly, Frame's move from depicting the Other as a spectre in *The Adaptable Man* to a human Other in *The Carpathians* enacts a subtle shift in her articulation of ethical responsibility. In her later novel Frame appears more willing to identify the Other with a specific category of people in society. Like Levinas, whose later works increasingly turn to the issue of addressing the relationship between ethics and politics, Frame's writing appears to display an increasing concern with how ethical responsibility can assist wider political interests. My final consideration in this section is Frame's validation of ethical remembrance. While Frame is sceptical of her own societies' memorialisation practices, her works continue to hold a place for memory in ethics. In *The Adaptable Man* she presents a model of memory that is paradoxically non-intentional and thus traumatises the ego, while simultaneously undermining the ego's ability to make the past known. Conversely, in *The Carpathians*, Frame depicts the ego's relationship with the past as originating in a primordial command not to forget for the sake of future and past others.

The first novel by Sebald that this thesis examines is *The Rings of Saturn*, which depicts the walking tour of an unnamed character who, like the protagonists of his previous two works, is both the narrator of the novel and resembles Sebald. Traversing East Anglia, the narrator creates a series of mental landscapes which, catalysed by the isolated and scarred physical landscapes before him, lead him to pursue unexpected pathways of thought. Suddenly, a walking tour of a small region in England turns into a far-reaching and potentially ever-expanding network of meditations on literature, history, astronomy and zoology, to name just a few of the many topics that the narrator explores. The second novel by Sebald that I examine is *Austerlitz*, which adopts what is considered to be his most conventional novel format through its depiction of the attempts of its eponymous hero to rediscover the repressed memories of his past. I have chosen to discuss *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* because, unlike his previous two works, they do not contain any immediate references to Sebald's personal past. While my concern with time applies to all four of Sebald's works, it is in his last two works that Sebald emphatically stresses that our indebtedness and responsibilities to the past do not necessarily originate from an immediately recognisable personal connection.
Section Two introduces Sebald as a writer who, like Janet Frame, displays equal measures of reverence and scepticism towards language. Sebald's prose works, which juxtapose photographs with text and which were originally published in German, are examples of hybrid works. They unsettle the sovereignty of the present or the Said of the text through undermining the reader's ability to position one medium or one language as the central interpretative schema. His works' hybridity creates an in-between space which undermines their sovereignty, thus gesturing towards a model of time that does not prioritise presence. Like Frame, Sebald unsettles genre categorisations but interestingly, unlike Frame, his later work *Austerlitz* is a more conventional novel than his earlier work. In *The Rings of Saturn* Sebald disturbs the Said through creating a narrative that defers meaning, while in *Austerlitz* a poetics of disruption disturbs every attempt to establish a stabilised present. Sebald's disruptive stylistic techniques challenge his reader to enter a realm where language has forgone its authority to convey meaning and where uncertainty can lead to ethical responsibility.

Chapter Five then turns to address Sebald's critique of the philosophy of the Same. I begin by identifying Sebald's representations of clock-time as a metonym for the ego's synchronisation of time from the perspective of the present. While Frame draws on the role that communities' ideologies play in affirming the ego's sovereignty over a timeless present moment, Sebald is more explicit in his historicising of this model of time as endemic to modernity. Sebald uses the conceit of clock-time to suggest the implicit connections between the rise of empirical systems of knowledge or rationalisation and mass industrialisation in modernity and, in turn, to allude indirectly to the Holocaust. He identifies the priority that modernity's time-consciousness affords to the present moment with larger communal practices and social developments. Contained by the present's need for affirmation, the future is translated into a progress-orientated discourse and the past into a self-confirming narrative. Moreover, Sebald suggests that modernity's 'present' time-consciousness, which resembles the ego's domain of presence, continues to affect how societies at the end of the twentieth century think about time. Both writers' works concur in their diagnosis that the ego's reduction of time into a self-affirming synchrony is an unethical response to time.

The last chapter highlights the vulnerability of Sebald's traumatised and melancholic protagonists. Sebald's emphasis across the two works changes: in *The
Rings of Saturn, he charts the ego's own weariness with being, while in Austerlitz the melancholic condition of the protagonist is directly positioned as an ethical response to the Other which does not restore the present for the benefit of the suffering ego. The subtle shift in focus, which is carried out between the two novels, affects the reader's response to the Other. In his earlier novel, Sebald's depictions of his traumatised characters evoke the reader's response of sympathy but, by contrast, his invocation of shadowy non-specific Others are unidentifiable and remain distant from the reader. The reader's somewhat torn sympathies in response to The Rings of Saturn suggest that an ethics of those who have nothing in common remains an uncertain and fragile project. In Austerlitz the protagonist's and Austerlitz's traumatic subjection to the Other is depicted as the painful, but necessary, cost of ethical responsibility. Nevertheless, despite Sebald's more open identification of the Other with the victims of the Holocaust in his later work, I argue that he continues to prioritise the ethical relationship over and above the construction of general rules of justice. This is perhaps most evident in Sebald's presentation of a form of ethical remembrance that requires the self's ongoing patience and vigilance. For Sebald, the self's subjection to such a form of memory-work is a signal of the self's acquiescence to its ethical responsibility to the Other.

My identification of a form of ethical responsibility that originates in interruption recognises the current need for a model of ethics which concerns those who have nothing in common. Frame's and Sebald's works reveal that such a model requires a form of subjectivity that is subjected to the Other in the name of ethical responsibility and a form of ethics that is not a prescribed code but which instead is an ongoing performance of interruption. Both Frame's and Sebald's works suggest that an ethical response to trauma requires that the respondee is subjected to melancholy, wounding and the unsettling of the primary mode of Western thought, which they use to define their world and their place within it. Through their works they show that literature never stopped being at the command of ethics; rather, trusting in a view of time as unity and stasis, we were unable to see the ethical which signifies within a poetics of interruption. Through invoking and practising a temporality that does not affirm presence, a model of time, that is to say, which performs 'responsibility for the Other,' both Frame and Sebald signal literature's capacity for ethical reflection. Following in the footsteps of literature's turn to ethics, this thesis's own turn to ethics seeks to show the ongoing validity and urgency of identifying the specific elements of
literary texts which allow literature to respond ethically to trauma. Both writers demonstrate that through interrupting the present moment an ethical response to trauma can emerge which not only responds to the past Other but also the future Other, who requires a time that does not foreclose the future in which they are yet to come.
 SECTION ONE
Taking Action against the Tyranny of Time: Janet Frame

In *The Adaptable Man*, the character Aisley, a Christian clergyman who is suffering from a crisis in faith, remonstrates that "Someone has to begin […] to take action against the tyranny of time" (212) and, as if in response, twenty-three years later the narrator of *The Carpathians* recounts "another story of the town of the Memory Flower" which involves "the trickling away of the perception of time" (14). In this chapter I will argue that in *The Adaptable Man* (1965) and *The Carpathians* (1988), Frame stages her own response to Aisley's plea which not only highlights the tyranny and violence of time but also explores an ethical alternative. In accordance with a Levinasian construction of ethical time—one that recognises the plight of the Other and the insufficiency of the ego's responses—Frame's literary actions do not replace one totalistic vision of time with another. Instead, she proposes a form of time that is marked by rupture and discontinuity—a mode of time Levinas names "diachrony"—and one that will not allow the ego to establish itself at the centre of a temporal continuum that begins from presence. The ego's synchronised time is characterised, as Lingis explains, by the fact that "the very move of Being is to present, re-present, synchronize, integrate [and] totalize" (Introduction xxxix). Distinguishing the time of diachrony from that of the ego, Levinas emphasises that "the present is essence that begins and ends, beginning and end assembled in a thematizable conjunction; it is the finite" (*Otherwise* 11). By contrast, "Diachrony is the refusal of conjunction, the non-totalizable, and in this sense, infinite" (*Otherwise* 11). The "non-totalizable" time of diachrony shares features with Frame's literary style, which, as Jan Cronin suggests, "is fostered by Frame's willingness to adopt multiple, contradictory poses, and which ultimately frustrates generalisations" (*Attending* 4). My discussion of diachrony in Frame's work is thus not limited to her literary representations of the effect that this form of time has on her characters but also interprets her disruptive literary techniques as enactments of the time of diachrony. By focusing on Frame's representations of time through a Levinasian lens, I am able to bring to the fore the ethical relationship between time, subjectivity and language in her works.

Frame's diagnosis of time as tyrannous implicitly recognises the role time plays in prioritising presence and the self-same at the expense of the Other and
alterity. Asking, "In what way has a certain determination of time implicitly governed the determination of the meaning of Being in the history of philosophy?" ("Ousia" 31), Jacques Derrida, in response to his own question, concludes that "The concept of time, in all its aspects, belongs to metaphysics, and it names the domination of presence" ("Ousia" 63). What underlies the relationship between time, subjectivity and language is the problem of presence. Presence is the ground or arché that informs all philosophical thought about time and subjectivity and, in turn, also all literary attempts to represent fictional worlds. The domination of presence, or the tyranny of time as Aisley describes it, prioritises the ego's grasp of the present moment over and above other times and other people. Frame's response to Aisley's plea must thus address the problem of presence within her novels at two different levels. First, at the level of content Frame interrogates representations of unified subjectivities that construct a presence which excludes the Other and, second perhaps more importantly, at the level of form Frame calls into question her own representational practices, subjecting her readers to a form of time which prevents them from feeling at home in her texts.

In Chapter One, "Disturbances at the Level of the Said," I examine Frame's attempts to tackle the tyranny of time as it is expressed in language. The problem of presence permeates all attempts to represent—whether fictional or non-fictional—since language is the medium through which the writer translates their encounters with the exterior world into unified and thematisable inscriptions that combine to make the totality of the text. This then raises the vexed issue—which also concerns Sebald's works—of how Frame can use the tool of language to challenge the violence of language. Turning to Vincent O'Sullivan's evocative description of Frame's view of the "Word as angel and monster" (ix), we find a partial answer to this question. Language contains not only the threat of conceptual violence but also the potential to interrupt the very same concepts and to undermine presence. Describing this second aspect of the dual function of language, Amit Pinchevski emphasises that language in Levinas's philosophy is "first and foremost a way of approaching and addressing someone" (93). Importantly, Pinchevski's description of language as approach does not suggest its conciliatory or totalising properties but, rather, the way in which language can signify before its production of authoritative declarations. Levinas uses the terms Saying and Said to distinguish between these two different functions of language, with Saying referring to language's primary function as an approach and
Said to the representational function of language. The Saying thus interrupts the Said through signalling a mode of utterance that precedes the representational function of language. Inevitably, every interruption or Saying is ultimately translated into the Said and no longer resists the totality of the text—and hence we can claim only a partial answer to the violence of language. Nonetheless, Frame's skilful use of postmodern disruptive literary techniques creates a series of interruptions that threaten to implode the presence and autonomy of the text, thus constituting an approach that resists the thematising function of the Said.

While acknowledging the unavoidability of the Said—the medium in which Frame must articulate her challenge to presence—Frame nevertheless attempts to disrupt the Said at two levels within both novels. At the first level, in order to disrupt the authority of language as expressed in the Said, Frame dismantles the aesthetic assumptions of particular narrative forms. If, as Pinchevski argues, we must view "interruption as what is denied in the discourse of the Said," then Frame’s challenge to conventional narrative forms (if we understand such forms as examples of the Said) are acts of "the puncturing of the Saying in the Said" (11). Despite the "appearance of aesthetic conformism" (Delrez, Manifold 152), The Adaptable Man subverts the literary conventions of the murder-mystery novel and reveals the writer's processes of construction. Frame undermines the murder-mystery's implicit process of restoring the reader's equanimity which occurs through its provision of causal explanations for murder. She implies thus the necessity of a form of justice which transcends the limited and superficial front of communal caring that is projected by Little Burgelstatham. In The Carpathians Frame critiques the traditional use of the trope of the journey to sustain national and individual identity. The journey of return, which culminates in an act of self-identification, is antithetical to The Carpathians' own journey. Instead, in The Carpathians, Frame's quest is for a form of subjectivity which does not resemble the unified ego and which has the potential, thus, to exhibit ethical regard for those others with whom the ego cannot identify. Both novels' subversion of literary conventions signals Frame's overarching commitment to a form of ethical justice that requires the self to relinquish its position of sovereignty for the sake of the Other.

The second aspect of Frame’s disruption of language is seen in her experimental literary techniques that undermine the unity of both novels’ structure. Just as Levinas's writing style changed across the publication of his two key texts,
Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, Janet Frame, similarly, continues to craft a literary style that by *The Carpathians* produces her most radical postmodern experimentations with language. In *The Adaptable Man* an omniscient narrator openly identifies the restricting frames of the narrative structure whereas, in *The Carpathians*, Frame's creation of a series of imploding narrative frames enacts the same disruptive function without resorting to a form of didactic instruction. Sharing an affinity, as Eaglestone suggests, with Levinas's later work which "performatively foregrounds language in order to disrupt the said" (*Ethical Criticism* 162), postmodern literary techniques undermine the autonomy of the text and gesture toward another form of articulation beyond the conceptual violence of language.

In Chapter Two, "Autonomy: The Time of the Self," I turn my focus to the novel's thematic representations of the violence of presence. In both novels, Frame reveals that the ego's autonomy, its freedom, depends on its ability to construct a timeless present moment which tames the flux of time. Presiding over this unchanging present moment, the ego is able to translate exteriority into its own possession through the thematising function of consciousness. In her fiction, Frame represents the house and garden as material manifestations of her characters' psychological stronghold on presence. While the dwelling symbolically assures the ego that it has successfully kept exteriority at bay, Frame's characters must also exist alongside others, which, she suggests, leads them to seek a communal structure that will maintain their autonomy. Frame presents Little Burgelstatham and Puamahara as examples of communities which first and foremost protect the ego's autonomy. Like the ego, these communities construct a unified and unchanging form of identity through developing defence mechanisms that contain all that is exterior to the community, including non-members. The community's assimilation of non-members through both mental and physical acts of inclusion or exclusion, however, fails to offer the Other what Jacques Derrida conceives of as radical hospitality. Such hospitality requires an unsettling of the community's subjectivity as it welcomes what it does not expect and what problematises its autonomy. Presenting Little Burgelstatham and Puamahara as prototypical examples of the violence that ensues from conformity, Frame is not only critical of their inability to offer hospitality to others but also suggests that the concept of individuality, which such communities purportedly maintain, is an illusion. In both novels Frame depicts her characters' individuality as an example of a non-unique form
of identity which is constructed in accordance with their community's ideologies. Through various social practices and institutions, communities naturalise and legitimise ideologies which constitute its members as subjects. Oblivious that their individuality depends on subjection to communal ideologies, Frame's characters view themselves as unique when, in fact, they are no more than products of conformity. Whether religion in *The Adaptable Man*, or the thematisation of the Other through colonial systems of signification in *The Carpathians*, Frame presents both of these examples of ideology supporting her characters' view of the exterior world as a moment of their own presence.

In the second and third sections of Chapter Two, I address how the future and past are complementary derivatives of the ego's violent assertion of presence. Although the past and the future seemingly introduce a disruption of the ego's presence, Frame illustrates how the ego recuperates and anticipates both times, translating them into moments of its own presence, as past-presence and future-presence. Both novels focus on the rapid development of post-industrial societies and their unstoppable drive for progress at all costs. Frame’s fictional construction of a new kind of people—the adaptable man, as presented in the novel of the same title—proposes that the future does not represent the unknowable and strange but, instead, can be reduced to a calculated trajectory of increasing progress. Through its progress-orientated vision, the ego possesses the future and ensures its own presence cannot be disrupted by the uncertain. Therefore, the future in both novels does not rupture the ego's presence but confirms its autonomy and, consequently, affirms a violent mode of existence. The past, similarly, is not allowed to disrupt the ego's presence and, as Frame illustrates in both novels, is subsequently either eradicated or reduced to the status of a commodity that confirms the ego’s autonomy.

Frame's experimentation with the dual functions of language works in tandem with her thematic exploration of the way in which the ego's violent mode of being can be disturbed which I address in the third, and final, chapter, "Heteronomy: The Time of the Other." In the first section of Chapter Three, my discussion focuses on Frame's depictions of the vulnerability of the ego, which is experienced at the level of the body. While *The Adaptable Man* depicts isolated moments of disturbance that interrupt the ego's presence, it is in *The Carpathians* that an even greater and lasting radical break-up of time, which distorts ontological categories of being, is announced by Frame's literary conceit, the Gravity Star. Consequently, despite their conscious
and deliberate assertions of presence, Frame's characters are rendered vulnerable and thus potentially able to be exposed to the threat that exteriority poses to their stronghold on presence. In the second section I will contrast both novels' depiction of the Other that interrupts the ego's presence. In the earlier novel, the spectral presence of Julio announces a form of justice that recognises the ethical importance of a time that foregrounds the ego's responsibility for both past and future generations. By contrast, in *The Carpathians*, the Other takes on the corporeal form of Decima, an institutionalised autistic child. The novel's ethical impulse to signal the ego's responsibility for radical alterity thus sits uneasily alongside Frame's political commitment to highlight the ego's responsibility for an identifiable form of otherness—the dispossessed and marginalised of society. In the third, and final, section of Chapter Three, I address the dilemma that permeates not only Levinas's philosophy but, I suggest, also his own very personal desire to acknowledge the victims of the Holocaust: namely, what form can ethical remembrance take when the ego's act of recollection always originates from presence and thus is violent? If the Other commands the ego with an infinite responsibility that cannot be surmounted, how can the ego respond to its debt to past generations? In *The Adaptable Man*, Frame's answer lies in the traumatised site of the body which she depicts as a passive receptacle of the past. By contrast, in *The Carpathians*, Frame acknowledges the violence of intentional acts of remembrance but, nevertheless, suggests that the ego, as a witness to the past, owes a duty to respond. Frame's subtle emphasis that the witness's relationship with the past announces a burden not to forget shifts the focus of memory work from the ego towards the Other which requires that the ego's response is subject to future interruptions. Indeed, Frame's own literary practices replicate the ethical necessity of an ongoing process of interruption when it comes to accounts of the past, as does the narrator's hesitant announcement at the opening of the novel that this is to be "another story of the town of the Memory Flower" and thus, not the only, or final, one (14; emphasis added). For Frame, the deconstruction of the present moment not only produces an ethical response to the past but also ensures that a just future awaits generations yet to come.
Containing "something different, something nobody counted on" (Calder 96), Frame's novels open themselves to an unforeseeable future reception. Their openness towards being interpreted through a variety of critical frameworks has fostered what Jan Cronin identifies as, "the most recent addition to the already plentiful supply of myths surrounding Janet Frame [namely] that both she and her work occupy a space that is somehow beyond criticism" (Attending 1). Without wishing to claim that Levinas reveals the essence of a Frame novel—a claim that is indeed counter to Levinasian ethics—her writing's openness towards the future paradoxically supports Frame's novels' commitment to a Levinasian form of ethics. For rather than seeking to reduce the Other, which can in this context be clumsily equated with Frame's fiction, Levinasian ethics allows the residue of Saying, when understood as the non-thematisable, diachronic aspects of her work, to resonate beyond their articulation in the present time of her novels. As a form of ethics that, as Bernasconi argues, "is more concerned with questioning than with providing answers" ("Ethics" 8), Levinas's philosophy complements a form of literature that is more concerned with resisting generalisations and posing challenges to the reader than with providing a reassuring reading experience. The reader who takes part in Frame's literary "show-down between text and reader" may be, as Norbert Platz suggests, "a loser rather than […] a winner" (204), but, their loss may nonetheless be a triumph for ethics.

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5 The phrase Alex Calder uses to describe the complexities of Frame's fiction is borrowed from Allen Curnow's poem, "The Unhistoric Story:"

And whatever islands may be
Under or over the sea,
It is something different, something
Nobody counted on. (80)
CHAPTER ONE
Disturbances at the Level of the Said

Despite Levinas's and Frame's admiration of literature, as seen in their works' extensive intertextual references, they both exhibit an ambivalent relationship to language. For both writer and philosopher, language is the key medium in societies that produces conformity and that maintains the violence of the ego's presence. Nonetheless, language also, according to Levinas, signals the approach of the Other and the moment of ethics and, for Frame, it is the "treasure" that hints at another way of being beyond that of violence. Nevertheless, a tension continues to persist within Frame's work; namely, how can a medium predicated on violence be used to hint at another way of being? Or, perhaps more to the point, how can Frame use the tool of language to challenge the violence of language?

The same dilemma permeates Levinas's philosophical work. His response to this dilemma is evident not only in his philosophical argumentation but also in the increasingly experimental writing style which he adopts between the publication of *Totality and Infinity* and his later work *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. For Levinas, the problem of presence inextricably pervades the relationship between time, being and language. He explains:

> The temporalization of time, as it shows itself in the said, is indeed recuperated by an active ego which recalls through memory and reconstructs in historiography that past that is bygone, or through imagination and prevision anticipates the future, and, in writing, synchronizing the signs, assembles into a presence, that is, represents, even the time of responsibility for the other. (*Otherwise 51*)

The active ego, starting and returning from its home of presence, undertakes a systematic and violent temporalisation of time that reduces the past and future to known possessions of the ego and for the ego. Language, in the form of the Said, creates and assists the ego's temporalisation and thus reduces the ego's relationship with others to a finite responsibility that does not challenge the ego's world. In order to disturb the prevalence of a metaphysics of presence, Levinas realised he could not

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6 Susanna Zinato argues that language as treasure is a "leitmotif" in Frame's fiction (184). Frame uses the term throughout the third part in her autobiography, *The Envoy to Mirror City*, describing how the treasures brought back from the Mirror City, "have faded in the light of this world, in their medium of language they have acquired imperfections you never intended for them" (*Autobiography* 434). This implies that language is a flawed medium for representing people's treasures but it is also the only medium that we have.
be content with merely questioning the ego's assertion of autonomy but also had to scrutinise the very language through which he framed his argument. In an interview that discusses Totality and Infinity, Levinas therefore acknowledges the "ontological terminology" that he used throughout his earlier work, and explains that "I have since tried to get away from that language" ("Paradox" 171). Indeed, Levinas went on to successfully craft a literary style in Otherwise than Being which, as Eaglestone observes, has close similarities with postmodern prose:

The text [Otherwise than Being], like a work of literature, explicitly performs itself, and as a result, echoes literary writing, especially perhaps self-reflexive contemporary postmodern poetry and prose. [...] In his style of writing and choice of metaphors Levinas performatively foregrounds language in order to disrupt the said. (Ethical Criticism 162)

A similar shift in Frame's literary style can be traced from The Adaptable Man to The Carpathians. Although both novels experiment with postmodern literary techniques, the earlier novel, while depicting the violence of presence, is less successful in adopting a style of writing that disrupts the Said. By contrast, like the language experimentations in Otherwise than Being, The Carpathians foregrounds the Said only to disrupt its presence through drawing the reader's attention to the construction of the text's frame(s).

Perhaps the key to understanding Frame's shift in literary style lies in foregrounding Frame's ongoing experimentation with modes of indirectly "hinting" at another mode of being rather than asserting the presence of an authoritative replacement. In her chapter "'Signposts to a world that is not even mentioned': Janet Frame's Ethical Transcendence," Simone Drichel addresses the similarities between Janet Frame's concept of transcendence and that found in Levinas's philosophy. She argues that "the beyond"—where the term signals a realm beyond ontological categories of thought—"cannot be expressed or represented" but, instead, "can [...] only ever be intimated" (185; emphasis added). Frame does not attempt to re-present another mode of being; rather, she gestures to it through writing in a way that disturbs conventional uses of language, thus destroying the illusion of language's presence and authority. In The Adaptable Man and The Carpathians, Frame subverts literary genre conventions and, in turn, experiments with disruptive literary techniques. These

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7 Similarly, Jan Cronin also characterises Frame's literary style in terms of its 'gestures' when she suggests that "Frame's fiction perpetually gestures beyond such ready classifications as the postmodern, the postcolonial, and those paradigms offered by contemporary critical theory" ("Theoretical Terrain" 45).
experimentations reveal an impulse in her work to undermine her own authorial control over the text's presence. This impulse is found most strongly in *The Carpathians* where Frame moves away from critiquing the Said—by telling the reader of its violence—to actually undermining its presence through enacting interruptions within her own prose that "gesture" to another mode of being. Instead of maintaining the totality of her texts through the construction of a unified narrative, Frame invites and practises interruption. Frame's foregrounding of disruption hints at the possibility of another mode of being or, in Levinasian terms, at an otherwise than being that does not begin with presence, the ego and the Said.

Janet Frame's ambivalent relationship to language is well-documented. In his introduction to the Oxford University Press's third collection of *New Zealand Short Stories*, Vincent O'Sullivan observes that Frame's "short stories […] moved in new directions, along veins of imagery and subversion that harried the cherished humanist assumption that language itself was intrinsically redemptive. Her concern was more ambivalent, with the 'Word as monster or angel'" (ix). Acknowledging O'Sullivan's observation, Susanna Zinato examines how, for Frame, language carries out a dual function: it both "reaps death and fear in her stories and novels, [and] it is also the 'treasure'" (184). Similarly, Robert Ross, while drawing on the notion of language as treasure in Frame's work, also notes how "often she admits [that] 'the medium of language' fails" (320). Identifying Frame's ambivalence towards language, Gina Mercer argues that for Frame language fails because, it "can be comforting because of its familiarity, but ultimately its comfort is that of the straitjacket. It allows communication, just as a straitjacket allows movement" (386). As a straitjacket, "language restricts communication […] through its 'division' of experience into exclusive and opposite halves" (Mercer 386). Frame's distrust of language is thus a result of its reduction of the exterior world to a series of binary oppositions: sane/insane, ego/other, known/unknown. In her writing, Frame depicts language, in its day-to-day use in societies, as a violent medium that "create[s] and maintain[s] exclusion and alienation" (Zinato 184). Such exclusions can be attributed to language's ability to divide the world into a mentality of us and them, or I and other—whereby the term 'other' no longer refers to Levinas's radical account of the Other who exceeds my comprehension but, instead, denotes the naming of one whom the ego contains and chooses to exclude. Frame's commitment to breaking down the conceptual divisions enacted by language inspires her literary project which, as Zinato
diagnoses, is to "ruthlessly explode the walls of euphemisms, clichés, awful acts of
politeness, and embarrassed or cruel jokes designed to avoid, not to 'acknowledge,' as
much as possible" (185). But perhaps it is Frame herself who has most powerfully
captured the scope of her own literary project when, in Living in the Maniototo, she
describes language as "the hawk suspended above eternity" who can only ever "hint at
what lies beneath it on the untouched, undescribed almost unknown plain" (62).
Language, as Frame's metaphor reveals, is like a hawk unable to land: it carries out
violent reductions of others that reduce human contact to battles that are waged in
order to ensure the supremacy of the ego's world but, in doing so, it always misses an
elusive dimension of human existence. However, Frame's insistence that the hawk of
language can also hint at something more suggests that language can signal a world
that does not partake in reductions of the Other and which is outside the ambit of
ontological frameworks of known and unknown. It is in this tenuous position of
hinting at the plain that lies beyond the everyday use of language that, for Frame,
language becomes the angel that is suspended above her pen.

Like Frame's fiction, Levinas's philosophy is centred on the ambivalence of
language. For Levinas, language does not simply involve a mimetic representation of
reality but undertakes an act of narration or translation that reduces the Other to a
moment of the ego's knowledge, allowing it to avoid, as Zinato puts it with reference
to Frame's unease with regards to language, "whole areas of 'unpalatable' experience"
that would problematise the ego's being in the world (185). Levinas's account of the
Saying as openness and the Said as closure closely resembles O'Sullivan's description
of Frame's view of the word as angel and monster. Language in the form of the Said
affirms and supports the ego's presence since, as Eaglestone explains, "The Said
imposes a totalising teleological narrative of identity and consciousness" (Ethical
Criticism 154). The ego's self-affirming narrative demonstrates its ability to possess
the exterior world through thematisation and meaning. However, in order to contain
the exterior world, the Saying is reduced and thus betrayed: "The correlation of the
saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic
system and to ontology, is the price that manifestation demands. In language qua said
everything is conveyed before us, be it at the price of a betrayal" (Otherwise 6).
Language in the form of the Said is an unsuitable medium to represent the openness of
an event that does not begin from the ego. However, the betrayal of the Saying is
impossible to preclude, which then begs the question: how can language represent
what lies outside of the realm of the Said? Furthermore, how can Frame continue to validate the role of writers when their medium—the Said—repeats the violence of the "dehumanizing" form of language that is used in conformist societies (Zinato 184)?

In both The Adaptable Man and The Carpathians, Frame acknowledges the violence of language, which is perhaps most forcefully illustrated by Mattina's experience of anger against words that could be so arranged to seduce the speaker, the writer, the listener, the reader, into believing that a truth had been created or discovered; against the magnetic power that held the words together so that few dared separate them or examine them, but used them, again and again. (40)

In order to question the Said and its innate violence, Frame must question the medium which she cannot but use to foreground such questions or, as Susan Ash observes, "[a]ware that her medium, language, is always already inadequate, Frame must nevertheless translate the unrepresentable into the presented discourse of fiction" ("Narrative" 1). Similarly, linking Frame's dilemma to that of Levinas, Drichel notes that, like Levinas, Frame "faces the difficult task of expressing the singular in a medium—language—that is inevitably tied to the abstractions of concepts" (186). In order not to repeat the violence of the "abstractions of concepts"—whereby the ego conflates its experiences of the exterior world with abstract universalisms, instead of "approaching them in their individuality" (Levinas, "Freedom" 19)—the Said, which maintains presence, must be interrupted. "Such an interruption of the Said by the Saying" not only breaks up the words that, as Frame suggests, are used again and again but also, as Critchley argues, "denies the closure of the Said and, for Levinas, represents the only end […] that can be envisaged by philosophical discourse" (Ethics of Deconstruction 124). The end that Critchley attributes to Levinas's own philosophical project does not entail the end of language. Like the pivotal dramatic event of The Carpathians, the implosion of an astrological phenomenon which threatens the world's languages, Levinas's philosophy does not entail the destruction of the Said. In the novel, although the world's languages lie scattered and ruined on the ground, Mattina, nonetheless, continues to use language. Similarly, in Levinas's philosophy, as Critchley stresses, "there is no simple and radical overcoming of ontological or logocentric language through the ethical Saying of the otherwise than Being; rather, the ethical is the momentary interruption of the logos" (Ethics of Deconstruction 124). For Frame, language, as angel and Saying, does not replace the
Said, but instead is its ethical watch-guard which can momentarily interrupt the Said's seductive and violent articulations.

1.1 Disrupting Literary Conventions: Murder without Explanation
Following a visit to her London publishers in the early 1960s, Janet Frame, Marc Delrez suggests, may have suffered "a momentary lapse of faith in the powers of her own writing" (Manifold 151). Delrez recounts how "Frame reports that, at the end of the interview, the publisher gave her two novels to read, with the comment they 'have been bestsellers' and should be imitated" (151). Superficially, The Adaptable Man appears to be the product of Frame's publisher's instructions and hence signals Frame's shift towards writing a conventional novel. However, whether we treat The Adaptable Man, as Patrick Evans suggests, as an "abortive attempt to write a plotted novel, or […] an attempt at something which lies beyond the limits of traditional criticism" ("Janet Frame" 451)—notably Evans takes the latter view—the novel represents traditional literary conventions only to subvert them.

While The Adaptable Man is framed as a traditional murder-mystery, or 'whodunit,' Frame problematises this categorisation of the novel through revealing early on the murderer's identity. As Evans argues, instead of allowing the "traditional plot element [to] adapt fruitfully […] Frame's attitude seems to be destructive" ("Janet Frame" 449–51). While I agree with Evans' overall assessment of Frame's attitude, I nevertheless suggest that the full extent of Frame's destructiveness rests not in her revelation of the murderer's identity but in her subversion of the reader's expectations that the novel will nonetheless respond to the murder-mystery genre's identification of the murderer's motivation. However, Frame does not provide the reader with the expected psychological characterisation of a murderer who is the product of a disadvantaged childhood, suffering from madness, or who commits murder in response to the victim's provocation. Alwyn, the murderer, grew up in a small town with a supportive family where as an only child he was the centre of his parents' attention. As an adult, he has earned a university degree, has a doting girlfriend and has aspirations to be a novelist. He had never met Julio, the victim, before the murder and neither liked nor disliked him. Instead of charting Alwyn's psychological

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8 Delrez draws on Frame's own account of the interview which is presented in the third part of her autobiography trilogy, The Envoy from Mirror City. See, An Autobiography (Auckland: Random House, 1989) 400–03.
motivations for murdering Julio, Frame reveals that it "had been […] a normal twentieth-century act of a normal twentieth-century man" (150). In such a society, the ethical command of the Other, which Levinas identifies as, 'thou shall not kill,' goes unheeded. Frame calls into question a literary practice of reducing murder to a calculable or foreseeable event that can be attributed to a murderer's psyche. Her destructive attitude undermines the murder-mystery's implicit process of restoring the reader's equanimity which occurs when the violence of murder is overshadowed by the reader's desire to uncover causal explanations.

Frame's portrait of Little Burgelstatham as an 'olde English village' with 'olde English values', which would seemingly ensure that the murder of one of its newest members will not go unpunished, is undercut. Replacing the vision of an idealised country community, which Raymond Williams characterises as the "epitome of direct relationships: of face-to-face contacts within which we can find and value the real substance of personal relationships" (165), Frame paints a grim picture of village relationships. Upon the death of Ruby Urwin, the farm manager, whose dogs undoubtedly contributed to her death, declares "'it's no fault of mine" (184). Similarly, the death of Julio, an immigrant, is initially treated as a topic of conversation by the villagers but, ultimately, he is quickly forgotten. Frame undercuts the image of an olde English village as the epitome of a caring community and highlights how readily the villagers ignore the plight of others in order to maintain their own egocentric freedom.

Frame's "destructive attitude" reveals the processes of construction that traditional literary conventions conceal. Despite the appearance of ascribing to what Evans calls "psychological characterization," he notes that Frame's "pungency and compression" alters this tradition ("Janet Frame" 449), as seen in the prologue's inclusion of a series of statements that begin with 'I' and that link each character to a series of key concerns or motifs. Through the emphatic "I, I, I, I " that introduces each character's description in The Adaptable Man, Frame highlights the ego's process of self-identification which produces its autonomous identity. This example of what Evans refers to as "predestination" undermines the text's fictional world (449), drawing the reader's attention to the writer's tools and to a time beyond the novel's own. Distinguishing "between what that text says and what it does"—where Frame's destructive attitude produces examples of the latter—Cronin develops the terms "signification" and "modus operandi" in order to describe the dual, and often
conflicting, layers of representation within Frame's fiction ("Theoretical Terrain" 61–62). If the modus operandi of the text "subsume[s] and subvert[s]" the themes and concerns of the novel, then Frame's 'destructive attitude' reveal her "texts' self-consciousness regarding their terms of representation" (62). While the text 'says' who the murderer is, through highlighting the murder-mystery's terms of representation, its frames of identification, Frame undermines the reader's sense of justice. Her characters' willingness to dismiss the murder, as seen in their identification of the victim as an outsider and hence insignificant, reveals that they value their autonomy above justice. Thus, the subversive frames of The Adaptable Man suggest that justice will not lie in what the text says but rather in what it does: its act of questioning the 'justness' of a form of justice which appears primarily concerned with affirming the self's and the reader's self-assurance.

In The Adaptable Man Frame accedes to what Delrez describes as "a logic of exposure of its [the text's] own premises" ("'Conquest'" 142). Frame's "destructive attitude" ensures that the novel form's authoritative Said is disturbed; however, as I argue in the next section, Frame's own experimentations with a form of writing that acknowledges the inadequacies of the Said are largely confined to a narrative style that informs the reader of the inadequacies of the Said and of the need for interruption, but does not itself enact such disturbances. Frame's experimentations with language are thus carried out at the level of narration or diegesis—she tells the reader of the need for interruption—but does not show or imitate such disturbances actually occurring within the narration.

1.2 A Compromised Interruption of the Said
While at the thematic level in The Adaptable Man the spectre of Julio disturbs the villagers' presence, at the level of form or language, Frame is less successful at carrying out a disturbance of the Said. Frame's attempts to disrupt her own language are largely performed through a critique of the artist-figure, as seen in her depiction of characters who pursue writing careers, and through the persistent voice of an omniscient narrator who informs the reader of the world that the Said has excluded, but who does not seem to challenge the legitimacy of his or her own articulations. It is

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9 In his most recent work on Janet Frame, Delrez explores Frame's texts' response to the violence of history and uses Cronin's interpretative model in order to argue that The Adaptable Man performs a "flirtation with the rules of realism" ("'Conquest'" 142).
only at the end of *The Adaptable Man* that Frame performs what is perhaps the novel's most radical disturbance of the text's autonomy, that is, she asks a question which will upset the reader's equanimity.

The inclusion of Unity Foreman as a character in *The Adaptable Man*—a journalist who is hired by a magazine to write "Letters from the Countryside"—means both that the novel, according to Delrez, "resembles some of its predecessors in that it proclaims its own fictionality by staging a version of its author in a somewhat imaginative guise" but also that it contrasts with her previous fiction (*Manifold* 153). For, as Delrez observes, Unity "lacks the imaginative resourcefulness" of Frame's previous artist figures (*Manifold* 153). Consequently, Unity's inclusion in the novel provides an outlet for Frame's implicit criticism of a form of writing that does not problematise conformity but that instead assists it through acting as the "new tranquilising drugs" (*Adaptable* 250). Unity Foreman, as her name suggests, is the overseer of societies' drive for unity. Her sentimental depictions of village life that are constructed in accordance with her editor's prescriptions—"two-thirds flora and fauna; one third people; one-sixth old customs; one-sixth progress" (217)—reveal that language, instead of challenging totalistic cultural statements, all-too frequently replicates them. While, as a journalist, Unity's "complicit[y] in the larger conspiracy against otherness" may not be surprising (Delrez, *Manifold* 157), Frame's descriptions of Alwyn's literary ambitions which, as Delrez observes, "reflect his perfect at-home-ness in the twentieth century, an age of genocides and exterminations," perhaps are (159). Frame emphasises that through writing a novel, Alwyn does not seek to bridge his distance from others but to retain it: "Writing about it [experience], you could flail and splash your way to the shore, thrusting away those desperate fools who tried to cling to you for survival" (62).

Language—whether used for the sake of journalism or fiction—reinforces conformity. When Alwyn later turns to journalism and writes 'Letters from Spain,' his letters, like Unity's letters, are written to formula. They affirm readers' expectations and are drawn from schematic representations rather than lived experience. This preference for a "textual attitude," as Edward Said describes it, ensures the reproduction of representations that do not challenge the status quo, or as Said explains, "it seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human" (*Orientalism* 93). Frame's implicit critique of Unity's and Alwyn's writing practices is also more generally a
criticism of the violence of language which can tranquilise the reader into ignoring the exclusions upon which every Said is premised, as illustrated by Unity's letters, which can smoothly write-off the death of Julio as an *accidental* drowning. Such writing constructs and prefers a "good view" (*Adaptable* 62), over and above direct encounters with others.

In the novel, a large part of Frame's project to disrupt the Said is directed at highlighting what has been ignored or overlooked in order to attest to the Said's comprehensive authority. Frame largely carries out this task through the voice of a persistent omniscient narrator who assists the reader in their identification of the totalising practices of the Said. This is first illustrated when the narrator directly accuses the reader of assuming that upon Julio's death—and presumably in accordance with established literary conventions—he will be eradicated: "you might think that the world would seal itself against Botti Julio or you might hope it would be so" (20). Disturbing such literary conventions, the narrator announces however that "we place Botti Julio here" (20), and thus the novel's and reader's expectations of unity are shattered. Later in the novel, the narrator's voice again intrudes to bemoan the absence of the dentist-hero in fiction. This example of an atypical hero can only be included, as the narrator informs the reader, through the novelist's act of cheating which requires them to "write about him in such an interesting way that you will not realize he is a bore" (205). While the narrator's acts of interruption are undoubtedly an example of a self-reflexive device that disrupt the text's present and that draw attention to the novel's construction, the narrator's 'insights' are also dictated in the Said. The narrator's persistent voice that instructs and informs the reader of language's acts of exclusions is ultimately a vehicle of the Said. The narrator's own Said, presence or commentary is never interrupted but, instead, is presented as an authoritative voice of wisdom. Such an omniscient and authoritative voice performs the violent temporal processes of a metaphysics of presence, revealing that at the level of form in *The Adaptable Man*, the narrator's contestation of presence remains largely articulated in the Said.

Perhaps Frame's most successful stylistic example of interrupting the Said in *The Adaptable Man* occurs at the end of the novel, when she asks a question of the reader that also calls their own presence into question: "But, imposing our own weather, our own limits of reach and touch, our own star-shaped irreparable flaw, don't we all live in mirrors, forever?" (277). Instead of using the authoritative voice of
the omniscient narrator to instruct and inform the reader, Frame poses a question. The act of asking a question disturbs the unique sense of closure which, as Frank Kermode argues, is provided by the novel form's 'sense of an ending.' Without such a sense of an ending, the novel fails to provide the self's dreamed-of final point-of-view which, according to Kermode, is only available upon the ego's death bed and for which the novel form is a substitute. Thus I would like to suggest that by spoiling the novel's sense of an ending, Frame's question is also a disturbance of the ego's violent process of affirming presence; instead of closure or totality, which the question asked at the end of the novel subverts, the individual is interrupted and subordinated to the Other.

To ask a question, as Eaglestone explains, is to invite interruption: "Unlike a statement, a question is to be interrupted: a question starts a dialogue. An idea phrased as a question resists closure and begs not only an answer but another question, an interruption" (Ethical Criticism 138–39). A question not only incites interruption but is also itself a product of interruption because the ability to ask a question, according to Derrida, presupposes that "Language is already there, in advance," and "exceeds the question" (Of Spirit 129). As such, language, Derrida argues, consists of "a sort of promise of originary alliance to which we must have in some sense already acquiesced" (Of Spirit 129). This originary promise or "pledge," as Derrida also calls it, means that a question is "engaged by it in a responsibility it has not chosen and which assigns it even its liberty" (Of Spirit 130). If, as Critchley's interpretation of Derrida's argument claims, "the liberty and choice of the questioning attitude are subordinated to a prior responsibility" then "language begins as a response to the Other" and thus "in Levinasian terms," as Critchley concludes, "it is ethical" ("Question" 97). Frame's question thus rests on an originary responsibility to the Other, which although never able to be fulfilled once and for all, is acknowledged by her writing style which privileges interruption over closure. Unlike her criticism of the Said which is espoused by a persistent and unchallenged narrator, Frame's act of asking a question more successfully achieves an interruption of the Said that calls both the ego's and the novel's presence into question.

10 In The Sense of an Ending: Studies on the Theory of Fiction Kermode argues that the traumatic history of the twentieth-century has precipitated a "deep need for intelligible Ends" in order that people can give shape and meaning to their life in the face of so much chaos (8).
1.3 Disrupting Literary Conventions: The Self's Journey of No Return

A key literary trope that frames The Carpathians is the journey. In the case of the novel's protagonist, Mattina, her quest is to discover the Memory Flower, which she believes will provide her with a source of spirituality that can rejuvenate her sense of self-assurance. To borrow a phrase which Valerie Sutherland uses to describe The Carpathians' own literary journey, Mattina is seeking a "connection with something essentially human" (111). However, Frame's mockery of the egocentrism of Mattina's journey, which affirms a form of humanism that presupposes Mattina's sovereignty over the present, is implicit in the townsfolk's revelation that the Memory Flower is no more than a tourism gimmick. Nevertheless, Frame continues to present the journey as a structural device that can imbue literature with an ethical impetus. Like Mattina, The Carpathians appears to seek a source that can confirm a particular model of subjectivity; however, unlike Mattina's journey, the novel's own does not present the return of the autonomous and unified self of humanism, who can authoritatively define the world before them, as its ultimate goal. The Carpathians' pseudo-ontological quest does not reinstate the self, but, instead, affirms a state of being-for-the-other. This form of subjectivity which subjects the ego to the Other produces an ego that is unable to return home to the site of its all-encompassing presence. Thus Frame's revelation that Mattina does not find a means to reaffirm her presence in Puamahara not only suggests the beginning of her protagonist's ethical responsibility but also the novel's own connection with something essentially human.

Delrez argues that the journey, in particular in New Zealand fiction, is the constitutive metaphor of national identity: "In New Zealand […] such national self-representation includes the iconography of the journey, because the voyage of exploration and conquest in which the nation originated has been seized and celebrated as a foundational myth" (Manifold 1). While in The Carpathians it is an American who undertakes a journey in order to access the rich source of memory that the home of the Memory Flower supposedly proffers, Mattina's quest is similarly centred upon the establishment of a foundational myth; that is to say, through accessing a rich past, Mattina hopes to fulfil her desire for spiritual wholeness. However, Mattina's quest is undermined from the outset by a community that refuses to acknowledge their connection to the town of the Memory Flower. As Mark

\[11\] See my discussion in Chapter Two of how Mattina's quest to consume another culture's past is a continuation of colonial practices that divide the world into us and them, self and other.
Williams aptly observes of Mattina's journey, "instead of finding the intact memory of Maori spiritual presence as something healing and active, she finds only a nagging sense of dislocation" (53). Frame's subversive treatment of Mattina's journey signals that her work does not advocate the self-serving return of a Ulysses, who in Levinas's work is the symbol of the ego's violent affirmation of their present, but instead presents a departure from this literary tradition and its prime product, the autonomous self. Nonetheless, critics such as Valerie Sutherland, while recognising the violence of Mattina's attempted journey, have claimed that The Carpathians' nostalgia for "former values and concepts which had created a seemingly stable and knowable world" means that it adopts a similar trajectory (113).

Sutherland's argument that, like Mattina, The Carpathians also embarks on a journey of return that will culminate in a knowable world is framed through her identification of a modernist impulse within the novel. As the following questions, by Suzette Henke, imply, arguments can be made for situating the novel as either a modernist or post-modernist work: "Is her fictive frame modernist in its search for organic unity and formal coherence? Or is it postmodern in its self-reflexive strategies of referential fracture and textual invagination?" (36). For Sutherland, this means that The Carpathians contains a "pivotal contradiction," namely that "the form of the novel works against the substance of the discourse; a post-modern structure encloses a modernist world view" (111). Sutherland associates The Carpathians' modernist view with providing the novel's 'connection with something essentially human,' assuming thus that postmodern writing techniques cannot convey such a connection. However, the modernist vision which, as Sutherland suggests, provides The Carpathians with a humanist dimension parallels the vision that supports Mattina's quest to reaffirm her own presence. They both prioritise a construction of unity that prioritises the self at the expense of the Other and, thus, one that can only ever produce an egocentric account of being human. Susan Ash, who provides a thoughtful analysis of the novel's post-modern literary strategies, observes a similar tension in The Carpathians. However, her conclusion does not take the step of identifying the novel's humanist aspect with modernist fiction but, instead, emphasises that it is "inaccessible" ("Narrative" 14). She concludes that "even as this novel troubles ontological boundaries with its narrative indeterminacies, [...] it remains firmly underpinned by a dependence on some inaccessible, but nevertheless existing 'hinterland' of truth" (14). This 'truth,' which I associate with The Carpathians' humanist dimension, remains
inaccessible to Frame's characters who can only ever experience ethical responsibility when their ontological boundaries have been disturbed.

The novel's journey of no-return is compatible with what Sutherland refers to as a 'connection with something essentially human' if, and only if, this connection does not presuppose a unified and egocentric model of subjectivity, but rather an ego called into question. Through highlighting the distinction between Mattina's and the novel's trajectories, Frame emphasises that the structure of the novel does not replicate the model of a self that can gather its perceptions of the external world into a unity. In this regard, Levinas's description of his own philosophy in terms of a journey without return is helpful; he writes: "to the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to oppose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever" ("Trace" 348). Mattina's journey is that of Ulysses: she seeks a return to her self; the novel's trajectory, by contrast, is that of Abraham: it does not seek to re-establish its presence. Adopting Cronin's distinction "between what that text says and what it does" ("Theoretical Terrain" 62), we can say that while the novel signifies Mattina's attempts to affirm herself—or a return to presence—its structure, or modus operandi, both undermines Mattina's attempts and signals another trajectory. Instead of following a well-worn path of intellectual thought that positions the ego as the starting point from which to establish a notion of humanity, I suggest that The Carpathians gestures towards a form of ethics that does not depend on the ego and its literary equivalent: modernist representations of subjectivity which achieve unity through conscious thought. Frame's advocacy of the role that a model of non-unified subjectivity can play in advancing humanity is exemplified by Levinas's argument that "to contest that being is for me, not to contest that being is for the sake of man; is not to give up on humanism […]. It is simply to contest that the humanity of man resides in the positing of an I" ("Transcendence" 14). The novel's journey forgoes a unified presentation of its own events and characters in order to locate an example of humanism within its own pages.

The Carpathians demonstrates that postmodern experimentations with language do not preclude subjectivity; rather, they render it in another form than that of the sovereign ego. When asked in an interview if his ethical thought was "an attempt to preserve subjectivity in some form," Levinas's reply distinguishes between two forms of subjectivity: Descartes' unified and sovereign ego, and an ethical state of otherwise than being. He explains:
It is not that I wish to preserve, over and against the structuralist critique, the idea of a subject who would be a substantial or mastering centre of meaning […] Ethical subjectivity dispenses with the idealizing subjectivity of ontology which reduces everything to itself. The ethical 'I' is subjectivity precisely in so far as it kneels before the other. ("Interview" 63)

The distinction Levinas draws between these two forms of subjectivity reveals that a structuralist critique of subjectivity is not incompatible with his notion of an ethical subjectivity. In literature, postmodern fiction realises a Levinasian form of subjectivity when it emphasises the role representations, or the Said, play in constructing our understanding of ourselves. For example, postmodernist texts which use self-reflexive devices in order to draw attention to the text's construction undermine the artifice of the text as self-contained and thus destroy the text's illusion of presence. Postmodern texts' undermining of their self-coherence highlight an important aspect of the larger project of postmodernism which, as Linda Hutcheon explains, is "identified with a 'decentering' of [a] particular notion of the individual," specifically, a humanist notion of subjectivity, which presents the individual as "unique and autonomous" (13). In her seminal text in the field, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon, while acknowledging that she is "going against a dominant trend in contemporary fiction" (3), nevertheless argues against interpretations of postmodern fiction as apolitical. Taking my cue from Hutcheon's precedent, I argue that alongside the political impetus of postmodern language, its ethical potential also needs to be considered. Insofar as postmodern fiction's decentred subject resembles the ego when it is called into question by the Other, we can begin to theorise a form of humanism that originates in a non-unified form of subjectivity. According to Richard Cohen, Levinas's philosophy "proposes a conception of the 'humanity of the human,'" in which "being 'for-the-other' takes precedence over, is better than, 'being for-itself'" (Introduction xxvi). Thus while Frame emphasises that Mattina cannot claim a connection with something essentially human through appropriating another culture's spirituality for the benefit of 'being for-itself,' Frame's depiction of Mattina's vulnerability—as her sovereignty is increasingly undermined in the latter half of the novel—suggest that Mattina may be able to discover this connection in a state of being 'for-the-other.'

In the context of Frame's writing, acknowledging a possible ethical impetus in postmodern writing does not depend on identifying the modernist features of Frame's representational practices. If *The Carpathians*' trajectory is not seen as a return to the
domain of the sovereign ego, but as a movement of the self in a never-ceasing quest towards an inaccessible Other, then the novel does not contain a pivotal contradiction. The form—postmodern experimentations with language which draw attention to the Said and interrupt the text's presence—supports the content, namely, a turn away from the violent conformity of the ego which ceaselessly attempts to maintain its presence, and a turn towards an ethical subjectivity. *The Carpathians* demonstrates that a postmodern text can convey a humanist dimension but, this is a form of humanism which requires the ego to embark on a journey of no return for the sake of the Other. In the next section I suggest that the trope of the journey illustrates the way in which, instead of seeking an Ulyssian return to the self, *The Carpathians* explores a journey of greater danger: one that will not provide the reader with a final frame from which they can assess the events of the novel.

1.4 An Interrupted Interruption

Producing more and more textual frames, which prevent the production of a unified account, *The Carpathians* reveals the ethical significance of a form of postmodern writing that disrupts the Said. In order for Mattina's journey to be completed, it must enact a return to the self. However, the narrative frames of the novel—an example of Cronin's modus operandi—deny this possibility of return through revealing that Mattina is the imaginative creation of her adult son. As the note that concludes the novel divulges, "perhaps the town of Puamahara, which I in my turn visited, never existed? Nor did my mother and father in the way they are portrayed, for they died when I was seven years old and I never knew them" (196). Thus, John Henry Brecon's account of his mother is imaginative, and Mattina, a fictional construction, cannot return to a self whose presence has been put in doubt. However, at the same time, John Henry's imaginative version of events—the "dream-play of a grown-up child" (Henke 36)—attempts to construct a stable and self-affirming account of his parents and the past which can affirm his presence. Thus, despite subverting Mattina's journey for selfhood, Henke implies that the novel appears to resort to a traditional framing device when it attributes the novel to John Henry Brecon's act of remembrance and consequential return to the self. John Henry Brecon's "dream-play" is an example of the role that language performs, according to Mercer, as both "a border [that] defines and communicates a shape" but also as that which "confines and restricts the communication of any other shape" (385). Lending support to Henke's argument,
Frame's construction of the final frame of the novel as John Brecon's dream-play reveals the restricting nature of language. However, I would like to suggest that Frame's complicated narrative structure, which creates a series of imploding frames, and her positioning of characters as the writer of the novel and vice versa, enacts the ongoing responsibility to the Other through remaining forever open to future interruption. Frame constructs a novel that undermines every framing device, allowing, in Mercer's terms, other shapes to communicate.

While the note which introduces the novel—and which is attributed to an unknown J.H.B.—is quickly forgotten by the reader, within the text another writer, Dinny Wheatstone, writes a manuscript that not only contains Mattina as a character but, as is later revealed, constitutes the middle passages of the novel. It is only on the last page of part two of the novel when Mattina closes Dinny's manuscript that the reader fully appreciates that they have been reading Dinny's manuscript. Although part two commences with Mattina opening the script, and although there are hints throughout that she is reading the events that paradoxically occur to her in the present, the reader, as in the case of the introductory note, forgets the presence of these extrinsic frames. Frame's concealment of these exterior frames, according to Ash, is typical of the parergon which is a framing device that effaces itself in order to foreground the work. Describing the function of the parergon as supplement, Ash writes: "it resides both inside and outside; simultaneously intrinsic and extrinsic to the work" ("Narrative" 6). The abrupt announcement of both of these exterior frames disturbs the presence of the novel and draws the reader's attention to the construction of the text. Frame's postmodern narrative frames, while representing the events of the novel, also always call their representational practices into question. As an example of Levinas's Said, they thematise the world while always acknowledging the betrayal that has occurred.

John Henry Brecon's attempt to reconstruct his mother's past through the Said acknowledges its own inadequacies. Brecon's final note emphasises that his turn to memory is imaginative and thus is an impossible act of remembrance of events and people that are not of his past. Mattina, who can never be finally known or recuperated, destabilises Brecon's frame, putting his account into doubt. Within the

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12 In a footnote, Susan Ash notes that "When I taught the novel in 1990, most of my students agreed that they completely 'forgot' about the J.H.B 'Note' at the beginning of the novel" ("Narrative Frame" 14).
novel language, which relies on a frame or an ego to contain events, is always in a state of being interrupted by Frame's series of imploding narrative frames. Nevertheless, Frame's fiction does not advocate the pre-linguistic nightmare of non-being that the Kowhai Street residents suffer, since the mantle of being is necessary in order to be accused, just as the Said is needed in order for interruption to occur. Through her authorial proxy Brecon, Frame accepts the inadequacies and violence of her medium. Unable to authoritatively capture his mother's identity, Brecon accedes to his responsibility to allow the past to reverberate within his own writing as both an inspiration and a source of disruption. It is such a responsibility that John Henry Brecon encapsulates in the phrase "Housekeepers of Ancient Springtime" (196), which he uses to describe those who treasure the Memory Flower of the past.

If we examine each of the terms in John Henry Brecon's phrase that describes people's obligation with regard to the past, "Housekeepers of Ancient Springtime," we find that read together they denote an infinite responsibility. The title "Housekeepers" expresses people's duty to maintain and oversee the past while the oxymoron, ancient springtime, invokes two different ways of understanding this past. The first refers to the many springtimes lived by past generations, a linear account of time, and the second suggests a cyclical model of time where the past is subject to rejuvenation. Thus the past, which it is our duty to recollect, must be allowed to rejuvenate and cannot be contained. This is our impossible obligation: to recall a past and, in our acts of remembrance and representation, leave that past room to change. John Henry Brecon's description of people's duty to be "Housekeepers of Ancient Springtime" suggests societies' and writers' ongoing responsibility to foster renewal in our efforts to recapture the past. This is only possible if we remain open to interruption or, as Frame's imploding frames in The Carpathians do, if we continue to interrupt our own efforts to represent. Our duty to the past lies in our obligation to invite interruption of the present, the Said and the ego, which will then allow the past to permeate the present not in the form of a final representation but as a trace that signals our ongoing responsibility.

As both angel and monster, language is a medium that provides Janet Frame with a tool with which to gesture to an otherwise than being that evades a metaphysics of presence; however, language also results in a betrayal. The treachery of language repeatedly translates the Saying into a moment of presence. Nevertheless, through her postmodern disruptive experimentations with language, Frame crafts a style of
language that insists upon the need for continual interruption of every representation of presence—whether that is the presence of the ego or the text. Through this process of interruption, Frame represents our relationship with the past in terms of an obligation that requires that every act of representation be subverted in order to promote the constant rejuvenation of our acts of remembrance. This also ensures that the ego's promise to unborn generations not to foreclose the future—which I will explore in Chapter Three through the lens of messianism—is ensured through allowing the radical unforeseeability of an unexpected future to circulate. The Adaptable Man's interruption of presence is limited to Frame's refusal to provide the sense of closure that Kermode argues is expected from the novel form. By contrast, The Carpathians' postmodern language experimentations with unstable narrative forms more successfully accomplish a literary style that, like Levinas's Otherwise than Being, disrupts ontological language. Both novels expose what Critchley identifies as the hinge-like nature of language. According to Critchley, "Levinas's writing is hinged or articulated around an ambiguous, or double, movement between the ontological Said and the ethical Saying" and, as he furthermore argues, "the very possibility of ethics is found in the articulation of this hinge" (Ethics of Deconstruction 19). Frame's unique literary style, which ceaselessly signals the monster of language, the Said, while also gesturing towards the angel of language, the Saying, is the very articulation of this hinge of ethics. In the next chapter, I examine Frame's representations of the temporalisation practices of the ego which, like the Said, affirm presence. However, in the third, and final, chapter of this section, I will argue that just as language consists of the Said and the Saying, the ego is similarly subject to dual propulsions: it both seeks to affirm presence but is also subject to the potential disruption wreaked by the absolute alterity of the Other. In this position of vulnerability, the ego, Frame suggests, will encounter both a form of justice, which The Adaptable Man's subversion of the murder-mystery genre precipitates, and a form of humanism, which accords with The Carpathians's disruptive postmodern literary techniques.
At the end of *The Adaptable Man*, Frame's narrator asks her reader: "But, imposing our own weather, our own limits of reach and touch, our own star-shaped irreparable flaw, don't we all live in mirrors, forever?" (277). Frame's entire oeuvre can be interpreted as an ongoing response to this question. For Frame, people experience and consequently construct the world, exteriority, as a mirror reflection of their own needs. Equipped with the thematising function of consciousness, the ego encompasses the potential threat that exteriority as what is other than the ego poses to its hold on presence. The ego's autonomy, its freedom, depends on its "identification of the diverse" ("Philosophy" 48). While the ego's mastery of exteriority and affirmation of autonomy may appear to be an ontological adventure that is independent of time, it is in fact through conquering the flux of time that the ego is able to assume its stronghold on presence. The defining characteristic of time, change, is tamed by the ego in the unity of its mirror-like consciousness where, as Levinas declares, "so many events happen to it, so many years age it, and yet the ego remains the same!" ("Philosophy" 48). The ego's autonomy depends on its ability to achieve stasis within the flow of time through reducing its experience of the present, past and future to an all-encompassing moment which originates from its own consciousness.

The ego's mastery of time, its affirmation of presence in the present, is a response to its fear of exteriority. Anything outside the self, as Levinas argues, "becomes an obstacle; it has to be surmounted and integrated into this life" ("Philosophy" 49). A failure to integrate what is external to the self undermines the ego's grasp of the present, which also means that the integral constitution of the ego, the unity of the 'I think,' is thrown into doubt. However, because the ego's sovereignty over presence is its very identity, the ego can never potentially be exposed to an exteriority which is not first apprehended and contained by its consciousness. Defined by the unity formed by the 'I think,' "the process of the present unfolds through consciousness like a 'held note' held in its always, in its identity of being the same, in the simultaneity of its moments" ("God" 134). By contrast, the past and the future can potentially expose the ego to the exteriority of temporality: another time that escapes and unsettles the present. Unlike the timelessly held note of the present, the past and
the future demonstrate the flow of time and, thus, problematise the ego's attempt to translate temporality into stasis. In both novels Frame's characters respond to this threat of temporality through adopting defence mechanisms which reduce the future and the past to derivatives of their present moment. While in Chapter Three I demonstrate that Frame's characters can never completely claim mastery over time and other people, in this chapter I focus on the various ways in which the ego attempts to maintain its stronghold on presence, making time subject to its egocentrism.

2.1 Present-Presence: Dwelling beneath a Makeshift Sun

In both works discussed here, the home or dwelling is a physical manifestation of Frame's characters' psychological state with regard to time. Frame presents the house as an extension of the self. Like a house, the ego protects its interior from the ravages of a changing external world. In Levinas's work the dwelling is a key metaphor of the domain of the ego and its synchronisation of time. Describing the dwelling as synonymous with the ego, Levinas emphasises the central importance of possession for the ego's affirmation of presence when he writes that:

The access to the world is produced in a movement that starts from the utopia of the dwelling and traverses a space to effect a primordial grasp, to seize and to take away. The uncertain future of the element is suspended. The element is fixed between the four walls of the home, is calmed in possession. (Totality 158)

If we view the dwelling as the interior home of the ego, and the element as objects of the exterior world, then the ego's movement from interior to exterior is carried out through a process of grasping and seizing—prime actions of any act of taking possession. Furthermore, as Levinas notes, the uncertainty of the element's future is removed, because in its act of grasping or taking possession, the ego views the element as a familiar object. The familiar object, one that the ego has successfully comprehended, is then relocated within the ego's dwelling as a piece of metaphorical furniture that has its appointed place. Despite appearing to encounter exteriority immediately and outside of the passing of time, the ego's relationship with elements is determined by its ability to remove the element's future. Thus in both novels discussed here, Frame's characters' translation of the exterior world into familiar terms is the temporal equivalent of claiming mastery over time.

Like Levinas, Frame represents the home as the metaphorical equivalent of the ego's feat of presence, where to be at home with oneself is to have achieved stasis.
within time. In *The Adaptable Man* when Muriel Baldry moves into the Little Burgelstatham neighbourhood as Vic's second wife she is initially affronted by the size of her new home and its obvious signs of its previous occupant, Vic's first wife: "Instead of taking over the usual stepchildren, Muriel had been confronted by the problem of trying to inhabit and control a strange house which seemed as difficult to possess as a new human relative" (28). Significantly, one of the major new additions to the house that Muriel installs is a Venini chandelier. Through bringing light, the symbolic equivalent of the ego's all-encompassing gaze, to her newly acquired home, Muriel attempts to reconstruct the house through her own vision and ultimately to assert the house's presence as her own. Muriel's aim to illuminate her dwelling with light replicates the dominant objective of Western philosophy which, with its origins in Greek philosophy, seeks to reduce the Other to the Same. Through the gaze, or its symbolic equivalent, light, the Other is "neutralised" and, as Levinas explains, "becomes a theme or an object—appearing, that is, taking its place in the light—[which] is precisely his reduction to the same" (*Totality* 43). Entering a world where the "comparison and challenge of households" is a daily occurrence (174), Muriel must construct a reliable dwelling from which to shine her all-encompassing light on the exterior world, projecting her sovereignty.

Like Little Burgelstatham, the neighbourhood of Kowhai Street abounds with house-proud residents. However, in *The Carpathians* Renee Shannon's mockery of the practice of showing guests around the home appears to undermine the sanctity of the ego's domain. Presenting Mattina with the carpet's shagpile, Renee suddenly bursts into laughter and remonstrates,

'I'm no fool you know! You can't believe that I'm entirely serious about this? Being shown the house and garden used to be a set piece for visitors, and now it has become a sort of nostalgic joke as well as a good piece of entertainment.'

(63)

Despite Renee's disclaimer, however, Frame's descriptions of the various electrical commodities that furnish the Shannons' home and dominate their existence tell another story. The computer that is allotted pride of place in the family living room and that is described as a family member reveals the extent to which a "commodity aesthetic" has come to serve the ego's presence. Drawing on Jean-Christophe Agnew's work on domestic interiors and their relationship to identity, Robert St. George identifies "a new sense of how such disparate objects as […] advertisements for
household appliances [...] may [...] shape the interiority of individuals in accordance with a commodity aesthetic" and draws the conclusion that "a key element of such interiority depends on the articulation of a desire for things as an elemental part of a sense of self" (226). The Shannons' household reveals the extent to which such a commodity aesthetic has taken hold of modern families. Obtaining the latest whiteware and computer technology is integral not only to the Shannons' sense of affirmation but, as George suggests, is an elemental part of the self.

In both novels Frame equates the characters' maintenance of their homes with an obsessive preoccupation with death. For the ego, time is defined by its existence, rendering death "an absolute event" where the ego "has no more time" (Totality 56). Fixated with its potential demise, the ego is blinded to a time beyond its own existence. In Frame's novels her characters' attempts to assert their dominance and control over time through maintaining their households is linked to their desire to keep death at bay. In The Adaptable Man the synonymous relationship between the ego's dwelling and its attempt to evade death is made explicit through the character of Ruby Unwin. Ruby's home, a ramshackle cottage, is symbolically equated with the body of Ruby, which, like the cottage, is showing signs of ageing:

[...] Mr Bedford [...] allowed Mrs. Unwin to live in the old farmhouse, which was becoming more and more dilapidated. It was common knowledge that Mr. Bedford refused to have the farmhouse repaired, that he was waiting for both house and occupant to fall into their final decay. (36)

Nevertheless, Mrs. Unwin is reluctant to abandon the security of her abode and she experiences distress at having to make the decision whether to leave the cottage and move in with her son and daughter-in-law. Well acquainted with the sad stories which produce such newspaper headlines as: "Retired. Collapses. Moves house after forty years. Dies" (180; emphasis in original), Mrs. Unwin associates her declining hold over the deteriorating cottage with the onset of death. Equating the cottage with Mrs. Unwin, Frame confirms her character's worst fears and when the first signs of rust are discovered on the oil oven, it is only a few days later that Mrs. Unwin dies.

In The Carpathians the connection that Frame draws between the house-proud Puamaharians and their dwellings is explicitly revealed upon the death of one of its members. Attending the auction of the possessions of George Coker, the residents look with disgust and disdain on those non-residents who purchase the dead man's effects and in turn guiltily hide their own purchases. Mattina's decision to purchase
Coker's "pink candlewick bedspreads" is a response to both her recollection of Coker's affection for the bedspreads and her own desire to represent and create "George Coker's memory flower" (99). While it is Mattina out of all the characters who momentarily places the needs of another person above her own, she ultimately reasserts her sovereignty through taking control of how George Coker is to be remembered, that is to say, from her point of view. By contrast, the other residents' acquisition of Coker's goods is solely a response to their desire to possess in order to furnish the dwelling of their own presence. The importance that the Puamaharians attribute to accumulating more and more furnishings for their homes is exemplified by the character of Madge McMurtrie. Languishing in the luxury of the final point of view that the approach of death brings, Madge offers to her niece and grand-niece an inventory of her home's assets:

'It's a nice house,' Madge said, 'Dugald and I made sure of that. We did it up. It's carpeted wall to wall.' A flush of enthusiasm flowed into her pale cheeks. 'And it has a dining nook, and ranchsliders for the morning sun and the mountains. We were going to have an overhead garage door put in [...]'. (29)

While the rush of enthusiasm she experiences in recounting the minute details of her dwelling is a result of an affirmation of her presence, her realisation that her future plans of renovations will not be accomplished anticipates her death and the demise of the ego's grasp on a time that is for the self.

Like the dwelling, gardens, as an extension of the home, in both of Frame's novels function as sites that symbolise the ego's presence. In The Adaptable Man, Greta's garden not only represents "her sense of 'empire'" (92) but, accompanied by her extensive knowledge of Maplestone's Chart—a chart that identifies common garden pests and the appropriate means of eradicating them—also represents her sovereignty over the world that she inhabits. When Muriel discovers a rat nesting in the box of her precious chandelier, Greta immediately turns to the wisdom of Maplestone's chart to solve the problem. She informs Muriel of the appropriate pesticide and describes the means of the death, and, perhaps most significantly, qualifies her knowledge as second-hand: "Or so Maplestone's Chart describes it. I don't know from first-hand experience, as we've never been troubled with rats in the house"(174). Although Greta's boast carries a hint of domestic competitiveness, it also reveals Greta's preference for controlled encounters with external reality that do not call her ego or presence into question. While Greta may come to regret her one-
way relationship with her garden which "knew no *encounters*" and which is characterised by domination and possession (92), this relationship has also provided the security of presence which the ego desperately seeks to maintain.

Observing the fanatical gardening rituals of the Puamaharians in *The Carpathians*, Mattina wryly jokes that the Memory Flower would never have survived if it had been a weed. Indeed, when Mattina first meets George Coker he is busy at work in the garden and although apologetic, continues to work, overwhelmed, as he is, by the pressing demands of his gardening duties. Given that Coker is to die later in the novel, his urgency can be read as an intuitive recognition that his presence is under threat: through maintaining *his* garden, Coker hopes to stave off the threat of death. His garden maintenance is less concerned with leaving for others a site of beauty than with keeping death at bay or, if this proves impossible, with producing something that guarantees his immortality. However, Coker fails to recognise that his garden, as a living realm, can no more withstand the ravages of time than his own ageing body can.

Frame's Puamaharians display exaggerated attempts to gain control of their gardens—and implicitly the larger garden that is New Zealand—as seen in their donning of "clothes patterned with flowers and leaves of all colours," which Mattina likens to "garden camouflage" (37). The novel implicitly contrasts the elaborate value and care that accompanies the Puamaharians' relationships with animals and plants in comparison with that with humans. If the garden is read as a necessary appendage to the dwelling, and together they affirm the ego's presence, then the Puamaharians' excessive attention to their gardens is self-directed. It represents a movement to the ego for-it-self and is not outwardly directed towards others. This is illustrated in Hercus Millow's hobby of surveying the world from the safety of his backyard. Sitting in his backyard, Hercus Millow sweeps the surrounding landscape with his binoculars and positions each landmark in relation to his starting point; namely, the centre that is the ego's all-encompassing presence. Like the ego, the characters' dwellings and gardens permit no encounters which would challenge the sanctity of their domain. Exercising their control over their homes and gardens, Frame's characters attempt to keep the unforeseeable at bay. This not only demonstrates their fear of death but also reduces time to an element of existence which is determined in accordance with an egotistical concern with one's own time at the expense of the Other.
Existing alongside others, the ego seeks a form of community which will protect its stronghold on presence. Frame's works specifically respond to and critique one model of community: one which protects its members' autonomy over and above heterogeneity and their responsibility. According to Levinas, communal identities are instruments that ensure social order through appealing to the egocentric desire for "the incontestable right of freedom" ("Philosophy" 57). Thus individuals enter into communities that are premised on a principle of autonomy: where individual freedom is prioritised above any state sanctions and regulations that are carried out for the benefit of the community as a whole. Describing the structure of such an 'egocentric' model of communal identity, Adriaan Peperzak observes that in such communities:

> As long as the principle of autonomy is maintained, its limitations or subjections by others or by the ego itself are justified in the name of freedom, and social philosophy remains faithful to the project of a universal egology. The ego's autonomy as such is not questioned and does not feel guilty of monopolizing as much as possible, on the condition that every ego has the right to be equally egocentric. (99)

According to the model of community that Peperzak identifies, the ego's establishment of a timeless present moment, which it presides over, is never questioned, as long as it accepts the right of other egos to "be equally egocentric."

Indeed, Peperzak's summary of communities which prioritise the principle of freedom implies that labelling such structures as communal is contradictory, since they appear more concerned with promoting individual interests. He reveals that at the heart of such communal structures lies not an impulse of mutual regard and responsibility but a defence of the ego's sovereignty over presence.

For Frame, communities, and in particular their values and ideologies, are the fixed centre from which the ego draws support for its project of keeping exteriority under its own control. In both novels, Frame's characters construct and pursue makeshift suns which, as the narrator of *The Adaptable Man* explains in the following quotation, provide people with an orientation from which to centre their sense of self:

> Human beings have little to impel them from century to century. They fix a makeshift sun in the sky, and its flame burns or does not burn, but in its fierce or fading light they make their intention movements, retreats, advances, trying to release the buried movement of their destination. (4)

As such a makeshift sun, the community assists the ego's "odyssey where all adventures are only the accidents of a return to self" ("Transcendence" 14). The community acts as a makeshift sun which legitimises the ego's stronghold on presence.
in two significant ways. First, the community institutionalises and thus naturalises the ego's process of containing the threat of exteriority through its own communal policies which exclude non-members. Like the ego at home with itself, the community creates its identity through conquering the flow of time: it produces a unified and unchanging identity that contains exteriority which, for the community, consists of other people. Through the institutionalisation of exclusionary policies, the community demonstrates to its members that the unforeseeable can be controlled.

Second, it institutionalises ideologies which foster the illusion of the ego's unique individuality, thereby legitimising the ego's construction of time in accordance with its own ontological adventure. Dwelling beneath the community's makeshift sun, the ego is assured that its stronghold on presence is secure.

Despite the notions of harmony and unity that resonate with literary depictions of the idyllic English village and small-town New Zealand, Frame constructs a subversive image of the communities that derive from both locations. Little Burgelstatham is a breeding ground of suspicion and distrust of both outsiders and 'locals,' while in Puamahara despite projecting a front of community caring through its neighbourhood watch-scheme, Mattina, nonetheless, only learns of a neighbour's death from a newspaper. Undercutting the notion that communal structures are premised on acts of kindness, hospitality and mutual regard, Frame suggests that communities that prioritise the commonality of their members are formed for the benefit of the self and not of the Other. Their internal construction depends on their ability to claim sovereignty over a timeless present moment, keeping the unexpected at bay. Little Burgelstatham and Puamahara are unable to offer the radical commitment to hospitality that is required by ethics. According to Derrida, such a radical form of hospitality means "to let oneself be overtaken, to not even let oneself be overtaken, to be surprised, in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped [violée], stolen [volée] […] precisely where one is not ready to receive" ("Hospitality" 361).

The hospitality offered to outsiders in both communities is, in Derridean terms, not true hospitality; as he explains, "If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality" ("Hospitality" 362). In *The Adaptable Man* Little Burgelstatham's failure to offer hospitality to non-members is exemplified when Julio, the Italian immigrant worker arrives only to discover that there is no one to meet his train and "the few people who met him frowned and raised their eyebrows" (15).
Indeed, Julio is never even allowed to reach his final destination, the Sapleys' farm, but instead is murdered and his body dumped in a duck pond. In turn, the villagers do not question the coroner's conclusion that the cause of death was accidental drowning and quickly forget the incident. In life and death, Julio is effectively excluded from the Little Burgelstatham community. However, even in the case of Mattina, a wealthy American visitor to Puamahara, who appears to be welcomed by the community in *The Carpathians*, the Puamaharians do not offer true hospitality but attempt to assimilate her within the community structure. Upon Mattina's arrival to the town, Dorothy Townsend quickly informs her of the neighbourhood's routines and regulations:

'The rubbish is left on the verge, in a regulation blue plastic bag every Friday morning.' [...]  
'A blue plastic bag? Must it be blue?'  
'Oh yes, they'll take nothing else.' (22)

Frame's ironic naming of Dorothy as the self-appointed Townsend echoes the term Godsend: it is her duty to ensure that order is maintained in the Puamaharian realm through acquainting strangers with the town's regulations. Mattina is not allowed to disturb the settled practices of the community or to disrupt their autonomy. In Levinasian terms, hospitality must be extended to the Other who would call my presence into question. Both Little Burgelstatham and Puamahara are unwilling to practice a radical form of hospitality which would undermine their grasp of time, requiring them to welcome what they cannot foresee. To offer such hospitality to the unforeseeable Other is also to accede to a model of time where the ego's pretence of keeping death at bay is revealed; the ego can no more tame the unforeseeable time of its own death than it can anticipate the Other's arrival. "To be for a time that would be without me" is unthinkable to the ego, whose stronghold on presence, as Levinas suggests, reveals "the vulgarity and a baseness in an action that is conceived only for the immediate, that is, in the last analysis, for our life" ("Meaning" 51).

In both novels discussed here, Frame reveals that communal structures which prioritise the principle of autonomy, and thus protect individual rights, do not promote individuality but, instead, produce *identical* egocentric figures. While Levinas views the ego's mode of presencing as innate, both of Frame's novels discussed here—although not contesting Levinas's assumption—suggest that this mode of being has become institutionalised and naturalised in twentieth-century societies. In particular,
Frame's writing suggests that the accepted prevalence of communal structures which are premised on the commonality of its members is sustained by the promotion of specific ideologies. According to Louis Althusser, ideologies are not value-systems that the individual can merely choose to accept or reject but, instead, are integral to the ego's constitution as an I; thus, as he explains, "the rituals of ideological recognition […] guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (161–62). Through acceding to public opinion, a force that disseminates the ideologies which are replicated by individuals, the ego is able to recognise itself in hegemonic values. For this reason, Frame's representation of the form of individuality that hegemonic societies produce resonate with Martin Heidegger's formulation of das Man, 'the they' of public opinion.

In Being and Time, Heidegger argues that far from being unique individuals, people submit to public opinion or to what he refers to as das Man 'the they.' Heidegger describes das Man as the "dictatorship of the they," where 'the they' is the point or standard from which every individual measures and judges their experiences of the world. Heidegger stresses the vast reach of the dictatorship of 'the they' when he writes:

we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise, we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find shocking what they find shocking. (164)

While Levinas would argue that Heidegger's entire philosophy needed to move beyond ontological foundations, I contend that Levinas shares with Heidegger a distrust of the das Man of society. For Levinas, the most terrifying form of das Man is not a specific cultural or historical opinion, but its institutionalisation and naturalisation of a systematic mode of ontological being that begins with my presence, my freedom and my individuality or, in Frame's words, the "I, I, I, I, I…." (Adaptable Man 7). Despite the uniqueness that personal pronouns such as 'my' and 'I' appear to represent, the 'my' of individuality is not mine but that of das Man and, as Julian Young observes of Heidegger, "individual lives are nothing more than functions of the One, functions of public opinion" and as such, "individuals are precisely not individual" (113).

Frame's characters locate and identify membership in a community as a makeshift sun from which to orientate and affirm their sense of presence. Their
identification with the community requires the adoption of its values and ideologies: a secondary form of makeshift sun. Thus, even though Frame's characters seemingly pursue and prioritise different secondary makeshift suns—whether religious devotion or enactment of colonial ideologies—they are ultimately all examples of ideology which, according to Althusser, "hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (164). In this position of being interpellated or constituted as a subject, the ego constructs what Althusser describes as its "imaginary" hold over exteriority. The ego's obsessive fixation on its own death is legitimised by communal ideologies which encourage the ego to view itself as an individual. The community thus implicitly protects the ego from encountering the unknown and unforeseeable. The ego is allowed to dwell in its own stable present moment oblivious that it is "being itself, which prevents us from recognizing our ethical duties" (Levinas, "Paradox" 177), which originate in a time beyond the self.

Content and at home in its dwelling, the ego adopts the key ideas or ideologies of *das Man* in order to further furnish its abode and strengthen its perimeter. Religion, in *The Adaptable Man*, is a prime example of a totalistic mode of thought that secures the self against intrusion of the Other. Associated with the adoption of linear time in societies, religion assures the self of its autonomy and removes the fear of an unknown future through the construction of the ideal of God's kingdom. Despite having the potential to disrupt the violence of the self-same through advocating the turn to the plight of the neighbour, religion, in *The Adaptable Man*, is a tool that affirms the ego's presence. By contrast, Levinas's God is "encountered in the alterity of the other person" and does not involve a return to presence or the ego (Cohen, *Introduction* 23). In *The Adaptable Man*, however, "Love thy neighbour"—a phrase that crudely captures the central premise of Levinas's philosophy—involves a selfish turning to the ego's own demands and not a turn to the plight of the Other and self-sacrifice. Aisley, a minister who is ironically suffering from a loss of faith, notes the reduction of religion to an instrument that affirms the ego's sense of well-being. Examining his brother Russell's church attendance, Aisley observes that

he knew that Russell seemed happier because he had worked hard among teeth all week, among stamps almost every evening, and the visit to church gave him a breath of fresh air, and the self-confidence brought about by his noticing the approval of patients visiting the same church, rather than the approval of God. (53)
The Church, a key example of an Ideological State Apparatus—Althusser's term for institutions which promote and naturalise ideologies—validates Russell's identity; thus, his church attendance provides self-confirmation in the eyes of the community.

Similarly, when Aisley examines the old and new translations of the Bible, he notes how the newer rendition—the "utility" Bible—"is a form of modern highway, tar-sealed, hard-shouldered, complete with lay-bys, which can transport the facts, history, purpose of Christianity swiftly to the ignorant ones in the outlying areas" (57–58). Described as a "highway," the newer translation symbolically implies a journey but, as seen in the case of Russell, this journey is not towards the Other. In Levinasian terms, this example of religion, in practice, authenticates the return of a Ulysses to the domain of the self-same. With all possible mystery and mystique removed from its pages, the Bible confirms the processes of making the world knowable and definable; consequently, it confirms the community's violent mode of temporalisation. Rather than being a "privileged secret," God, Aisley reveals, is "a dirty secret [...] swarming with foul bacteria which could be used, nevertheless, cultivated, like a kind of penicillin, to wipe out plagues that had persisted for centuries too long in the human spirit" (55). The cultivation and utilisation of religion in societies wipes out plagues; however, what the term "plague" denotes is ambiguous. It can refer both to the eradication of the selfish mindset necessary to maintain the community's autonomy or, on the other hand, it can also mean the destruction of any plagues that would call the community's identity into question. The latter definition is supported by examples from the text that illustrate the calculated use and practice of religion to reaffirm the ego's presence. Aisley's crisis in faith is a result of the realisation that the religion and God he has cherished for so long have been misused in society in order to support and protect the community's and ego's sense of presence: he has worshipped "a comprehended god who could not trouble the autonomy of consciousness" (Levinas, "Trace" 346). Levinas's unique formulation of God, as that which is "the very excellence of ethics, command without commandments, the love for the Other prior to the love for oneself" (Cohen, Introduction 24), and his philosophical dictum to 'Love thy neighbour' are cruelly manipulated to serve the community's ideological interpellation of its members as individuals.

Like religion, colonial discourse is an example of an ideology or mode of viewing the world which is naturalised by the das Man of society and, in turn, adopted by the ego in order to produce its individuality. The practice of collecting inanimate
objects to furnish the ego's dwelling finds its natural extension in Mattina's practice of collecting *people*, in particular the colonised other. Mattina's need to meet, know and assimilate people from other countries is an example of the ego's process of reducing objects of the external world to a moment of its own presence.

In *The Carpathians*, the imperialist vision of colonial discourse is shown to still hold sway and is embodied by the figure of Mattina Brecon. Mattina, a wealthy American philanthropist, uses her vast wealth to travel and purchase other lands in order to fulfil her desire to "truly" know the colonial other. Mattina's tourism represents a second wave of colonialism. Arguably inherent in Mattina's desire to ensure her own presence through acquiring knowledge of the colonial other are the ideologies that, Said argues, sustained the imperialist mission; namely, "notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination" (*Culture* 8). Mattina's frequent use of cultural assumptions to define others—as seen, for example, in her assumption that all New Zealanders are outdoors people—and her pursuit of authoritative ethnographic knowledge of the colonial other require her to maintain a position of centrality. In this position, Mattina adopts a colonial convention which Mary Louise Pratt refers to as "monarch-of-all-I-survey" (22). As self-confirmed "monarch" of all the places she visits, Mattina returns to her family in New York each time feeling replenished and assured of her autonomy. Mattina's self-deceptive tourist practices contain and define the Other's unforeseeability, ensuring that her control over time is not threatened. For example, when Mattina's practice of washing her hair with detergent is challenged by a local, she is quick to dismiss the colonial other:

"Later, standing in the Customs queue, Mattina frowned suddenly, remembering that she had used dishwashing liquid to shampoo her hair while she swam in the lagoon, and then she had noticed a shoal of dead fish floating by the shore. 'They've been poisoned,' Sam the boatman said. 'Probably some tourist with detergent.' [...] *These people will make a song and dance about everything.* (140; emphasis added)"

Mattina is surprised upon arriving in Puamahara to find her own practice of occupying a central position that confirms her ego replicated by the residents. Like Mattina, the Puamaharian residents also draw on cultural assumptions—in this case

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those that concern American identity—to maintain their centrality. While Mattina experiences irritation at the residents' repeated act of performing "a cultural doffing of the cap to the Master" when referring to America's superiority (47), their purported acts of "cultural doffing" illustrate the residents' knowledge of American culture. This knowledge, in turn, while seemingly relegating their community to an inferior position, in fact restores their centrality as able to know, define and contain American identity. Furthermore, the Puamaharians' expressed interest in learning more from Mattina about America contains the explicit assumption that the person who collects and organises knowledge is the epicentre of the world that he or she surveys.

Discussing questions of multi-culturalism in today's society, Spivak argues that it is problematic when "the dominant people […] talk about listening to someone 'speaking as' something or the other" (*Postcolonial Critic* 60). For dominant people, as Spivak explains, "When they want to hear an Indian speaking as an Indian, a Third World woman speaking as a Third World woman, they cover over the fact of the ignorance they are allowed to possess, into a kind of homogenization" (*Postcolonial Critic* 60). In this case, in a reversal of colonial paradigms, the Puamaharians are an example of Spivak's category of dominant people, and after listening to Mattina, they judge her to be speaking as an American. In doing so, they position Mattina as representative of Americans and thus create a homogenised sense of *all* Americans. Categorised and located as an American, Mattina's identity does not challenge the presence of the community but reinforces its autonomy: for it is the community that decides, defines and reduces Mattina to a known and contained entity.

This battle for presence is illustrated in Mattina's initial encounter with Dorothy, when Mattina notes, "Her glance carried a hint of 'They say most Americans who come here are cranks or they think they're going to reform the world on us, get back to the land, organise protests under our sun – we're quite happy, thank you'") (20). Dorothy's reference to the sun resonates with the parallel Levinas draws between the temporalisation practices of the ego and light. Levinas observes that "Light is that through which something is other than myself, but already as if it came from me. The illuminated object is something one encounters, but from the very fact that it is illuminated one encounters it as if it came from us" (*Time* 64). Thus, Dorothy's use of the possessive communal pronoun "our" to define her relationship with the sun affirms the community's mode of perception and presence over Mattina's. Her communal defence of the Puamaharians' mode of being comes at a great cost for the
Other as suggested by one of the epigraphs that frame *Otherwise than Being*. Taken from Pascal's *Pensées*, the epigraph warns that to declare "that is my place in the sun[…] is how the usurpation of the whole world began." Through Mattina's attempts to usurp the Puamaharians, which are countered by the Puamaharian community's attempts to usurp Mattina, Frame illustrates how colonial discourse is premised on the centrality of presence. It affirms a process of othering, which sees the ego approaching, categorising and assimilating the Other as a definable object that forms the ego's vision of the external world.

In both novels discussed here, community is a makeshift sun that provides Frame's characters with autonomy. Through ideology, the community interpellates its members as individuals, guaranteeing their stronghold on a timeless present moment and even validating their egotistical concern with their own death. In Chapter Three I address the question of what happens when a character encounters the unforeseeable: what would it mean to be for a time beyond oneself? In such encounters, Frame suggests the possibility of an alternative form of community which prioritises heteronomy over autonomy; the Other over the self; time over timelessness.

2.2 Future-Presence: Adaptable Men

The majority of characters in both novels—in particular those whom Frame depicts as exemplary members of conformist societies—are unified by their pursuit of progress at all costs. The notion of progress, and the inherent turn to the future which the term conveys, would seemingly disrupt the community's presence and introduce the unforeseeable nature of the future. However, as Peperzak reminds us, the ego can grasp and thematise both past and future through intentional thought and reduce it to a moment of its presence: "The past and the future are presented as secondary forms of the present; remembrance and expectation bring them back or reduce them to the presence of a thought that ties all faces of temporality together in a supratemporal, eternal 'Now'" (33). Confronting the future—in particular through the notion of progress—the ego is able to contain its unforeseeable nature through envisioning the future as a teleological projection of increased and continuing adaptation and advancement. Unlike Derrida's notion of the future as the 'yet to come'—which I discuss in Chapter Three—the future defined from the present is expected, unsurprising and does not disturb the ego's presence.
Frame's characters' unitary propulsion to seek progress at all costs presupposes a sociality where all members are judged by the same standard, namely that of economic progress. By contrast, for Levinas sociality "is irreducible to the immanence of representation [and] is other than the sociality that would be reduced to the knowledge one can acquire about the Other as a known object" ("Diachrony" 102–03); instead, he argues for a form of sociality which starts from the face of the Other and "commands me to not remain indifferent" ("Diachrony" 109). Turned towards the individual fulfilment of their own needs, characters in both novels do not heed this command and instead form a community that adheres to a capitalist adaptation—or, as George Levine would claim, a mutation—of Darwinism.14 Describing the Darwinian characteristics of the Little Burgelstatham community, Bruce King observes that "Survival, or adaptability, requires a lack of feeling, especially no illusions, beliefs, or weakness towards responsibility and guilt" (112). The community's pursuit of progress does not turn to the plight of the Other but instead reaffirms the importance of the I or ego. Frame thus reveals that the future, when envisioned as a calculable trajectory of progress, instead of introducing an-other form of time which would undermine the ego's stronghold on presence reaffirms the centrality of the "I, I, I, I….." (Adaptable 7).

The Adaptable Man's prologue presents a world that has produced a generation of people fitted with safety helmets which prevent and discourage the wandering of stray thoughts. Characterised as both an age of safety and neatness, the postmodern epoch that Frame depicts keeps the uncertainty of the future at bay by a system of regulation and control. Products of their era, characters such as Alwyn and Greta look upon the future with approval and deem it a necessity to keep up with the times. For Alwyn, his ability to adapt exemplifies his strength and autonomy: "His adaptability in an age where uncles and fathers fled to the past, where almost no one stayed his temporal ground, positively rippled with power, like displayed muscles that could be trained to perform further feats" (151). The power to adapt and view the future as a certainty of teleological progress confirms the ego at home in its presence.

14 Reading Charles Darwin's works, George Levine emphasises that "every history does not recapitulate an inevitable progress of 'lower' to 'higher'" and "furthermore, the idea of progress can only mean this biological development in adaptation, […] and certainly, there is no hint of perfection here, or even of progress, in the way industrial economies adopted the idea" (112–13). For this reason, Levine argues that industrial economies' adoption of Darwinism in order to support progress is a mutation of Darwin's work.
The most chilling product of the age of adaptation is Alwyn. Alwyn, the twenty-year old son of Russell and Greta, "has taken the first step toward being the truly Adaptable Man, a Child of His Time, by murdering someone whom he did not know" (149). Unlike Raskolnikov—the protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, which provides lengthy descriptions of Raskolnikov's guilty conscience after he murders a stranger—Alwyn coolly suggests a mere two pages would suffice to describe his feelings after murdering Julio. Alwyn's feat, to murder without guilt, is a symbol of a larger phenomenon in communities whereby the relentless pursuit of progress at all costs is reducing human relationships to economic calculations of gains and profits. Alwyn's self-described aim "to be at peace with his time" is carried out in accordance with a violent goal of securing the domain of his presence (151).

In *The Adaptable Man*, Frame's depiction of the coming of electricity to the village suggests both practically the community's adaptability and metaphorically the strengthening of its presence through the spread of an all-encompassing light. Rapid advances in technology have ensured that the phosphorous glow of electricity will illuminate all areas of darkness. The arrival of electricity in the village thus symbolically invokes what Delrez describes as "the myth of transparency inherent in a positivistic realism" (*Manifold* 174). He further adds that this myth "needs to be challenged, in the name of what it overlooks and obliterates" (*Manifold* 174). Associated with transparency and illumination, electricity seemingly heralds the establishment of an open and accountable community, but Frame queries if this transparency is not already qualified by the community's structure which protects its members' autonomy at all costs. Julio's mysterious death in a darkened country lane was apparently not witnessed but, later in the novel, the reader learns that both Mrs. Unwin and Aisley know of Alwyn's murderous deed and choose not to comment. The arrival of electricity will thus not change Julio's fate: even without light the community is aware of what happened to Julio. In order to establish a place for Julio in the community it is not further light or its symbolic equivalent—intentional thought—that is required but rather another mode of perception that does not begin from the community or ego.

Although many of the villagers gossip about signs of progress—in particular the threat of the Overspill—with distaste, this is less due to the symbol of rapid growth and progress it exemplifies than to the ominous threat that the arrival of
strangers in the village poses to the community's autonomy. In their gossip, the villagers reduce potential new residents to the categories of "them," "invaders" and "foreigners" (39). This reduction and categorisation confirms the autonomy of the community and controls the uncertainty of the future; however, it also threatens to undermine it. For as Bert reflects after Mrs. Unwin's death, although she was an important companion to discuss the invasion of "them," she herself was a "foreigner" to Little Burgelstatham. As these cracks and paradoxes start to undermine the community's identity, community, Frame suggests, can no longer be claimed to be an inherent identity but one that is carefully constructed by intentional thought so as to affirm presence in the face of the approach of the Other that would call it into question.

In *The Carpathians*, Frame's social setting is that of a small New Zealand town that has embraced the three tenets of progress—consumption, social advancement and wealth—with little regard for the consequences on others. The Shannon family welcome the notion of progress and the certainty with which it contains the future through furnishing their house with the latest and newest appliances. At a dinner she attends at the Shannon house, Mattina observes "the white-ware shining to attention, the straight-backed stove, belly forward, [and] the beheaded white-bodied refrigerator" (58). For the Shannons, "the commodity gives the individual subject an identity" (Rodaway 265). Frame's description of the white-ware employs a form of personification, emphasising the appliances' resemblance to human body parts. The white-wares' adopted 'human-form' symbolises the important role it plays in the Shannons' identity. The Shannons' identification with commodities rather than with people exemplifies the ego's practice of welcoming progress—such as advances in technology—that reduces the future to a linear procession of increasing advancement which in turn affirms the ego's autonomy.

The Shannons' identification with commodities illustrates Karin Hansson's observation of Frame's characters that their preference for things over people leads to a greater emphasis being placed on economic progress in their lives. Hansson argues that "Reification in the sense of giving first priority to property and 'things', rather than to one's fellow-man, and emotional or immaterial values, is another factor prevalent in a global-techno system where science, technology and industry have joined forces and where economic growth, control and possession are all important" (98). In *The Carpathians*, Frame's depiction of Ed Shannon's relationship with his
computer and the games he plays in reality-mode suggest that things play a role in maintaining the ego's presence; namely, they buffer the subject's encounter with the real.

The Shannons' most prized possession, the computer, which Frame pointedly describes as "the remaining member of the Shannon family" (54), symbolically evokes the increasing tension between the real and hyper-real in postmodern societies. The "real" is defined by Jacques Lacan as both that which is outside of symbolisation and as the psychological stage of development before the infant comes to distinguish between subject and object. Thus, at this early stage of development, the concept of the subject, or what I have equated with presencing, has not yet occurred. While it may appear abrupt to turn to the work of Lacan to read Levinas, in particular as Levinas was openly critical of psychoanalysis, both thinkers, as Critchley observes, "share a common grammar of moral insight" (E-P-S 207). According to Critchley, both Lacan and Levinas prioritise the experience of trauma which arises from exposure to the real or the external world, revealing their reliance on a "common formal structure to ethical experience" (199). Indeed, as the following quotation illustrates, Lacan's argument that the route of ethics lies in the real appears to turn to a similar space beyond presence as that which Levinas proposes: "Well, as odd as it may seem to that superficial opinion which assumes any inquiry into ethics must concern the field of the ideal, if not of the unreal, I, on the contrary, will proceed instead from the other direction by going more deeply into the notion of the real" (11). Denoting an area outside of symbolisation or language where the subject does not occupy a domain of presence, Lacan's real shares a likeness with Levinas's account of the ego's encounter with the Other. In order to protect presence, Frame's characters prefer encounters with the hyper-real (or simulated realities) over those with the real because 'life' in hyper-reality does not disturb or traumatisate the ego as an encounter with the real potentially does.

Ed Shannon epitomises such a preference for the hyper-real in societies over the real. Every evening Ed sits before the computer playing a simulated flight course in reality-mode. Frame's account of Ed's pastime paints a portrait of a society with little ethical regard for the Other in society. She highlights this when Ed struggles to explain to his son the difference between a murder game he plays on the computer and

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15 In order to distinguish my references to Simon Critchley's Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity from his other work Ethics of Deconstruction, in text citations to the former work have been abbreviated to E-P-S.
the recent murder of a local, Madge McMurtrie. While Ed asserts the murder games are not real, he contradictorily claims the flight programmes are real. For Ed the hyper-real is a preferable reality to that of the real, which cannot simply be conquered through advancing game levels; therefore, to tame the uncertainties of the real, Ed's hyper-real games become his real. When read alongside Frame's earlier description of the scene of a Turkish plane crash where "sightseers picnicked in the forest beneath the winter branches draped with shreds of clothing, pieces of arms and legs, hands and feet" (34), people's inability to distinguish the real from the hyper-real becomes readily apparent. The consequence of people's detachment from reality—as exhibited by the picnickers—is a cold complacency before scenes of human suffering. Later in the novel, following the event of the midnight rain, the residents of Puamahara will quickly dismiss the disappearance of an entire street as an event that occurs all the time, according to the news. This turn to another medium—in this case the news—to explain a real event, insulates the community's autonomy and allows them to quickly forget the names of those who once lived among them. Instead of querying the real and traumatic events that have happened in their own community, the Puamaharians use secondary sources to contain that which they cannot explain and thus also that which potentially could happen to them as well. While characters' preference for the hyper-real over the real affirms the ego's autonomy, it does so at the expense of the Other. Progress and the adoption of simulated realities contain the uncertainties of the future through reducing it to a triumphant march of development that confirms the community's and ego's presence.

2.3 Past-Presence: A Sanitised and Commoditised Past

As in the case of the future, the turn to the past through history would seemingly disturb the community's sense of being at home in its presence. However, this is to forget Levinas's fundamental assertion that "to speak of consciousness is to speak of time. It is in any case to speak of a time that can be recuperated" (Otherwise 32). The potential disruption that the past causes the ego is therefore contained through reducing the past to a moment of the ego's present. Levinas argues that "history as a relationship between men ignores a position of the I before the other in which the other remains transcendent with respect to me" (Totality 52). Instead, through remembrance and recuperation the past is restored to the ego as a moment of its own presence. Content within the domain of the ego, the self can thus ignore, neglect and
even determine the identity of the Other of the past. In both novels discussed here, Frame explores the community's process of recuperating the past. Through alternative processes of eradication or utilisation, Frame reveals that the past serves and affirms the community's egocentrism. Drawing, in particular, on the practice of eradicating the past, Delrez discusses the violence that Frame identifies attending representations of the past. Complementing my own discussion of the violence of the past-presence, Delrez describes the "historic present" as "the diminutive result of a long-term subtraction" and "history" "as a continuous whittling away of possibility" ("Conquest" 137). Like Levinas, Delrez implies that any act of remembrance or recuperation of the past must also be seen as an act of eradication insofar as such acts involve an appropriation of the Other which reduces it to an entity that is other than the ego and ultimately not threatening.

In *The Adaptable Man*, Frame's metaphor of train travel represents the ego's process of sanitising the past. Frame describes travel as a process that once "changed you into a human trace element," but in today's world "it's all so clean, and what a relief, for traces suggest possible guilt and discovery, and the human race is enough burdened with guilt to want to persist in suffering it on railway trains" (11). This passage symbolically evokes the Little Burgelstatham community's relationship with the past. If the ego conceives of time as a linear continuum, then trains—which travel predestined routes on carefully laid out railway tracks—can be seen as emblematic of time. The community, like the latest advances in train technology, have established methods and processes for removing the dirty traces of the past. Further, if it is these traces that signal the community's guilt, and if guilt is one of the primary sensations that the ego experiences before the Other, removal of these traces is an act of the ego's self-preservation: it ignores the position of the I before the Other.

The community's process of eradicating guilty traces of the past is illustrated when Alwyn discovers an old advertisement for the sale of a slave woman concealed in the wall of the old cottage he is demolishing. Hidden in a crevice of the dwelling, the life and fate of Sarah, "a hard-working servant" (112), has conveniently and systematically been eradicated from the community's remembrance. The community's eradication of Sarah's past replicates the work of historiography, which, as Levinas suggests, "recounts the way the survivors appropriate the works of dead wills to themselves; it rests on the usurpation carried out by the conquerors, that is, by the survivors; it recounts enslavement, forgetting the life that struggles against slavery"
The community, or Levinas's surviving-conquerors, have appropriated Sarah's life, and judging her "work" to be insignificant, choose to forget her.\textsuperscript{16} The advertisement causes Alwyn to reflect that "perhaps Aisley is right in removing himself so far in history that he can avoid the embarrassment of too recent events" (112). The guilty traces of the recent past are hidden from view in order to affirm the community's presence and conceal its violent foundations. Even though Alwyn pockets the advertisement, Frame does not suggest that the ultimate prototype of the adaptable man will share this guilty trace from the community's past; rather, safely hidden in Alwyn's pocket, the history of Sarah, like that of Julio, will become another forsaken trace of the past that the community attempts to eradicate in order to affirm its presence.

The community also uses the past to confirm its presence against the intrusion of outsiders. Instead of ignoring the past, as illustrated in the examples above, the villagers construct a representation of the past that confirms the community's "olde" and cherished lifestyle. For Bert Whattling, "the one true native of Little Burgelstatham," his status as a native, which grants him privileged access to the community's past, installs him with "a sense of power and [thus] he knew that he received glances of respect when he remarked, with shrewd old-identity perception of the old-identity role, 'I knew this land when there were no big farms, no roads, only cottages. I helped to make the roads!'" (106). Frame uses the term "role" to describe Bert's old-identity, thus emphasising the performative quality of Bert's representation of himself to others. Significantly, Frame describes Bert's memory as "a long enough and firm enough plank to parade up and down on without his ever needing to take the plunge into the past" (108). Delrez notes the restricted parameters of Bert's past and observes that, "[Bert's] readiness to dwell on one's own share of memory involves a hasty dismissal of whatever happened 'within the living memory' of people who were dead" (Manifold 166). Although Bert asserts the importance of the past, it is a past that is carefully constructed to confirm his own autonomy and that of the community, and in order to achieve this goal the past of numerous generations of the dead has to be neglected.

\textsuperscript{16} Work in a Levinasian context refers to external details, such as "actions, gestures, and manners" (Totality 175), that define a being in the exterior world. Sarah's life is not dismissed because her physical work as a slave is deemed an insignificant value; rather, her identity is equated with this work, rendering her known and non-threatening to the community's presence.
Like Bert, Aisley, a retired clergyman who is suffering from tuberculosis—a disease that, as Greta exclaims, is outdated—uses the past to affirm his presence. Not at home in the twentieth-century, Aisley turns to the past with what Frame describes as a desperate hunger: "Aisley has swallowed a handful of centuries with more desperation than if he had been a starving man […] He has returned to the Anglo-Saxon world of East Anglia […] thus to more securely possess, what he hates and loves" (77). Immersed in the wisdom of Saints and poets of the past, and confronting the world with archaic turns of phrase, Aisley, like his brother, whose outdated dental surgery illustrates a refusal to move with the times, has created the past as his domain of presence. Interestingly, Frame emphasises that Aisley's and Russell's consumption of the past replicates Alwyn's manipulation of the future. Both brothers, in turning to the past, are illustrating another form of adaptation: "Both Aisley and Russell were Adaptable Men—adapting only to themselves and their needs" (152; emphasis added). Whether turning to the past or to the future for solace, characters' temporalisation practices seek the same goal: a time that is under their control. Furthermore, Aisley's and Russell's turn to the long-ago past is actually a form of forgetting that ignores events of the recent past. Both brothers, as Alwyn remarks, have no idea what The Voyage of the Lucky Dragon is. Sheltered in the protected domain of the distant past that has become their preferred abode, both brothers can safely ignore contemporary atrocities and can thus, like Alwyn, ultimately treat the death of strangers as inconsequential.

Like the community of Little Burgelstatham, Puamahara has developed means for eradicating the guilty traces of the past. Mattina notes this feature of Puamahara's relationship with the past when she walks down the main street of the town, "among the windows praising smoothness, freshness, [and] lemon-scentedness" and consequently she concludes, "now here was […] 'Little ole Noo Zealand' trying to wash its and the world's guilt away in award-winning machines" (48). Rather than turn to the past, and in particular to the guilty traces of its colonial past, Puamahara uses the latest air fresheners and mod-cons to restore order and affirm the community's presence. Focused on the endless process of accumulating the latest designs, the Puamaharians ignore and contain a past that would challenge their presence. Furthermore, the Puamaharians' collective denial of belonging to the town can be read equally as a refusal to accept responsibility for the past. With no firm
connections to Puamahara, the residents thus cannot be held responsible for the past's "apparent or invisible bloody deeds" (48).

Nevertheless, the community realises that the past can have its uses. Like the latest appliances that the Puamaharians acquire, the past has become a valuable commodity. Mattina is first drawn to Puamahara by a New Zealand tourist brochure that promotes Puamahara as "an attractive horticultural centre in the south-west of the North Island' known to be 'the source and setting of the legend of the Memory Flower'' (19). The tourist centre realises that, if marketed successfully, Puamahara's past—in particular its indigenous past—represents a valuable commodity. This calculated commoditisation of the past creates a carefully constructed representation that affirms the community's autonomy to decide and contain a past that serves its purposes: in this case increased tourism. This example of the utilisation of New Zealand resources reverberates with an historical tradition that Evans associates with European settlement: "From the first, they [the Europeans] saw New Zealand as a source of raw materials that could make them a profit" (Long Forgetting 48). The indigenous occupants of New Zealand, the Maori, were also seen by the Europeans to be a valuable "raw material" (Long Forgetting 48), and with the beginning of tourism in the early nineteenth-century, Evans argues, both land and indigenous occupants were reduced to the status of spectacle. In The Carpathians, the Europeans' tradition of using the Maori inhabitants as a resource is shown to continue in Puamahara and, in this particular case, New Zealand's indigenous past has become a spectacle that attracts tourists.

Ruth Brown identifies and diagnoses a desire for spirituality that permeates the Western world and, I contend, one that is also present in the tourist board's tactical decision to commodify Puamahara's indigenous past: "Western culture shows a profound need to believe that spirituality still exists somewhere in a world that appears to be reduced to a consumerist monologue" (252). The Western world's desire to discover spirituality, preferably in a Third World location, results in the appropriation of another's culture. This act of appropriation is carried out through intentional thought and allows the community to affirm its autonomy through reducing the exterior world to a consumable good at its disposal. The tourist brochure's romanticised image of Puamahara, home of the Memory Flower, is an example of a trend that, according to Mark Williams, emerged during the 1980s in New Zealand. Williams explains that "Once they had truly embraced their Pacific
location (and remade their culture in deference to a romantically interpreted image of the Maori), the Pakeha would be able to feel truly at home" (19). The Puamaharians' romantic interpretation of Maori thus ensures and affirms, in Levinasian terms, the community being at home with itself. It also has the added effect of firmly locating Maori culture in the past. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theories, Bev Hogue argues that "classifying Maori culture as archival commodity rather than living culture results in what Homi Bhabha calls the 'calcification of colonial cultures'" (128). Such a process, as Bhabha warns, promotes "the celebratory romance of the past" which, as a result, is at risk "of the fixity and fetishism of identities" (Location 9). Firmly positioned in the past, Maori culture is unable to disturb the community's presence and reveal the "apparent and invisible bloody deeds" that are part of New Zealand's colonial past.

If the past is to challenge the community's presence and, perhaps even more importantly, invoke the ego's responsibility, another time is required than that which originates from the ego's domain. In the next chapter I will examine Levinas's time of diachrony which does not begin from the presence of the ego and which undermines the stability of characters' makeshift suns. Rendered vulnerable to an absolute alterity which cannot be contained, the ego's temporal continuum of present, future-presence and past-presence is replaced by an unstable present that reveals an uncertain future and problematic past.
Having established that timeless presence is the ultimate and violent goal of Frame's conformist characters in *The Adaptable Man* and *The Carpathians*, I will now examine how this presence is being disturbed or interrupted in the novels. Despite the characters' best efforts to construct makeshift suns that affirm their control of time, the primary marker of individuality—the body—is revealed to be a vulnerable site. While the body is the shelter of individuality, it is also vulnerable to the approach of the Other that calls the ego's presence into question and invokes responsibility. Undoubtedly frightening and violent, the Other's questioning of the ego's way of being is preferable to the violence of conformist societies that, like popular fiction, produce "supermarket recognitions" (Frame, *East-West* 87). In both novels, the disturbance of the ego's presence reveals the emptiness and violence of the moment of interruption and of the ego. Confined to a temporal system that champions its own ontological adventure, the ego is a violent form of subjectivity that carries out superficial identifications of "this as that." As Levinas explains, "*this* which takes form in experience is already alleged or understood or identified, hence thought *as* this or *as* that and as present" (*Language* 110). By contrast, the time of diachrony, which does not begin from the ego's present, does not reinstate this as that but "is the refusal of conjunction" (*Otherwise* 11). Moreover, the violent disturbance of the ego's present presupposed by the time of diachrony heralds "goodness," which, for Levinas, "consists in taking up a position in being such that the Other counts more than myself" (*Totality* 247). The ego's vulnerability allows for its present to be interrupted and for the ego to be confronted with the time of diachrony which heralds its infinite responsibility to both past and future generations.

My examination of the interruption of presence in *The Adaptable Man* and *The Carpathians* is divided into three sections. In the first, I will examine how "physical vulnerability precedes the intentionality of consciousness" (Uchiyama 128). Accordingly, Frame reveals that the body while the home of the ego, is also, first and foremost, a sensible site that is vulnerable to the approach of the Other. Her characters' erection of dwellings is thus a futile project because the walls that afford them protection are also always a form of contact with exteriority. In *The Adaptable*
Man both Alwyn and Aisley find their attempts to affirm their centrality through their respective ideologies of adaptation and religion undermined. Despite Alwyn's display of brute strength, as demonstrated in his act of killing Julio, he is overcome by his bodily vulnerability, which constitutes a potential challenge to his autonomy. Similarly, it is significant that when Aisley's crisis in faith begins, his illness also takes hold. Aisley's bodily vulnerability invokes what Levinas refers to as the trauma of exposure to the Other. In The Carpathians, this trauma is precipitated by the Gravity Star which, unlike The Adaptable Man's astrololgical metaphor of makeshift suns, does not reaffirm characters' centrality. Instead, sharing similarities with Gérard de Nerval's description of the black sun of melancholia in his poem "The Disinherited," the Gravity Star precipitates traumatic events in the characters' lives. 

In The Carpathians Mattina experiences this trauma when her project to know others is put in doubt by a mysterious illness that invades her body and undermines her perception. Like The Adaptable Man, The Carpathians presents the body as a vulnerable site susceptible to the approach of the Other. However, while, in The Adaptable Man, Frame's depictions of the ego's vulnerable presence are limited to isolated examples in characters' lives when their presence is disturbed, in The Carpathians, Frame's galactic phenomenon, the Gravity Star—which presents a world whose categories of ontological thought are in disarray—hovers over all of the characters. The later novel thus seems to represent a stronger assertion by Frame that conformist societies and their by-product, the individual, are never immune to threat. The Gravity Star's eerie non-presence reveals the melancholic vulnerability of the ego and, as seen in the case of Mattina, who suffers bouts of insomnia and is haunted by an invisible creature, anticipates the interruption of the ego's presence.

In the second section, I will examine how Frame's characters' vulnerability predisposes them for the actual threat of an interruption. This interruption occurs when they encounter an Other which resists the thematising function of consciousness. In The Adaptable Man Frame's inclusion of spectral presences enact the Other's interruption of the ego. These spectral presences not only include the obvious example of Julio, a ghost, but also Frame's many references to metaphors of visual disturbances, such as shadows, specks and cracks that distort the ego's vision of

17 In Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia Julia Kristeva discusses Nerval's poem in detail; the influence of what Kristeva describes as Nerval's "dazzling metaphor" had on her own work is evident in its title (13).
the exterior world. The notion of the gash represents the vulnerability of the ego's presence which, although subordinating the exterior world to cognition, also remains forever susceptible to haunting disturbances that upset its hold over the world. Like the notion of a gash or speck in the novel, Julio disrupts the opposition between existence and non-existence and therefore disturbs a metaphysics of presence. Furthermore, Critchley's argument that in *Specters of Marx* Derrida "speaks of spectres in order to try and do justice to the living, the dead and the unborn" suggests that the inclusion of spectres in discourse invoke responsibility for both living and non-living generations (*E-P-S* 151). Adopting Critchley's proposal that the justice invoked by the spectre is of a Levinasian nature, I will suggest that *The Adaptable Man* pursues a messianic experience of time. Undermining the ego's centrality, the ghost's messianic time affirms a form of inter-subjectivity that is built on an insurmountable responsibility for past and future generations. By contrast, in *The Carpathians*, while the ego's vulnerability is also shown to precede its consciousness and anticipate the approach of the Other, this Other does not take on the form of the spectre, but is an example of one of the many characters—so predominant throughout Frame's fiction—who resist society's attempts to know them. In *The Carpathians*, this example of the unknown in societies is Decima, an autistic child who resists categories of knowledge. At the request of his dead wife, Jake visits Decima, and his encounter with Decima invokes an overwhelming burden of responsibility that can never be fulfilled. Through viewing Decima as an example of a Levinasian Other, the obligation that people owe to such figures in society is given the infinite scope which Frame's fiction appears to call for. However, Frame's fiction also departs from a Levinasian ethical framework at this point because, unlike Levinas's others, Frame's others frequently belong to specific and identifiable groups in society. Frame's willingness to traverse the boundaries between ethical and political considerations and thus to identify the plight of the Other with the plight of a specific group of people sits uneasily alongside Levinas's emphasis that the 'absolutely Other' "cannot be said with the categories of Being" (*Enigma* 77).

Sensible, vulnerable and interrupted by the Other, Frame's characters in both novels are exposed to an insurmountable responsibility that evokes an immemorial past. For Frame, such a responsibility necessitates a deconstruction of the ego's presence which not only allows an ethical response to the past to emerge but also ensures a more just future. In the third, and final, section of this chapter, I argue that
in *The Adaptable Man* it is again the body which, in its sensibility and vulnerability, is capable of carrying out a form of ethical remembrance that, unlike intentional thought, does not originate from the ego's presence. However, in *The Adaptable Man* the body's remembrance is limited to people with whom the ego has a personal connection. As such, it falls short of the radical scope that Levinas's ethical stance demands. By contrast, in *The Carpathians*, Frame's representation of Mattina's obligation not to forget is not only carried out at the level of the body but also comes closer to realising the infinite scope of the ego's responsibility to both past and future generations. While *The Carpathians* undoubtedly places an importance on the need for societies to foster remembrance, it is necessary to ask if Frame's turn to memory—whether the Memory Flower's, or Mattina's—is ultimately an unsatisfactory return to the mode of knowledge and presencing that the novel seeks to disturb.

### 3.1 The Sensible and Vulnerable Present

Alone one night in the cottage with Alwyn, Jenny, Alwyn's girlfriend, remarks that "Skin's not a very efficient hedge. People *do invade*" (72). Jenny's perceptive comment undermines the multiple attempts of the Burgelstatham villagers' to keep stranger and neighbour at bay, since the skin that houses the ego's presence is also a site of vulnerability. Levinas calls this vulnerability of the ego sensibility which, as Critchley explains, "is my subjection, vulnerability, or passivity towards the Other" (Ethics of Deconstruction 179). "On the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves" (Otherwise 15), the ego's sensibility is its vulnerability to being exposed or, to rephrase this in temporal terms, its vulnerability to a time that is beyond itself. Moreover, as Levinas explains, "the immediacy of the sensible is an event of proximity and not of knowledge" ("Language" 116). An event of proximity is the fundamental moment in Levinas's ethics: it is the moment when the ego's presence is disturbed by the signification of the Other and, consequently, turned to a state of being-for-another. The event of proximity cannot be an event of knowledge since knowledge is the work of the intentional ego carried out in the present in order to shelter the ego from interruption. Nor can the event of proximity between the ego and the Other occur in the present since, as Alphonso Lingis explains, in his introduction to a collection of Levinas's philosophical papers, "he [Levinas] distinguishes [proximity] from the ontological concept of presence" (xix). Outside of presence and "the common time of clocks" (Otherwise 89), the ego's proximity to the Other, which
occurs through the body's sensibility, reduces the ego to a vulnerable state. While Jenny and Alwyn look upon the skin's inefficiency with distaste, and perhaps fear, Jenny's observation captures the vulnerability of the ego's presence; it is this vulnerability that throughout the novel all of the villagers attempt to deny through fortifying their symbolic stronghold, the home.

Alwyn, the prototypical adaptable man, who has turned away from the past and those not able to adapt, and who is the epitome of strength and indestructibility, continues to be haunted by a childhood incident when his presence was ruptured and his ego left vulnerable. Out of turn with the conversation—but also strangely in sync, since the main topic of conversation has been the subject of foreign immigrants and the issue of how to keep them at bay—Alwyn addresses his mother:

"Do you remember, Mother?"
"Yes, Alwyn . . ."
"Years ago when I came home for the holidays I put up a tent in the garden, and I imagined it was waterproof, and so it was. [...] Then one day I touched the canvas, the spell was broken, the rain came in [...]"
[...]
"Sometimes I wish," Alwyn said, "that no one had ever learned to touch the canvas. But you don't learn to touch it, it's an instinctive movement." (60)

This example reveals that despite Alwyn's assertions of strength—as demonstrated by his killing of Julio and his incestuous relationship with his mother—Alwyn's presence is vulnerable. If the fly of the tent is viewed as a symbol of Alwyn's body, and in particular of his skin, Alwyn's being is interrupted through contact or touch and he is left exposed to the elements that are exterior to the ego.

Alwyn's account of this discovery of his skin's vulnerability reverberates with Julia Kristeva's work on melancholy in Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia. In this text, Kristeva includes an account of a patient's description of their experience of melancholy; the patient explains, "I speak [...] as if at the edge of words, and I have the feeling of being at the edge of my skin, but the bottom of my sorrow remains unreachable!" (56). Similarly, Alwyn's disturbance in the tent resembles the experience of the melancholic person who is unable to signify in language an agent or cause for their condition but, instead, is affected at the site of the body by an intense feeling of vulnerability. The image of the tent, an example of a dwelling in its most makeshift form, represents the vulnerability of the skin which, as Levinas explains with reference to proximity,
is neither a container nor the protection of an organism, nor purely and simply the surface of a being, but nudity, presence abandoned by a departure, exposed to everyone and then too unfaithful to itself, insolvent, yet also delivered over to the things, contaminated, profaned, persecuted, in fault and in distress. ("Language" 121)

The intensity of Levinas's description of the skin's exposure in proximity resembles the rupture felt in being by the melancholic person: a being whose presence has been irreparably disturbed. Although Alwyn's vulnerability is revealed through his own actions—it is his touching of the canvas—Alwyn's description of the event as an "instinctive movement" suggests the body's, and not the ego's, memory of a passivity that precedes the ego's present. In turn, Alwyn's instinctual and non-intentional actions echo the melancholic person's relationship to the unnameable Thing that precipitates his or her crisis. According to Kristeva, the Thing—or the real that does not lend itself to signification—"is inscribed within us without memory, the buried accomplice of our unspeakable anguishes" (14). Furthermore, despite Alwyn's best efforts to ignore his vulnerability and susceptibility, the incident in the tent anticipates Alwyn's eventual encounter with the face of Julio. Vulnerable and rendered a "prisoner of affects" at the site of his body (Kristeva 14), the adaptable man cannot escape the approach of Julio who will undermine Alwyn's stronghold on presence in order that a form of ethical responsibility can take place.

Like Alwyn, Aisley's corporeal vulnerability reveals his potential to be threatened by exteriority; however, unlike his nephew Alwyn, Aisley's deteriorating physical condition originates from his desire to come closer to God. While I am not aware of any instances of Levinas describing the ego's exposure to the Other as an illness, Aisley's illness in The Adaptable Man, when read alongside his crisis in faith, may serve as a suitable example of a Levinasian ego that is vulnerable and exposed. Sensibility as exposure to the Other is felt or signified, first and foremost, in the body, which has led Critchley to describe Levinasian ethics as "lived as a corporeal obligation to the Other" (Ethics of Deconstruction 180). Levinas uses images of bodily pain in order to describe the ego's sensibility and proximity to the Other; for

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9 While Alwyn's calm and calculated refusal to feel guilt over Julio's murder appears antithetical to a melancholic disposition, his cool demeanor resembles Kristeva's account of a female patient's ability to present "the appearance of a practical woman, at ease with herself" (80).
example, after describing sensibility as "a being put in question by the alterity of the other," Levinas expands on this quality of being for the Other and describes it as "a writhing in the tight dimensions of pain," and in the next sentence as "being torn up from oneself" (*Otherwise* 75). Similarly, in *The Adaptable Man*, having lost the assurance of his ideological makeshift sun, Aisley registers an intense corporeal vulnerability and is "overcome by a desire to return beneath the stone" (5), with the stone representing the security of a time which only concerns the ego.

Aisley's discovery of the shadow on his lung and his realisation that the speck which he identifies as God has strayed beyond his vision are concurrent events. No longer vouchsafed the security that religion provides, Aisley's body is rendered vulnerable and he succumbs to illness. Suffering from tuberculosis, Aisley is described as deathly thin: "his feet moved like planks or flat paddles along the summer-dusty lanes. The dust rose in a thin cloud about him; he looked like a portrait of an aloof creature, new to earth, skimming along the lately abandoned surface of hell" (91). Aisley walks the surface of hell because his faith has deserted him and, lacking the security of presence with which his makeshift sun provided him, Aisley is rendered vulnerable. Aisley's response to his illness is contradictory: he both longs for his recovery, which he associates with the return of God, but he also fears the return of a manmade God that, like the little village church whose congregation consists of vegetables, is "not any more of [the] people" (244). On the one hand, having recovered from tuberculosis, Aisley assures himself that with the coming of spring, and its obvious associations with physical regeneration, "he would look out with a camera eye onto the essence of God" (235). On the other hand, he quickly realises that "his dream had been only another example of the human cunning that tries to bring God or not-God within its own limits" (235). Aisley's analysis of his intentions produces the profound recognition that the God he seeks is one that supports his presence and does not disturb the ego. In discordance with Levinas's idea of God as that which "breaks up the thought, which is an investment, a synopsis and synthesis and can only enclose in a presence" ("God" 136), Aisley seeks a human vision of God which is not-God. Consequently, as Aisley recovers, his "feeling of helplessness increased" (214), for he realises that the return of his man-made version of God is like the fixative his brother uses with false teeth: it fixes the ego in the present through meeting the "consumer needs of the soul" (215). The trauma and violence Aisley has undergone corporeally is incomparable to the violence he experiences when
recovered: "Like the blow of an ax cutting him clean from the nourishing roots of sickness. He lay helpless. The source was gone. He would never blossom again" (253). Recovered, Aisley is no longer vulnerable and, despite the trauma it facilitated corporeally, vulnerability was also the blossoming of the trace of Levinas's unique formulation of religion which "is not a moment in the 'economy' of being" but, instead, "is signified by the idea of the infinite in us or by the humanity of man" ("Transcendence" 159).

I am not the first to identify the importance of the vulnerable body in Janet Frame's fiction. In his article "Forbidding Bodies: Avatars of the Physical in the Work of Janet Frame," Delrez argues that in Frame's fiction "the fading body derives an unexpected significance by virtue of its being in touch with eclipsed dimensions clamouring for ontological and epistemological reclamation" (70). While I find a tension within Delrez's article between his use of universal and totalistic frameworks to understand the significance of the body and his use of phrases that resist totalisation, such as an "elusive hidden dimension" (79), Delrez ultimately argues that in Frame's novels "the wasting body materializes as a major object of retrieval" (79). By contrast, my interest is in the way in which Frame's representations of a non-intentional form of responsibility render the body's symbolic function as a site of ongoing disturbance rather than retrieval. In illness, Aisley's body is rendered vulnerable; and when read alongside his crisis in faith, the vulnerable body both signifies an interruption of the ego's presence and signals another mode of being and temporalisation. Ultimately, however, Aisley recovers, and with the return of the ego, the threat of exteriority is contained. By contrast, the radical disturbance enacted by the Gravity Star in The Carpathians leads to the collapse of the ego's sovereignty over exteriority and dispossesses the ego of its autonomy. Thus, while The Adaptable Man depicts isolated and momentary disturbances of the ego, The Carpathians is more emphatic in its descriptions of the total collapse of the ego's world.

Under the influence of the Gravity Star, Puamahara represents an exterior world that is vulnerable to the approach of the Other. The fictional note that opens The Carpathians explains the narrator's fascination with an astrological phenomenon which, citing a Press Association Report, he defines as "a galaxy that appears to be

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20 Interestingly, in his essay on Frame published in 2009, Delrez, while discussing the violence of representations of the past, exhibits a hesitancy that these 'eclipsed experiences' can be retrieved, wondering "Whether or not we [can] believe in Frame's capacity to excavate, at a higher level of her own metafiction, these fossils of a forgotten past"("Conquest" 137).
both relatively close and seven billion light years away." While the note explains the influence the phenomenon had on the narrator's writing of the novel, it also enters the fictional world of the characters. Unlike the characters' various makeshift suns in *The Adaptable Man*, the Gravity Star does not affirm but rather threatens traditional ontological categories of being and knowledge, anticipating "the prospect of the sudden annihilation of the usual perception of distance and closeness, the bursting of the iron bands that once made rigid the container of knowledge, the trickling away of the perception of time and space" (14). The Gravity Star wreaks a traumatising disturbance of the characters' lives in the latter part of the novel where under its influence an entire street of inhabitants are reduced to dumb animal-like creatures who are unable to communicate their despair. Like the condition of melancholy, the effects of the Gravity Star are written on the bodies of characters who are pelted by a midnight rain which consists of the languages of the world that are no longer at their disposal. Their plight resembles that of melancholic people who, as Kristeva suggests, are subject to "the most archaic expression of an unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound, so precocious that no out-side agent [...] can be used as a referent" (12). Moreover, Kristeva's descriptions of melancholy in terms of Nerval's metaphor of the black sun echo Frame's account of the Gravity Star. Kristeva describes it as "an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time" (13). Like the black sun of melancholy, the Gravity Star hovers over the characters but resists their powers of comprehension. Both near and far, both a familiar astrological phenomenon of our night skies, a star, and utterly strange, the Gravity Star heralds unprecedented destruction but at the same time transmits brightness. It is this brightness, I shall argue, that heralds the novel's exploration of the ethical potential of a mode of human interaction which does not begin with the ego's violent assertion of an I at the expense of the Other.

The Gravity Star disturbs traditional ontological frameworks that oppose an inside (the ego) to an outside (the body). This tradition of "the feeling of the eternal strangeness of the body," Levinas argues, has "persisted throughout every variation in ethics" ("Reflections" 8); and through his own unique version of ethics, Levinas attempts to foreground the importance of the body. The coming or non-coming of the Gravity Star heralds a form of time that does not begin from the ego's presence but instead ruptures and disturbs: the time of diachrony. Despite the appearance of
ordinariness, Frame conceives of Puamahara as a place whose carefully constructed dwellings and gardens attempt to conceal the potential disturbances that lie just beneath these surfaces and which the Gravity Star will ultimately unearth. Under the influence of the Gravity Star, and hence unable to approach the world from the certainty and security of presence, Puamahara will discover "those whom you thought to be dead appear in the doorways" (15). No longer able to safely assume the dead's absence from the present, the Puamaharians' container of knowledge, which sharply distinguishes between living and non-living, will begin to trickle away.

This trickling away of knowledge Frame metaphorically represents as the experience of walking to the end of a familiar street and gazing out into the unknown:

The further you gaze the easier it is to lose your sense of being somewhere, [...] with the warmth of being in your street changed to the desolation of realising that distance may transform your feeling and knowing into nothingness, that you yourself may destroy and declare not to exist what you do not now know and have ceased to become a part of. (15–16)

If the street represents the site of familiarity which is the ego's presence, the ego's world is rendered vulnerable once it gazes beyond its limits. However, rather than accept this vulnerability, the ego uses its tools of comprehension to reduce the inexplicable to nothing. Reduced to nothing, the unknown that threatens the ego's horizons is tamed. As a consequence, the ego ceases being part of an ethical world or, as Frame describes it in the next sentence, "you may fall into the darkness at the end of the earth" (16). Although the ego maintains its presence, there is an element of farce in the ego's belief that its town is the core of the earth suspended above "the spinning earth and the stars" (15). Dinny Wheatstone suggests the farcical qualities of the ego’s presence when she likens the ego’s illusions to imposturing: we "believe the earth is motionless, a secure foothold, although we have learned it spins itself like a top [...] we are all deep in imposture, surrounded only by intimations of truth" (52).

Frame's geographically framed analogies for the ego's site of presence emphasise the illusory quality of the ego's belief in its own centrality. It is this suggestion of farce, which is less pronounced in The Adaptable Man, that signals the complete collapse of

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21 Kristeva argues that the ego's reduction of aspects of the world that might challenge its centrality to "nothing" was employed by many as a defense mechanism against the traumatising historical events of the twentieth century. She writes: "As if overtaxed or destroyed by too powerful a breaker, our symbolic means find themselves hollowed out, nearly wiped out, paralyzed. On the edge of silence the word 'nothing' emerges, a discreet defense in the face of so much disorder, both internal and external, incommensurable" (223).
the ego's ability to use its interiority to contain exteriority. Hovering beyond the ego's presence, the Gravity Star anticipates the destruction of the ego's illusions.

The vulnerability of the ego and the uncertainty of its illusions are an element of the ego's relationship with the Other, as Gerald Brun explains: "the interiority (the self, the same) is always haunted by another sort of Other, [...] who threatens to reduce my representations to travesty, that is, who shadows my experience of the world with the possibility that the world is mere spectacle" (139). Considering the possibility that her existence is two-dimensional, Mattina reflects:

It couldn't be that she and everyone and everything could be reduced to mere cut outs without volume simply because some astronomer had discovered a Gravity Star that destroyed the concepts of nearness and distance as opposites, setting them side by side and thus overturning all thought. Yet could it be?

The Gravity Star has the same effects as Levinas's Other: it reduces the ego to an insubstantial existence and reveals that the ego's mode of being, or its three-dimensionality, has always been illusory. As mere cut outs, Frame's characters are separated from their corporeal existence and only experience bodily vulnerability when the Gravity Star appears and calls their mode of being into question. Undermining characters' grasp on the world, the Gravity Star is a concept that distorts the ontological categories of knowledge which are produced by a metaphysics of presence. In their place, the Gravity Star anticipates a time that cannot begin from the ego's presence and that also affirms the ancient breathing presence that will interrupt Mattina's presence, provoke her bodily vulnerability and throw her into a state of vigilant wakeful insomnia.

In Puamahara, Mattina suffers the "bouts of sickness, vomiting, lassitude [and] lack of appetite" of which she has told no one (36). Rendered anxious and fearful of death, Mattina's bodily vulnerability ignites "a flash of fear of the unknown" and rather than face this fear (36), Mattina resorts to what Heidegger calls inauthentic life. Heidegger argues that through identifying with the group, das Man, the individual evades death, but ultimately pursues an inauthentic life, which is evoked in Frame's descriptions of the "big fat people-packed opinion" where "man clings safe as a member of the ordered compulsive colony" (Adaptable 214). Accordingly, Mattina shifts her focus away from her own illness and impending death towards the lives of the Puamaharian townsfolk: "She suspects that her desired acquisition of so many lives in a short time may be influenced by her growing certainty that her own life may
soon end" (70). Mattina's acquisition of the Puamaharians represents an attempt to stave off her anxiety over her impending death. Heidegger argues that instead of running from death, the subject should face up to their own death or to what he calls "Authentic Being-towards-death" (304). In other words, the subject should turn away from the inauthenticity of *das Man* to the authenticity of individuality. However, in the case of Mattina, her bodily illness already represents the vulnerability of an ego that cannot be recuperated through turning to the self. Turning back to the ego, or individuality, would only represent a farcical illusion or a spectacle of authenticity and it would ignore that the ego's "physical vulnerability precedes the intentionality of consciousness" (Uchiyama 128; emphasis added). The ego's sensibility signals its susceptibility and exposure, which in *The Carpathians* is represented by the ancient breathing presence that haunts Mattina's nights.

Suddenly waking one night during her stay in Puamahara, Mattina becomes aware of the sound of breathing in her room. When she turns on the lights she is unable to see anything. Although she can neither see nor explain the presence, she accepts it and "termed the presence a creature although she felt it could be looked on as a thought, a memory, a time, or just a shape occupying a new kind of space" (80). Mattina's inability to categorise or thematise the presence echoes Levinas's description of the ego's experience of darkness or night:

> Darkness, as the presence of absence, is not a purely present content. There is not a 'something' that remains. There is the atmosphere of presence, which can, to be sure, appear later as a content, but originally is the impersonal, non-substantive event of the night and the *there is*. ("There is" 35)

Mattina's breathing presence, which "is neither an object nor the quality of an object, invades like a presence" ("There is" 30): it interrupts Mattina's sleep, ignites fear and confusion and resists her attempts to thematise its presence. Disturbing Mattina's ego, the breathing presence's interruption reduces the ego to indeterminacy. This indeterminacy is prior to a state of nothingness and represents the anonymous and impersonal being of the 'there is' which, according to Seán Hand's explanatory foreword to Levinas's essay, "marks the end of objectivizing consciousness" (29). The creature's presence interrupts Mattina's sleep and reduces her to a vigilant wakefulness which, as Hand further explains, is "prior to the essence of being" (29). For Levinas, the vigilant wakefulness of the insomniac signals the error of philosophers in arguing that the ego is a foundational ground from which ethical responsibility can be defined.
Instead, the insomniac's eternal vigilance indicates the necessity of the Other's disturbance of the ego's presence in order that ethical responsibility can take place.

Like the Other, the haunting presence brings "the disorder of space and time" (*Carpathians* 89): no longer can the ego rest in the security of the present. While Mattina initially attempts to evade the traumatizing presence of the creature through listing the residents of Kowhai Street "as if they were her possessions" in order to fall asleep (90), the creature continues to disturb her nights. As the imprecise form of the breathing presence paradoxically becomes more defined, Mattina is overwhelmed by the fear and anxiety that she, as well as those around her, may be "mere cut outs" (101). The breathing presence reduces "Mattina, the house, the street and its people, […] to a two-dimensional existence, people-shapes, and house-shapes, […] a world-scape without volume, with their present image of themselves an illusion only" (101). When Mattina later tries to understand her inclusion within Dinny Wheatstone's script as a character—an example of her reduction to two dimensions—she does not recall in her passivity "the detail that might help to explain" but rather "it recalled itself to her" and "she sensed within the room the breathing presence that had broken through the fabric of time and space: an ancient distant presence that was new and close by, affirming the world of the Gravity Star" (115). This invisible presence breaks through the boundary of walls, which represent Mattina's own vulnerable skin, and serves as an example of the unnameable Thing of melancholy which, according to Kristeva, "is inscribed within us without memory" (14). Frame's stress that Mattina does not actively "recall" but is approached by the breathing presence emphasises Mattina's passivity before the breathing presence that, like Levinas's description of the ego's experience of the night, renders the ego vulnerable and necessitates its eternal vigilance. The breathing presence's affirmation of the Gravity Star is thus also an affirmation of a mode of being that does not validate its own time at the expense of the Other. Consequently, when the midnight rain—an example of the full exertion of the Gravity Star's influence and the climax of its disturbance of being—reduces the residents of Kowhai Street to "passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form, trauma of accusation" (*Otherwise* 15), the breathing presence disappears. No longer in the nominative form, as their inability to articulate and tame language illustrates, the residents of Kowhai Street are accused and reduced to a state of being-for-the-other. Both the Gravity Star and the breathing presence expose the vulnerability of the ego's presence and signal the approach of the Other that
commands an infinite responsibility to remain vigilant. In the next section I examine how Julio and Decima, the principal examples of the Other in *The Adaptable Man* and *The Carpathians* respectively, expose the ego to a time which does not validate the self.

### 3.2 The Other's Interruption

In this section I want to propose that the spectre, defined by Derrida in *Specters of Marx* as that which "exceed[s] any presence as presence" (xix), not only shares characteristics with Levinas's Other, but also, as Critchley argues in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*, anticipates the same goal, that is, justice. The parallels between the figure of the spectre and the Other suggest that Julio's inclusion in *The Adaptable Man* as a ghost also functions as an example of the Other that calls the ego's presence into question. With the approach of the neighbour—whereby Levinas's specific use of the term neighbour implies the ego's proximity to the Other—there "rises an absence by virtue of which proximity is not a simple coexistence and rest, but non-repose itself, restlessness" ("Language" 120). The ego's "restlessness"—which Levinas has variously described through terms such as "distress," "horror" and "trauma"—subordinates the ego to a passivity that is characterised by the "obsession of an I 'beset' by the others" ("Language" 123). The above terms that Levinas uses to describe the vulnerability of the ego in its passivity before the Other resonate with the characteristics of Derrida's notion of a hantise. Although translated as 'haunting' in the English edition of Derrida's work, *hantise* in French, as his translator Peggy Kamuf explains, "also has the common sense of an obsession, a constant fear, a fixed idea, or a nagging memory" (177). Thus, like the approach of the neighbour, a haunting overwhelms the ego and renders it passive to an obsession that is both fearful and, as I shall argue, for both Derrida and Levinas anticipates justice.

Before examining the similarities between Derrida's spectre and Levinas's Other, I wish to address how Frame's representations of spectral disturbances of vision call into question her characters' presence. In response to Eaglestone's argument that two strands inform both Levinas's and Derrida's "humanism beyond

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22 In *Specters of Marx* Derrida's confesses that he had chosen to name his series of lectures the "Specters of Marx" before recalling the opening sentence of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* which declares "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism." Although throughout his lectures the word spectre reverberates with his primary focus on Marxist ideologies, he readily interchanges the term spectre for ghost and provides no clear distinction between the two terms.
humanism”—first, "a sense of the fundamentally fragile, corporeal existence" and second, "an awareness of the trace, of that otherness which escapes the limits of systems of thought and language but is made manifest in them" (Holocaust 3)—I adopt a two-fold approach to Frame's representation of the notion of haunting in The Adaptable Man. The concept of haunting is first evoked in The Adaptable Man even before Julio's haunting begins, through Frame's representation of the spectral disturbances of vision that call into question her characters' presence and that reveal the ego's fundamentally fragile, corporeal existence. Frame then presents Julio, a spectre, whose unusual form of communication—an eclectic collection of English phrases—suggests that the trace of otherness can both elude and be made manifest in language.

The French notion of a hantise, as a constant fear, is evoked in Frame's repeated descriptions of disturbances of vision in The Adaptable Man. These include the shadow that registers on the X-ray of Aisley's lungs, the speck that distorts Aisley's vision of God, and the crack that distorts Vic's mirror view of the world. In the case of Aisley, for example, the shadow on his lungs suggests the threat of tuberculosis, and the speck that hovers on the edge of his vision and prevents him from seeing God challenges his faith. Similarly, for Vic, who suffers an horrendous accident that renders him a tetraplegic only able to view the outside world through a series of mirrors that are arranged around his bedside, the crack suggests the impossibility of harbouring a complete view of the world. If, as Levinas argues, consciousness consists "of an ego identical in its I think, aiming at and embracing, or perceiving, all alterity under its thematizing gaze" ("Diachrony" 97), then these metaphors of disruption reveal the vulnerability of the ego's presence. Throughout The Adaptable Man, Frame charts the characters' attempts to construct a "smooth, weatherless world" through the aid of their various ideological makeshift suns (277). These makeshift suns aid the ego's construction and maintenance of a man-made version of the world which, in turn, sustains the autonomy of the ego. However, the spectral disturbances of vision, which mar the characters' smooth, weatherless world, reveal their corporeal susceptibility through "strip[ping] the Ego of its self-conceit and its dominating imperialism" ("Substitution" 88), and expose it to a spectral residue that is borne from a moment that was never of the ego's presence. Fittingly, like the spectre, which "is never present as such" (Derrida, Specters xviii), these spectral disturbances of vision disturb the ego's mode of being. In Frame's writing, as Tessa
Barringer argues, "that tiny speck in the eye/I, the nature and name of which cannot be finally determined, can be interpreted here as the absolute 'alterity' of the other, that which cannot be subsumed as one (I) and the same" (182). Moreover, Frame's spectral presences, which like the spectre cannot be accounted for by the ego, destabilise the characters' egocentrism and announce the ego's susceptibility to the Other. Levinas argues that the ego's susceptibility is grounds for understanding that ontology, or the ego's mode of being, is secondary to the ego's responsibility for the Other. Thus, this responsibility, which cannot be accounted for in the ego's present, or fulfilled once and for all, will continue to haunt the ego.

Frame's spectral disturbances of vision complement the emergence in the text of Julio, a spectre, who is "neither substance, nor essence, nor existence" and thus "is never present as such" (Specters xviii; emphasis in original). Derrida describes "a spectral moment" as "a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents" (Specters xx). Like Derrida's spectral moment, Levinas's Other can never be encountered or grasped in the ego's present: "The freedom of another could never [...] abide in the same present, be contemporary, be representable to me" (Otherwise 10). Nor can the Other be reduced to an essence or identity since "the way in which the other presents himself," as Levinas explains, "exceed[s] the idea of the other in me" (Totality 50; emphasis in original). Neither the spectre nor the Other belongs to the ego's present; their strangeness or excess cannot be subdued by knowledge.

While Levinas has never explicitly referred to the Other as a spectre, scattered throughout his works are teasing references to ghostly figures. In an early essay, Levinas uses scenes from Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth in order to illustrate the horror of the 'there is.' The 'there is' is an "impersonal form" that designates the ego's horror before a world that is reduced to a void that the ego can neither dismiss as nothing, nor comprehend as some-thing ("There is" 30). Examining the function of the spectre in Shakespeare's plays, Levinas observes that "Spectres, [and] ghosts, are not only a tribute Shakespeare pays to his time, [...] they allow him to move constantly toward this limit between being and nothingness" ("There is" 33). Levinas's implicit point is that the spectre constitutes the very element of horror that is the 'there is.' Similarly, Derrida characterises the primary function of the spectre as its disturbance of the limit between being and nothingness (or the 'there is'), when he argues that "the ghost [...] points towards a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary
logic" (Specters 63). Identifying the similarities between the "impossible experience of spectrality" and the horror of the 'there is,' Critchley emphasises that both reveal the "impossibility of death" (E-P-S 161). Thus the horror of the 'there is' which the spectre ignites is the fear of immortality or of forever being burdened by responsibility. Like the ego's relationship of proximity with the Other, the spectre announces the insurmountable responsibility of the ego.

In Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity, Critchley correlates the justice Derrida's spectre represents with the justice of Levinas's ethical obligation. Indeed, Critchley notes that Derrida cites Levinas's concept of justice—which Critchley defines as the "ethical relation to the other" (151)—in order to identify the justice precipitated by the spectre. Explaining the significance of the ghost for his own work, Derrida argues that "no ethics, no politics [...] seems possible and thinkable and just that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer there or for those others who are not yet there" (Specters xix; emphasis in original). Derrida's emphasis that the spectre announces the ego's responsibility for generations not yet there or yet to come reveals the way in which, according to Critchley, Derrida's concept of justice is messianic (E-P-S 151). Through rupturing the binary logic of living and non-living, and through signalling the ego's insurmountable responsibility to the Other, the spectre leaves the future open. This opening of the future, the yet to come, as Derrida describes it, is the messianic, which "refers to the promise of something or someone to come in such a way that does not anticipate at all what or who will come, when or where" ("Perhaps" 3). In the presence of the spectre, whose arrival cannot be foreseen, the ego's responsibility for the Other—whether that of past or of future generations—is born, and thus the future exceeds the ego's grasp and cannot be contained. Accordingly, Levinas states that "to be affected by a side [face] of being while its whole depth remains undetermined and comes upon me from nowhere is to be bent toward the insecurity of the morrow" (Totality 142). Uncontained, this future is messianic and, as Derrida emphasises, "in the messianic moment [...] There is the future [...] That can happen [...]. This is not utopian, it is what takes place here and now, in a here and now that I regularly try to dissociate from the present" ("Deconstruction" 83). For this reason, as I now turn to the role of Julio in The Adaptable Man, I will argue against Delrez's reading of Frame's fiction as utopian and instead propose that Julio signals a messianic experience of time through his interruption of the ego's presence.
In presenting this argument, I am indebted to the work of Drichel, who has explicitly engaged with Delrez's utopian reading of Frame's fiction and argues instead for an interpretation of Frame's novels that 'thinks utopia otherwise.'²³ For Drichel this means "we think utopia not as the good place to be aimed for and realized at some point in the future, but as a principle of transcendence that persistently unpicks the fabric of totality" (207). Drichel emphasises that the notion of 'thinking utopia otherwise' does not mean Frame's works are providing a specific thematic content of utopia; instead, the notion of 'thinking utopia otherwise' describes a process that acts within Frame's novels, whereby every presence and ontological assertion is called into question.²⁴ Like Levinas's unique definition of messianism, Drichel's notion of 'thinking utopia otherwise' with regard to Frame's fiction foregrounds the necessity of interrupting all ontological stances and assertions of totality. Levinas even goes so far as to acknowledge in an interview that he "would […] accept the term 'messianic' to describe this ethical relation with the other" although he is quick to qualify this sense of messianism: "I could not accept a form of messianism which could terminate the need for discussion, which would end our watchfulness" (66–67). Whether we approach Frame's fictions as examples of 'thinking utopia otherwise' or of messianism, both approaches foreground the importance placed on disturbing the ego's presence. Levinas's warning that messianism requires an eternal watchfulness reverberates with the ego's experience of being haunted. According to Tim Woods, "the messianic is spectral (hauntological or beyond being), because it ushers in a radical otherness which cannot be appropriated by a conceptual violence within our existing systemic structures" (110). Despite the ego's attempts to rationalise the presence of the spectre, the spectre continues to haunt the ego and leaves it in a state of vigilance, which is illustrated in The Adaptable Man through the disturbance of presence that Julio exacts.

The reader's first encounter with Julio, upon his arrival in Little Burgelstatham, is narrated in the past-tense (14–15). By contrast, in the following chapter, an account of Julio's preparations for his immigration is narrated in the present-tense. This juxtaposition of tenses emphasises that Julio's arrival in Little

²³ Drichel borrows the phrase 'to think utopia otherwise' from the title of Miguel Abensour's article. See: Abensour, Miguel, "To Think Utopia Otherwise," Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 20.2–21.1 (1998): 251–78.
²⁴ In turn, Drichel's approach alludes to Cronin's distinction between the signification and modus operandi of Frame's novels. As a process—rather than a theme—'thinking utopia otherwise,' is an example of the modus operandi of the novel.
Burgelstatham is more accurately described as a non-arrival for he is never allowed to (enter or) be a participant in the community's present. Although firmly relegated to the past through his death, Julio persists in a spectral form. As the narrator warns, while "you might think now that [Julio's] story has been stamped out" (19), he has in fact been placed as "a ghost in our story" (20). Neither present in life, nor able to be present in death, Julio resembles Levinas's Other who "is not even a member of 'my' community but rather the life of someone who comes from afar and who does not belong to it" (Peperzak 137). As a ghost, Julio is the gash that interrupts the community's present (and presence) and questions Frame's conformist society's belief that an age of neatness can eradicate all traces, which is perhaps most forcefully illustrated by what the narrator refers to as the "most appalling piece of reasoning," namely that "death is a prime, convenient, perfect solver of problems" (149). Nevertheless, the narrator insists that "People persist!" and that despite the community's attempts to eradicate him, "Botti Julio persists" (149).

The persistence of Julio in the villagers' lives is a haunting reminder of Levinas's emphatic assertion that the Other's primary commandment to the ego is 'thou shall not kill.' Yet at the same time Levinas argues the Other is the "sole being I can wish to kill" (Totality 198), because unable to possess the other in the horizon of being, the ego resorts to murder as the only possible way of negating the Other. However, as Levinas warns, although "we approach death as nothingness in the passion for murder […], this nothingness presents itself there as a sort of impossibility" (Totality 232). For Levinas, physically annihilating the Other through murder does not lead to total negation but to a "relative annihilation […] attempted within the world" (Totality 233). Thus, despite the temptation of murder and even the physical performance of the violent deed, the Other will always persist because murder is an act carried out in a world predicated on the Same, a world that the Other never belonged to in the first place. Levinas describes the impossibility of total negation in the following terms:

At the very moment when my power to kill realizes itself, the other has escaped me. I can, for sure, in killing attain a goal; I can kill as I hunt or slaughter animals […] But when I have grasped the other in the opening of being in general, as an element of the world where I stand, where I have seen him on the horizon, I have not looked at him in the face, I have not encountered his face. ("Is Ontology Fundamental?" 9; emphases in original)
Murder is an act that occurs in the "opening of being," a site where the Other can never be encountered. As such, the ego's attempt to negate the Other is an "ethical impossibility" (Totality 199). As Jill Robbins argues, for Levinas "murder always misses its mark. No doubt it effects an annihilation of the other in his being. But it thereby misses the genuine alterity of the other, namely that which in him goes beyond the sensible (and that which in him is beyond being)" (143). Unable to negate the Other, the ego remains vulnerable to "the very unforeseeableness of his [the Other's] reaction" (Totality 199; emphasis in original), which occurs in a messianic form of time where the future remains unknowable.

Notwithstanding Alwyn's insistence that his era is not one procurable of guilty consciences and his emphatic assertion that he is "no Raskolnikov" (113), Julio disrupts Alwyn's and the community's presence. When Julio's face first appears to Alwyn, he is neither surprised nor frightened and asserts that "there was no question of the sweat of guilt […] there just wasn't time to sink a shaft of guilt into one's mind and bring up on misery-creaking chains the dregs of conscience, using them to try to flood the so pretty landscape of Now" (113). Alwyn realises that guilty consciences disturb the timeless Now of the ego's presence and are to be avoided at all costs. Nevertheless, if we consider Derrida's comments regarding the 'yet to come' of the future which the ghost signals, we can see how, despite Alwyn's systematic rationalisation of Julio, his ghostly presence and signification cannot be contained: "however prepared, protected, resisting we may be, we remain exposed to what is coming" ("Perhaps" 6). Although Alwyn expects the appearance of Julio's face and rationalises away his guilt, he is still exposed and disturbed by that which he is unable to contain, namely Julio's recital of English phrases.

When Julio's face recedes, Alwyn's present is interrupted by Julio's approach, signified, as it is, by his eclectic collection of English phrases: "My tailor is not rich […] A brace of partridges and two rabbits. The boxers are skipping in the gymnasium to strengthen their legs. These photographs are underexposed; please will you intensify them?" (113). The content of Julio's phrases is insignificant: if subordinated to meaning or interpretation they appear nonsensical. As examples of set-phrases, they carry a stock meaning that is essentially meaningless, amounting to little more that what Dinny Wheatstone describes in The Carpathians as "easy words […] , making false claims to level everyone" (44). Julio's phrases resemble Levinas's Saying; it is not their meaning (or Said) that is important but the fact that they signify the approach
of the Other which the ego cannot reduce to a moment of its presence. Therefore, although Julio's phrases are articulated in language, they nevertheless resist thematisation. Exemplifying one of the central theses of Levinas's work, Julio's phrases reveal that

Language is first and foremost a way of approaching and addressing someone, and only later a linguistic structure that outlasts any particular address. Language is a means of signification before it is a means of thematization, […] it signifies through (and despite) thematization. (Pinchevski 93)

Although Alwyn believes he has mastered Julio, Julio's ghostly presence signals beyond the ego's ability to establish firm boundaries between living and non-living. Julio's eclectic phrases signal an approach that interrupts the ego and invokes responsibility. Later in the novel, when the residents of Little Burgelstatham recall the Italian farm worker, their recollections are interrupted by the inclusion in the text of an assortment of Julio's phrases (227). The spectre of Julio will not allow the townsfolk to contain his identity through remembrance; instead, he continues to disturb their presence. Uncontained, Julio's approach renders the ego vulnerable to the 'yet to come' of the future, for the townsfolk can neither anticipate Julio's approach nor can they surmount the responsibility that Julio demands and that encompasses future generations.

Forever pointing beyond the present, Julio's mode of being in the novel shares greater affinities with a messianic notion of time than with a utopian one. Like a gash, Julio continues to interrupt the present and thus forestalls the possible unity that the term utopia entails. Despite proposing Frame's fiction contains "articulations of her ideal of wholeness," Delrez qualifies his remarks by noting that "Frame's utopia […] comes across as an infinitely deferred ideal, never to be fully realized" (Manifold 221). In agreement with Delrez, I view The Adaptable Man as an example of Frame's fiction that never achieves an idealistic unity. Unlike Delrez, I would not, however, characterise Frame's impulse as utopian unless, as Drichel argues, we 'think utopia otherwise,' that is to say, if we think utopia as an ongoing process of criticising ontological structures. The novel's repeated metaphors of disruption and Julio's function as a disturbance of presence signal a mode of existence that welcomes, and indeed champions, continual interruption. Furthermore, if we regard "interruption as what is denied in the discourse of the Said" (Pinchevski 11), then Frame's impulse to highlight points of disjuncture must be described as ethical rather than utopian.
The Carpathians signals a shift in Frame's depiction of those who disturb the ego's presence. While in The Adaptable Man spectral disturbances of presence signal the Other, in The Carpathians the Other adopts a corporeal form. This implicitly invites a political reading of Frame's novel. For if the Other has a bodily existence, they can then also be identified with a specific social categorisation: in this particular case, marginalised figures in society—such as the mentally ill. Although Julio, as a dispossessed immigrant, fits into the category of a marginalised group in society, his political and social status is rendered secondary to his predominant form as a spectre. However, when Decima, an autistic child, is read as the Other, a tension begins to emerge in my Levinasian interpretation of The Carpathians.

Decima, Gloria and Joseph James' autistic child, resides at an institution on the outskirts of Puamahara. Decima's imposed exile is a response to the town's bewilderment before that which they cannot know because knowledge, as Gloria's description of her daughter emphasises, is all important: "Fifteen. And unknown. That's the pity. Unknown by herself or anyone. I never realised how important it is to be known and to know" (73). Later, as "Mattina's thoughts returned often to Gloria James and her emphasis of the word know, her reference to her daughter as unknown and unknowing" (75), Mattina observes the importance that Gloria presumes of knowledge for identity. As Mattina realises, knowledge is valued because of the influence that the founding framework of the ego's presence, language, has on identity: "The life of Gloria James appeared to depend on a concept and its word, and the fragility of this dependence was horrifying, but was it not merely the usual dependence of anyone upon the language, spoken or written?" (75). Language in the form of Levinas's Said—whereby the ego reduces and thematises the exterior world and its occupants to identifiable entities of its own knowledge—is the primary and sustaining medium of the ego's presence. However, as Mattina's thoughts reveal, this system of affirming presence is fragile, and when confronted with the Other, in this case Decima, the ego is rendered vulnerable. Describing "the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me," Levinas explains that "this mode does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading forth as a set of qualities forming an image" (Totality 50; emphasis in original). Decima approaches the world as an irreducible excess, and as such disturbs the townsfolk's presence, since they are neither able to understand her form of communication—which does not resemble a recognisable form of language—nor to make her known.
Although Decima, as Penelope Ingram observes, "usually receives little or no attention in critics' readings of *The Carpathians*" (99), attempts have been made to understand her role in the text. Such approaches have on the whole highlighted Decima's function as a representative of a marginalised group in society, leading, as Nicholas Birns' comments exemplify, to the conclusion that Decima "is deprived of verbal and spiritual existence by her institution-mandated muteness" (24). Similarly, Delrez views Decima as an example of one of the decimated characters who are so prominent in Frame's fiction. Moreover, he emphasises that her central role within the novel is to signal Frame's "gesture towards an atonement for the 'decimation' of unknown identities" (*Manifold* 89). While I agree with Birns and Delrez that Decima can be read as one of the marginalised victims of conformist societies who are frequently present in Frame's fiction, I first want to consider her as an example of Levinas's Other before taking into account how Birns's and Delrez's political categorisation of Decima, as representative of a social group, problematises a Levinasian interpretation of her. Viewing Decima as an example of Levinas's Other highlights what I consider to be her primary role in the novel: a disturbance of the ego's conventional mode of establishing presence. In *The Carpathians* Decima is less a character and more a mode of communicating a radical form of alterity. In this respect, Decima resembles Cronin's description of the layers of Frame's writing: she is not defined by who she is, a representative of a specific marginalised group, but what she does, that is to say, invoke ethical responsibility. Like the Other, Decima "comes to us not only out of the context but also without mediation" ("Meaning" 53): she signifies the gravity of an insurmountable responsibility that cannot be quelled by a political means of response.

Prior to visiting Decima, Jake, Mattina's husband, conceives of Decima as a "special touchstone" in society (185). Although the term "touchstone" implies that Decima is an origin or arché for societies, Jake's description of Decima's role emphasises that Decima is not to be construed as the unifying foundation of societies but rather as a symbol of an ongoing disturbance that disrupts the ego's autonomy. As a "special touchstone," Decima is not an instance of the "fountain-sources where the supposed strong could replenish their strength of being" but instead "measure[s] the usual need and dependence on spoken words against an infinite silence where the buffeting, battling, hurting world is met with no castle and keep of spoken language" (185; emphasis added). As a measure of the ego's violence and overwhelming
responsibility, Decima resembles the Other who, as Levinas describes, "In his face [...] appears to me not as an obstacle, nor as a menace I evaluate, but as what measures me. For me to feel myself to be unjust I must measure myself against infinity" ("Philosophy" 57–58; emphasis added). Decima's approach interrupts the ego's presence: it can neither return to the safety and security of its castle, nor can language, which is "first and foremost a way of approaching and addressing someone" (Pinchevski 93), explain and contain Decima's interruption. As a "special touchstone" for societies, Decima does not serve as a foundation but as a source of continuing and non-appeaseable interruption.

Providing a politically-inflected interpretation of Decima's muteness, Penelope Ingram argues that Decima is a fountain-source for the white settler's desire to establish an original belonging to the land through becoming the 'white indigene.' Drawing on the work of Spivak, Ingram argues that "the settler desires to be invisible and untranslatable like the native because this untranslatability, this 'inaccessible blankness,' has become the desirable subject-position—an indeterminate, 'authentic' marker of alterity that has come to signify origin for the settler" (101). While, like Ingram, I am also arguing that Decima represents a pre-original presence, my use of these Levinasian terms emphasises that Decima will not unify identities but will signal a disruption of presence, and thus I am seeking to provide an interpretation that moves beyond ontological categories of thought. By contrast, Ingram's interpretation of Decima as a fountain-source that secures the white settler's desire for authenticity, argues that Decima substantiates, supports and affirms the ego's presence. As such, it is an example of a reading that is framed in terms of a metaphysics of presence. Like the plastic cobra snake that Decima swirls around her head and that threatens to strike, Decima's function is not to affirm presence, no matter how illusory, but instead to act as a ceaseless source of disruption. In turn, through disturbing the ego's presence, Decima demands an overwhelming responsibility, which, during Jake's visit to Manuka Home, will accuse, traumatis and persecute him with the insufficiency of his responses.

At the request of his dead wife, Jake visits the town of Puamahara and the Manuka Home. After a discussion with the carer at the Home, who emphasises Decima's inability to communicate, Jake decides against visiting Decima and, while waiting for his taxi to return, falls asleep. He is suddenly "awakened by the sensation of being pulled, clung to [and] crawled over" and proceeds to pull the children around
the yard in a wheeled cart (191). Although "his impulse was to brush away the clinging hands from his sleeve, his coat, his hands" (191), Jake cannot ignore the approach of the children, which is initially non-verbal and conducted through the primary site of ethical obligation: the body. Despite his refusal to meet with the residents, Jake is rendered passive before an approach or command that comes from the Other. Approached through the site of the body, the ego is rendered vulnerable and fragile: the ego's present is interrupted. Moreover, the burden of responsibility that overwhelms Jake and calls him into question is symbolically represented through his reduction to the role of pulling the cart around the yard. Like the Saying, the children's clinging hands are "an exposedness to the other where no slipping away is possible" (Otherwise 50). Jake must bear the burden of pulling the cart around the yard even though this simple gesture is insufficient in the light of the infinite responsibility that the children signify. When Jake leaves he "looked guiltily back at the group that still danced and clamoured for giant-sized attention and love" (191), and even though he declares his fleeting visit "enough," Jake's guilty stare reveals the insufficiency of his response. Although Decima is never identified as one of the children who approach Jake, the failure to ascertain Decima's presence only contributes to her already ambiguous ontological status as unknown. Importantly, however, it also signals the novel's identification of the Other with a specific social categorisation: the marginalised. This produces a tension with Levinas's philosophy which I will now address.

Although Levinas's description of the Other as "for example, the weak, the poor, the widow and the orphan" appears to equate the Other with specific classes of people (Time 83), Bernasconi warns against such a reading. He argues that the ego is positioned as "rich and powerful" in contrast to the Other because, "what Levinas calls my desire for the Other, reconstitutes me as rich and powerful, whatever my empirical status may actually be" ("Who is my Neighbour?" 3). Therefore Bernasconi concludes that "the descriptive terms that identify the Other […] are not being employed solely descriptively, as they would be if they simply referred to character, physiognomy and psychology or, […] to the sociological level" ("Who is my Neighbour?" 3). Despite the growing area of research that identifies the Other with a specific social or ethnic group, in agreement with Bernasconi's interpretation of
Levinas's Other, I find such a reading contrary to Levinas's ethics. In order for the Other to signal a Saying that is otherwise than being and invoke the ego's responsibility, the Other cannot be equated with a specific social categorisation which would belong to the ego's present. Thus, either _The Carpathians_ must be read as departing from Levinasian ethics at this point or, alternatively, we can argue that the identification of the Other with a specific social group is anticipated by Levinasian ethics, which, as Bernasconi observes, is not limited to ethics but focuses on the "point of intersection" between politics and ethics ("Ethics" 15).

In "The Ethics of Suspicion," Bernasconi analyses a number of what he calls Levinas's exclusionary phrases—such as the 'the saying without the said'—and concludes that they "are enigmatic in terms of the system, never free of that order which they interrupt but irreducible to it. For that reason they are challenging, haunting, but at the same time easily dismissed" (14). Although emphasising the asymmetrical relationship between the Other and the ego, and the Saying and the Said, Levinas acknowledges that the ego will ultimately always be successful in reducing moments of interruption and hence restoring its autonomy. This is in accordance with Levinas's original contribution to philosophy of an ethics which "is more concerned with questioning than with providing answers" (Bernasconi, "Ethics" 8). Frame's characterisation of Decima resembles Levinas's exclusionary phrases. The readiness with which both the Puamaharians and literary critics reduce Decima's identity to that of a social outcast misses her enigmatic quality. Decima transcends the novel-form's own system, which would attempt to contain her through reducing her to a character, an identifiable 'I' within its pages. A politically-inflected Levinasian reading of _The Carpathians_ would suggest that through interpreting Decima as an example of the Other who interrupts the ego's present, Frame is able to question the principle that the mentally ill must be separated from society for their own good. However, implicated in this reading is an appeal to a universal principle, namely that those who are mentally ill should not be treated in this way. Alternatively, we can accept the existence of a political impetus in _The Carpathians_ and, nevertheless, propose that it emerges from the secondary reading that we impose onto Decima's

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25 One such example of this growing body of research which identifies the Other with a specific social or ethnic group is Shannon Bell's chapter "Levinas and Alterity Politics" which identifies the Other with the 'gender deviant.' Bell also acknowledges other theorists who have extended their interpretation of the Other to include specific classes of humans and even non-humans (112). See, Shannon Bell, "Levinas and Alterity Politics," _Difficult Justice: Commentaries on Levinas and Politics_, Ed. Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 111–26.
identity despite Frame's emphasis that Decima is inaccessible and indefinable in terms of social categories. If we return to the children's encounter with Jake and analyse it in terms of the particular and unique experience of the ego's face-to-face contact with the Other, we see that Frame is not advocating a universal principle but a continued commitment to the particular. This means that the primary impulse of this encounter is not political but ethical; its key focus is hence the moment of interruption, or the act of questioning "Jake's impulse to brush away the clinging hands" (191). Although The Carpathians undoubtedly displays particular concern for the marginalised in society, this political concern is preceded by a pre-originary commitment to the disturbances of being that are initially announced by its overarching literary conceit: the Gravity Star, which reveals "the other side of the barrier of knowing and being" (129). Given that Jake's motivation for visiting the Home was his wife's insistence not to forget, the implicit importance the novel places on the ethical potential of remembrance throws up the question whether Frame's novel has ventured back to a realm that is governed by a metaphysics of presence.

3.3 Ethical Remembrance

Both of Frame's Others, Julio, a spectre, and Decima, an unknowable child, signal the importance of the ego's ethical obligation which originates from an immemorial past. Both novels, but perhaps even more overtly so The Carpathians, emphasise the ethical importance of the past. However, as I suggested in the preceding chapter, Frame's distaste for commoditised and sanitised accounts of the past requires that her characters' relationship to the past move beyond the intentional grasp of acts of remembrance. Like Levinas's philosophy, Frame's writing is subject to an impasse; it desires to signal the importance of the past while simultaneously viewing acts of remembrance as irreparably contaminated by the ego's violent sovereignty over the present. Throughout his philosophy, Levinas repeatedly argues that acts of remembrance or reminiscence originate from presence: "Reminiscence is the extreme consciousness which is also the universal presence and the universal ontology; whatever is able to fill the field of consciousness was, in its time, received or perceived, had an origin. Through consciousness the past is only a modification of the present" ("God" 134). Levinas's assertion that reminiscence is an act of the intentional ego and thus is inherently violent produces a tension that permeates his philosophy. As Paul Ricoeur notes, Levinas's treatise against the violence of memory
sits tensely alongside his dedication in *Otherwise than Being* to the memory of the victims of anti-Semitism. Consequently, Ricoeur asks: "can one not hope for the return of memory, beyond the condemnation of the memorable?" ("Otherwise" 99). Frame's writing can be seen to respond to Ricoeur's plea through suggesting a way in which memory can have a place within Levinas's ethics without violating the ego's infinite responsibility to the Other. This is carried out through Frame's representation of non-intentional forms of memory. In *The Adaptable Man* this is evident in Frame's representation of the body as a site of traumatic memory that lies outside the intentional ego's presence. In *The Carpathians* Frame continues to use the image of a traumatised and melancholy body in order to suggest an ethical form of remembrance but, in contrast to her earlier novel, places an increased emphasis on the burden of the witness not to forget. Moreover, Frame's writing exemplifies that a deconstruction of the ego's present will not only produce an ethical response to the past but will also ensure a more just future.

Pivotal to Frame's representations of the ability of the body to receive and signal a non-intentional form or remembrance is its traumatised and vulnerable state. Although noting Levinas's hostility towards psychoanalytical categories, Critchley nevertheless proposes that Levinas's thematisation of "the condition of possibility for the ethical relation with the notion of trauma" invites (*E-P-S* 185)—if not fully justifies—an exploration of the notion of trauma in Levinas's work. Encouraged by what Critchley acknowledges can only be written in a provisional manner, namely that "without a relation to trauma, or at least without a relation to that which claims, calls, commands, summons, interrupts or troubles the subject […] there would be no ethics" (*E-P-S* 195), I contend that Russell's body in *The Adaptable Man* is a site of traumatic and thus ethical remembrance. Delrez's identification of the significance of Russell's function in the text as a character who is dedicated to the "ghosts of history" leads him to declare him "an emblematic figure of hope and possibility" (*Manifold* 179). Through focusing on the fact that Russell's traumatic memory is carried out in the body, I suggest that the full ethical purport of his remembrance can be realised.

After the chandelier tragedy, the townsfolk are initially shocked and even indignant at Russell's pursuit of his daily routine. Although Russell at first appears untroubled by the death of his wife and brother, he finds his calm disturbed:

The force of their death had the effect of a gentle tide which made it seem to Russell, without oars, compass, destination, as if he controlled his own going;
but that was not so, [...] the hull began to fall apart, and the sea——this sea of death that people had marveled to find so untroubling to Russell——swamped the boat with its breaking and entering. (275)

Russell cannot control the return of the dead, and his passivity and vulnerability emphasise that they return not through intentional thought's wave of recollection but upon their own terms. In turn, as Russell increasingly becomes "slightly unbalanced," the trauma of their return is carried out in his body, for Russell "had grown to resemble his brother Aisley, as if at Aisley's death, Russell had taken on the burden of being Aisley" (276). Russell's burden, his responsibility to the dead, is realised as a trauma that is recalled at the site of the body.

Russell's bodily memory represents "a type of memory work" that the theorist Anne Fuchs argues "speaks a language of gesturing that defies representation. Instead of writing itself on a sheet of history, this highly elusive but persistent memory writes itself on the body" (235). Drawing on Levinas as well as trauma theory, Fuchs persuasively argues that an ethics of remembrance "can only be done with reference to a theory of cultural memory, which reflects on the other of discourse" (245). Through trauma, Russell's body remembers his brother and carries out a form of ethical, and thus non-intentional, remembrance that interrupts the present (Russell's body) and denies the "pastness of the past" (Fuchs 237), since Aisley is both present in his brother's body and forever absent. Aisley's haunting non-presence is a mnemonic example of Frame's interruption of the ego's domain of presence. Through Russell's traumatised body she represents a form of corporeal grief that resists the ego's attempts to adopt conventional practices of mourning. Such practices, according to Spargo, allow the mourner to resolve their grief through a process of translating the memory of the dead into a language that serves the living and thus reduces the radical alterity of the Other. By contrast, in his own work, Spargo suggests that "a resistant and incomplete mourning stands for an ethical acknowledgment of—or perhaps a ceding to—the radical alterity of the other whom one mourns" (13). Russell's corporeal trauma represents a form of resistant and incomplete mourning; the ego is powerless before a grief which resists its thematising gaze. As a result, Russell's mourning will be ongoing, a persistent and irresolvable form of melancholy.

My Levinasian interpretation is arguably too generous here for, traumatised by his body's memory of Aisley, Russell's ethical vigilance only extends to his brother. It remains unclear if Frame's writing recognises the possibility of a non-intentional form
of memory work which does not require a personal connection. The series of thematic interruptions in *The Adaptable Man* which I have explored in this chapter suggests Frame's dedication to disturbing the present and representing a diachronic form of time. Nonetheless, like the character Russell, the novel as a whole does not appear able to extend its ambit to encompass a radical form of alterity. Frame's literary techniques—as discussed in Chapter One—through failing to challenge the authority of the narrator's assertions, remain largely articulated in the Said. *The Adaptable Man*’s failure to question its own utterance and to consider the possibility of an ethical relationship with a radical form of alterity is redressed in *The Carpathians*. In this, her last novel, Frame emphatically asserts the necessity of an infinite form of remembrance which will permit neither forgetting nor the interventions of the intentional ego's drive to reaffirm presence.

*The Carpathians*’ overarching literary conceit of the Memory Flower signals the importance of the past in Frame's last novel. However, significant questions arise over Frame's inclusion of an indigenous myth in the novel: has Frame commandeered another culture's resources? If this is so, then what distinguishes the Puamaharians' adoption of the myth in order to lure tourists from Frame's own act of appropriation that lures a Western reader? It would appear difficult, if not naive, to suggest that the positive potential of the Memory Flower can still shine forth if Frame is deemed to have carried out a violent act of appropriation. This uncertainty over how to judge the inclusion of the Memory Flower in *The Carpathians* is reflected in critical readings of the novel. While critics appear to be in agreement that Mattina's pilgrimage to the home of the Memory Flower is a quest to secure identity, it is less settled how to read Frame's inclusion of the myth of the Memory Flower in the novel. On the one hand, Bruce Harding proposes that the "Maori elements" in *The Carpathians*, namely the myth of the Memory Flower, "may be interpreted as pointers towards constructing...

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26 In agreement that Mattina's quest reveals an egocentric attempt to consume the past of another country in order to quell a sense of absence that haunts her identity, Ash describes Mattina's desire "to discover some timeless essence which will explain her 'self'" ("Urgent" 57); for Delrez, Mattina's desire for a timeless essence will require her "to retrieve, if need be to invent, a conception of memory allowing for longer perspectives than those allotted to time-bordered, death besieged individuals" ("Boundaries" 212), which, as Hansson argues, leads to Mattina "relat[ing] to some specific distant time and/or place, rather than establishing deep and enduring contacts with other human beings" (29). Similarly, locating Mattina's quest in a social context, Henke describes Mattina "feed[ing] symbiotically, on the memories of others in an effort to obliterate her own memory-bank of privilege and entitlement" (30), which, as Hogue concludes of Mattina's "desire to consume authentic memory," will "ultimately push the authentic further into the distance" (127).
viable 'myths of centring' for all human beings" (115); in this sense his reading of the novel replicates Mattina's quest and can be understood in Levinasian terms as an attempt to secure the ego's presence. Janet Wilson, on the other hand, argues that Frame's inclusion of the Memory Flower in *The Carpathians* is her way of "writ[ing] back" to her literary contemporaries, [through] exposing the attitudes to authenticity which underpin the current fashion for myth-revival" ("Intertextual Strategies" 276). Wilson is critical of works of New Zealand literature of the eighties and nineties that use "indigenous myths and legends of origin" which contain "regressive aspects of colonial culture" in order to authenticate the colonisers' identity (274–75). Significantly, she distinguishes Frame from this trend and views *The Carpathians* as an example of a text whose use of indigenous myths does not re-inscribe colonising perspectives, resisting the urge to use the colonial other to affirm the colonisers' presence. In *The Carpathians*, I suggest, the Memory Flower's primary function is to signal a command not to forget those elements of the past which have been usurped by the ego's rhetoric of presence. In turn, the ethical significance of the Memory Flower's command demonstrates how its unique indigenous context is not appropriated in *The Carpathians* but, rather, may indeed find an ally in ethics.

In *The Carpathians*, forgetting is presented as a trait of conformist characters who neglect the past in order to secure their presence. In his analysis of *The Carpathians*, Delrez notes: "Janet Frame [in previous works] has warned against the crippling of imagination caused by the forgetfulness of society" ("Boundaries" 212). Showing Jake around the rental properties in Kowhai Street that were purchased by Mattina before her death, Albion Cook, the real estate agent, exclaims, "'give us time to forget. I shouldn't be expected to remember everything about those who used to live in Kowhai Street. Life goes on, you know'" (183). Cook's assertion that "life goes on" represents an attempt to forget the victims of the midnight rain, for to acknowledge their demise is also to allow a rupture to appear in Cook's settled way of being. Similarly, the young carer who meets Jake at Manuka Home affirms the ease of forgetting and shows callous disregard for the victims of the past: "'And they're even naming a street after a General who killed our boys in the Second World War, […] but what do I care. I don't remember the War because I wasn't even born then!'" (190). Frame's undoubted criticism of the callousness of figures such as Cook and the carer has encouraged readings of her work that emphasise the unifying properties of a redemptive past, as illustrated by Jeanne Delbaere's description of memory in *The*
Carpathians as "a chain of love [that] links the past and the present" (205). By contrast, I suggest that Frame's criticisms of forgetting drive her attempt to redefine remembrance: not as a restorative of the present but as an obligation not to forget. Viewing remembrance as an obligation that invokes a burden not to forget shifts the focus of memory work from the ego towards the Other. The ego's obligation to remember does not signal an affirmation of the present; instead, it points to its potential disruption through the ego's subjection to a past that problematises its mode of being in the world. Appropriately, Birns emphasises that in The Carpathians "we are warned not to expect a redemptive past, whether personal or historical, that can with ease be brought in to illuminate the present" (27). For my own purposes, the Memory Flower's command not to forget, not to ignore the taste of "the yesterday within the tomorrow" (11), can also reveal the ethical obligations of the witness.

Following the events of the midnight rain, Mattina is horrified at the town's production of ready-made explanations to explain away an entire street's disappearance; she "found it incredible to see the life of Puamahara continuing as if nothing had happened" (150). As the example of Albion Cook illustrates, the town all too quickly welcomes the relief of forgetting an event that they cannot understand. Initially experiencing "the joyful sense of being home," and also wondering "who cared, anyway" (159), Mattina later insists on the importance of remembering the Kowhai Street residents. In her final days, Mattina's persistent pleas to her family not to forget represent her duty and obligation as a survivor of the midnight rain to bear the burden of the witness. "A witness," as Pinchevski explains, "is entrusted with an obligation following the act of seeing—the responsibility to respond" (254–55). Mattina's response is two-fold. At the corporeal level, her body succumbs to illness and responds to the traumatic obligation of the witness through marking on its surfaces her intense vulnerability and indirect culpability. A product of the effects of the Gravity Star, Mattina's traumatised body resembles the condition of melancholic people who, according to Kristeva, "are witness/accomplices of the signifier's flimsiness, the living being's precariousness" (20). Mattina's precariousness is evident in her illness, but her role as a witness also forces her to accede to the flimsiness of the signifier which, as Kristeva suggests, reveals melancholic people's inability to name the Thing that causes their condition.

The second form that Mattina's response as a witness takes is seen in her insistent pleading that her family must not forget Puamahara. While Mattina describes
the lives of the residents in detail to her husband and son, she does not tell them about the midnight rain. Mattina's failure to recall and thematise the traumatic event ensures that a causal explanation for her symptoms cannot be produced. This, in turn, prevents a purported resolution to trauma from being constructed which would nullify the command not to forget. Instead, her accounts display an emphasis that the unique singularity of the people of Puamahara must not be forgotten.

Mattina's omission emphasises that "the gist of witnessing is not exhausted in the pursuit for truth, which is motivated by an attempt to reconstruct a comprehensive schema of what 'really' happened" (Pinchevski 254). Instead, Mattina's insistence not to forget, and her witnessing, "transcend[s] the Said, [and] is implicated by and gives expression to a general demand for justice, a demand whose origin lies on the face of the Other and whose horizon extends to the future, to justice yet to come" (Pinchevski 254). Thus it is not the accuracy or 'truth' of Mattina's version of events that is important but, rather, her subjection to an ongoing obligation to remember, which allows her present to be ruptured by something that she cannot understand. Through not recuperating the present, Mattina keeps the future open. This relationship between the past, as an obligation not to forget, and the future, as dependent on the past's irreconcilability with the present, is fundamental to Levinas's account of the ego's ethical responsibilities to both past and future generations. Furthermore, it signals a significant difference between psychoanalytical and ethical models of melancholy. In the former model, melancholic people are "riveted to the past" and "manifest a strange memory: everything has gone by, they seem to say, but I am faithful to those bygone days, I am nailed down to them, no revolution is possible, there is no future . . . " (Kristeva 60). By contrast, an ethical account of the melancholic ego's subjection to the Other requires that they ensure that there is a future for the Other—but not one of the ego's making.

The Memory Flower's command not to forget thus also surfaces as an ethical response to the future. In the novel's opening description of the Memory Flower, Frame emphasises that it is only when the "memory-collector" "tasted the yesterday within the tomorrow" that "her search was over" (11). However, in the absence of the memory-collector who has long since vanished from this earth, The Carpathians suggests that this role now falls to the artist. Equally this is a realisation that Mattina makes:
She felt that in future someone who knew and remembered the people of Kowhai Street, [...] would use persistence of memory to uncover the story, and perhaps rebuild, in fiction, the individual residents of the street; not to say, [...] that the street vanished to reappear only in fiction, but to hope that future artists [...] would forever ensure new versions of Puamahara with the Gravity Star, the light of unreasonable reason, shining on the petals of the Memory Flower. (151–52; emphases added)

Mattina's messianic hope for the ongoing commitment of future artists to produce new versions of Puamahara is one that does not view the past as foreclosed and contained but forever open to retellings. Her hope thus recalls the novel's opening emphasis that it provides "another story of the town of the Memory Flower" 14); it never claims to be the only or even the last story of the Memory Flower. Artists, like the novel itself, are thus subject to a messianic requirement to remain vigilant in their never-ending quest to expose the infinite "black holes of history" (Delrez, "Conquest" 136). Furthermore, the future artist will write of a time and place that defies reason or the conventional use of language, the Said, and thus with the Gravity Star always shining, their account of the past is never final but interrupted and invites further interruptions from the future. The burden of the witness, which is carried by Mattina and future generations, "is the responsibility to bear witness to the disparity between what can presently be said and what still remains to be said" (Pinchevski 255). Such is also the burden of the novel as a whole.

Before the Memory Flower, Mattina has what Wilson refers to as an epiphany: "[she] discovers the importance of memory and pays homage to artists, who as guardians of that precious commodity, and Keepers of Ancient Springtime, can redeem time" ("Post-modernism" 116; emphasis added). While The Carpathians, like the majority of Frame's fiction, presents the artist as a unique figure in society, Mattina's 'epiphany' is undermined. Both Frame's subversive descriptions of the Memory Flower, which undercut its aura, and her concluding remark that the artist's ability to capture the Memory Flower lies in the future contest an epiphanic moment that heralds the redemption of time. The monument erected to commemorate the Memory Flower is missing petals and paint and, as Mattina wryly observes, the detailed inscription resembles "the print on a giant pack of cornflakes or detergent" (115). When placed alongside the inscription's reference to the contraceptive properties of the Memory Flower, Frame's description of the monument subverts the healing and rejuvenating properties of remembrance. In her encounter with the
Memory Flower, Mattina thus does not discover a matter that inspires redemptive epiphanies but rather a tacky commercial gimmick. Moreover, Mattina's epiphany, as she herself is at pains to point out, does not affirm the ability of artists to "redeem" time in its entirety, but is presented as a qualified hope of the 'yet to come' of the future: "In the future, perhaps, […] the artists of Puamahara […] will create Puamahara's own orchard in the sky" (115).

While the novel thus undoubtedly views artists, and in particular writers, as having a special ability to resurrect the past, Frame's repeated emphasis that it is future artists who may record the past stresses that any final account of the past is insufficient and yet to come. As Hogue argues, "Wilson's reading fails to consider that Mattina's apparent discoveries are simulacra invented by John Henry, himself an authorial invention" (140). Wilson ignores that Mattina's epiphany is the imaginative construction of her son and thus also overlooks a central premise of The Carpathians, namely that language is both a liberating and imprisoning force. If language liberates the past, as Mattina's epiphany suggests, then it also imprisons it, as the frame—John Henry's account—that creates and contains Mattina's epiphany emphasises. The inclusion of the Memory Flower in the novel is thus both a violation that seeks to contain and reduce an indigenous myth to a literary function, and an ethical liberation that emphasises that no representation of the past is final. Through using language in the form of the Said, artists cannot escape the violent curtailing of the past and the future that their act of writing entails. However, as I have argued, Frame's own experimentations with language illustrate that, if writers accept that language is both angel and monster, and nevertheless persevere, through practising interruption, their obligation to past and future generations, although never fulfilled, is also never foreclosed.

Frame's comparison of the self in The Adaptable Man with "those menacing structures you see in the lonely places of East Anglia—the incongruous temples built upon prayers of destruction" (78), makes it perhaps fitting that I now turn to the work of W. G. Sebald. Like Frame, Sebald not only looked upon the very same menacing structures in East Anglia with distaste, but also sought to respond to what he viewed as evidence of humanity's history of violence and destruction. His response is demonstrated by his unique literary style which invokes its own form of destruction but, unlike those menacing structures in East Anglia, it does so for the sake of the Other and not of the self.
SECTION TWO

A Treatise on the Temporality of Destruction: W. G. Sebald

Critical of what he views to be a restricting and violent mode of time, Austerlitz—the eponymous character of W.G. Sebald's last prose work—deems time to be "by far the most artificial of all of our inventions" (141). Thus, Austerlitz continues a tradition of criticising a synchronised mode of time that was also found in Janet Frame's evocative depiction of a troubled minister's struggle with the tyranny of time. For Sebald, however, the problem of time is not only a feature of egocentric relationships in conformist communities but is also written on the very physical spaces that his characters inhabit. Sebald's landscapes and cityscapes all bear testimony to the violent repercussions of the reign of time, while his characters who use such sites for the purpose of orientation serve as both witnesses and accomplices: they who have taken part in building and maintaining a world that has no place for the Other. Perhaps it is due to the overwhelming evidence of the destruction wreaked by a synchronised mode of time that Sebald, even more so than Frame, fully embraces—both in terms of his thematic and stylistic literary experimentation—a diachronic mode of time, a mode of time, that is to say, that interrupts the time of the ego in the name of the Other and thus, ultimately, in the name of ethics.

Somewhat surprisingly, few critics have analysed Sebald's works in terms of ethics. The one notable exception is Jan Ceuppens's chapter "Transcripts: An Ethics of Representation in The Emigrants." Focusing on reading practices, Ceuppens argues that the coherent meaning the reader attributes to a text always misses something. He then suggests that instead of offering a "'solution' to this dilemma," Sebald's texts provide "a form of narration which at least tries to account for this unavoidable violence inflicted upon the other" (262). In turn he proposes that "Sebald's insistence on 'unreadability'" is an example of such a form of narration (262). Sebald's 'unreadability,' or the various enigmas that permeate his narrative structure, disturb his texts' presence and allow an other form of time to reverberate that does not culminate in settled meaning. Extending on Ceuppens's insightful argument, I will argue that Sebald's insistence on 'unreadability' is an example of a disruptive literary technique which disturbs his works' sovereignty. Furthermore, Sebald's stylistic techniques that undermine the text's presence complement his works' central thematic
preoccupations—subjectivity, time, trauma and responsibility—which also play a role in calling into question the concept of presence.

Adopting an approach that focuses on Sebald's works' disturbance of a metaphysics of presence is at odds with the redemptive impulse that some critics attribute to Sebald. Critics such as Jonathan Long and David Darby identify what Darby refers to as a "redemptive project" within Sebald's prose (266). For Long, such a project is supported by Sebald's "aesthetic strategies"—in particular the juxtaposition of images and text in his works—through which "history can possibly be redeemed" ("History" 137); similarly, Darby attributes Sebald's storytelling technique with "point[ing] a way full-circle out of the wilderness" (271). Extending on this impulse to identify a possible coherent unity within Sebald's texts, Mark McCulloh has even gone so far as to identify an overarching metaphysical concern with transcendence. However, the problems inherent with associating a unifying impulse with Sebald's works is already found in McCulloh's somewhat qualified conclusion that "Sebald's aesthetic of transcendence remains a skeptical, undogmatic one" and, as he further admits, "even as the sublime beckons [Sebald], there is an ever present uncertainty" ("Destruction" 404). McCulloh's final comments appear to undermine his assertion that Sebald's works promote an ideal of transcendence or, at least, a notion of transcendence that provides the ego with self-certainty. Nonetheless, McCulloh's argument is valuable for identifying an elusive dimension in Sebald's prose, a dimension, moreover, that resembles Levinas's description of the beyond as "an absence radically withdrawn from disclosure and dissimulation" ("Meaning" 59).

This notion of a beyond in Sebald's works—which, as Anne Whitehead observes, "the narrator has not himself experienced, but which nevertheless acts for him as a compulsive point of fascination" (122)—must be understood to exist outside the ontological structures of thought, language and time. Such a beyond that can neither produce unity, nor be expressed in language, corresponds with critics' descriptions of Sebald's works in terms of openness, indeterminacy and as an "approximation of the trace" (Ward 64). The disturbances Sebald's texts enact are "not the breakup of a category too narrow for the order," "nor […] the shock of a provisional incomprehension" (Levinas, "Enigma" 71). Instead, they paradoxically gesture to a hither side of meaning, being and time while simultaneously erasing such gestures. Sebald's prose does not seek to restore the unity of our world or of an ideal world because, as Sebald himself argues, the creation of a "presumptive metaphysical
meaning" is "a process through which literature revokes its right to exist" (Ward 66).²⁷ The sense of responsibility for past and future generations that informs Sebald's emphatic rejection of metaphysical unities suggests a writer who is forever burdened and obsessed by the Other. This responsibility, according to Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy, means that the beyond can neither accommodate, recuperate nor restore the present of the ego's world: it is "irreducible to the modalities of being and certainty" ("Enigma" 75). Instead, Levinas proposes that "everything depends on the possibility of vibrating with a meaning that is not synchronized with the speech that captures it and cannot be fitted into its order; everything depends on the possibility of a signification that would signify in an irreducible disturbance" ("Enigma" 67).

Sebald's works create such an "irreducible disturbance" through their enactment of a beyond that both lies beyond being, in a time that does not begin with the ego, and also beyond language, in a prose form that Sebald was painfully aware must remain vigilant against its own trespass.

In this section I will examine two of W. G. Sebald's works. The first, The Rings of Saturn (1998), is Sebald's third novel and was originally published in German under the title Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine englische Wallfahrt (1995). The second, Austerlitz, is Sebald's fourth, and last, novel and appeared in English translation the same year as the German edition, shortly before his tragic death in 2001. While both novels share "the voice of Sebald's somewhat obsessive, often displaced narrators" (Bere 184), whose thoughts and observations ceaselessly shift between seemingly disparate subjects forging strange connections and disjunctions, Sebald's later novel, Austerlitz, is widely acknowledged as adopting a more conventional narrative plot and style. Focusing on Austerlitz, a Czech, who as a child was evacuated to Wales during World War II where he grew up unaware of his past, Austerlitz traces the title character's attempts to uncover his past and family. By contrast, The Rings of Saturn does not foreground such an overtly personal and pseudo-biographical account. This shift in emphasis in the two works, I contend, is a response to the problem of how to represent the time of the Other ethically. In The Rings of Saturn Sebald traces the walking journey of an aloof and detached narrator across East Anglia. Through the narrator's critical and melancholic gaze, the violence

²⁷ I have quoted Simon Ward's translation of Sebald's comments which are taken from his article "Zwischen Geschichte und Naturgeschichte: Versuch über die literarische Beschreibung totaler Zerstörung mit Anmerkungen zu Kasack, Nossack and Kluge," Orbis Litterarum 37 (1982): 345–66.
wrought by representational practices which restore the present—whether word, building, art or photograph—is revealed. However, the narrator's overwhelming despair—which has been criticised for its far-reaching scope—is at risk of replacing the ego's ethical responsibility with an egotistical perspective which could be condemned as an example of the narcissism that Sigmund Freud suggests is inherent to melancholy. According to Freud, the ego's condition of melancholy is a form of narcissism because the ego's prolonged and incomplete mourning of the object is inadvertently "transformed into a loss in the ego" (Collected Papers 159). The "self-criticizing faculty" that Freud argues is produced by the ego's experience of self-loss thus intensifies the ego's self-obsession (168). In Austerlitz, by contrast, Sebald places a greater emphasis on the uniqueness of the Other and of the ego's burden which "is a responsibility for the freedom of others" ("Substitution" 87).

The more recognisable inter-personal dimension to Sebald's characters' experience of melancholy in Austerlitz suggests that Sebald has resorted to using social, cultural and historical markers to define the Other. Like Frame, Sebald thus appears willing to use ethical principles in his work in order to serve the interests of a particular group, that is to say, his books produce specific manifestations of the Other and address political concerns. In particular, the trauma of the Holocaust haunts the pages of Sebald's texts, demanding an ethical form of justice. Unlike a political form of justice, ethical justice focuses on the needs of the Other and does not resort to healing paradigms which would restore the present generation's equanimity. While both works share an ongoing concern with how to respond to our responsibility for the Other, or how to represent a time that does not begin with the ego, their approaches to the problem of how to re-present ethical concerns in a literary form differ.

In Chapter Four, 'Dismantling the Authority of the Said,' I begin by addressing the hybrid nature of Sebald's works. This hybridity is a feature not only of the unusual format of the texts, which include photographs, but also characterises the nature of translated works which, as Tejaswini Niranjana argues, can "inscribe heterogeneity" (186). Although a term associated with a violent colonial heritage, hybridity has been reconceptualised by postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha as a valuable critical tool for dismantling colonial discourse. In a colonial context, Bhabha argues, hybridity allows "other 'denied' knowledges [to] enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority" ("Signs" 156). Similarly, the hybrid form of Sebald's texts undermines what Bhabha would call the dominant discourse and Levinas the Said
through allowing an Other mode of signification to disturb the presence of the text (a Saying) in Levinas's terms. The hybrid nature of Sebald's works—which contain both text and image, and which can be read in both German and English—highlights the key tension that also permeates Janet Frame's writing: namely, the writer's paradoxical task of using language, a form of representation, to criticise representational practices. This dilemma over the violence enacted by representation has its origins in Adorno's dictum that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. Sebald's works are highly conscious of the ethical necessity of not performing a wrongful trespass in their pages, that is to say, of not aestheticising the Holocaust and encouraging voyeurism.

Chapter Four then turns to the specific texts and examines the innovative stylistic techniques Sebald develops in order to respond to the problem of the violence of representation. Both texts disrupt a particular genre: the literary conventions of the pilgrimage in the case of The Rings of Saturn, and the unity of the Bildungsroman in the case of Austerlitz. In accordance with Eaglestone's argument that "genres form horizons of understanding" (Holocaust 6), both novels' subversion of the literary conventions of a particular genre establish a style of writing that seeks to gesture beyond the constraints of a metaphysics of presence. In turn, each novel experiments with different techniques of undermining the authority of the Said. In The Rings of Saturn the primary literary technique used is one of deferral. Sebald creates ever-expanding, and potentially infinite, patterns of possible meanings that prevent the Said from ever establishing a stable present or of communicating a settled meaning. In Austerlitz Sebald's technique is one of disruption rather than deferral. Sebald translates the symptoms of psychological trauma into literary techniques. Thus, like the traumatised mind, the novel suffers from interruption, repetition and missing contexts, leading to an unstable temporality. Through deferral and disruption, both novels' sovereignty is called into question and the nodes of disjuncture that are consequently produced by these techniques are haunted by the trace or gesture of another mode of time.

In Chapter Five, 'Autonomy: The Time of the Self,' I examine both works' depiction of the priority afforded to the present at the turn of the twentieth century and Sebald's inherent critique of this model of time-consciousness. Sebald presents modernity, an historical era that witnessed rapid industrial growth and advances in scientific research, as adhering to the Enlightenment view that reason could illuminate all areas of human existence through the light of knowledge. During the rapid
technological and cultural changes that marked the pre-World War I period, Stephen Kern argues that "the sense of the present was the most distinctively new" experience of time (314). For Sebald, modernity's time-consciousness is informed by the Enlightenment's emphasis on rational principles and thus epitomised by the abstract measurement of time that is governed by clocks and which was sanctified by this era's global implementation of standardised time. Sebald's prose suggests that at the turn of the twentieth century the present, like clock-time, became the standard unit of measurement for people's calculations of the past and the future. In Levinasian terms, Sebald associates modernity's clocks with a temporal model that relies on the Same and, thus, also with wider social practices that ignore the plight of the Other.

Chapter Five is divided into three sections with each examining a specific feature of modernity's time-consciousness: the present, the future, and the past. I begin by analysing the metaphorical and ideological tools—such as, for example, the all-encompassing gaze and the light of reason—which Sebald associates with the priority afforded to the present at the turn of the twentieth century. Sebald's descriptions of this era's vast imperial and industrial enterprises create an image of an egotistical Western society that was intoxicated with its own reflection at the expense of others. Sebald's critique of modernity's time-consciousness only intensifies when he considers how readily the future was embraced as an extension of the present's sense of assuredness in its own progress. The monumental buildings that were erected in the late 1800s present a façade of human dominance while simultaneously foreshadowing the era's growing preoccupation with objects at the expense of people. Despite Sebald's somewhat harsh critique of modernity's time-consciousness, he also acknowledges the ethical potential inherent in the contingent model of time that was ushered in by modernity. Nevertheless, his works suggest that the lasting influence modernity's time-consciousness has on today's memorial culture cannot be attributed to a contingent model of time but, rather, to a time that subjects the past to the present's needs through the complementary techniques of either preservation or wilful forgetting. Sebald reveals that modernity's process of taming the past's strangeness through commemoration protects the ego's present by simultaneously containing and excluding the past. In order to move beyond the ego's illusion of presence, Sebald's works address the issue of what happens to time and subjectivity if, instead of beginning with the present or the ego, we turn to the Other. It is this last issue which I will address in the final chapter, 'Heteronomy: The Time of the Other.'
A defining, and frequently referred to, feature of Sebald's work is the melancholic tone that presides over the narrators' encounters with the world. This disposition can fruitfully be explored through invoking Levinas's notion of the traumatised subject who, according to Critchley, is "unconsciously constituted through the trauma of contact with the real" and who, he fittingly describes, is also "a subject of melancholia" (E-P-S 195). Sebald's narrators' melancholy can hence be interpreted through a Levinasian framework as a response to the trauma of encountering the Other who disturbs the ego's world and announces an insurmountable responsibility. Using Levinas's account of the traumatised ego, in the first section of Chapter Six, I examine how the narrator of The Rings of Saturn is confronted with the horror of the 'there is' which undermines the ego's conventional mode of approaching the world in terms of its own presence. In Austerlitz an even stronger correspondence with a traumatised ego is reflected in Sebald's depictions of the psychological effects of trauma on his characters. Traumatised, Sebald's characters have lost the ability to define the world from the vantage point of the ego and this opens a space where both another mode of time and another form of relationship with the Other can reverberate. In the second section of Chapter Six, adopting Austerlitz's theory of a mode of time that allows all times to exist simultaneously, I will explore what form the ethical relationship takes in Sebald's works. Closely corresponding with Levinas's account of a non-specific Other, who is never directly encountered in the ego's present, Sebald's Other in The Rings of Saturn is rendered as an unidentifiable trace. By invoking the ego's subjection to the Other through their encounter with an irreducible trace, Sebald divides his readers' attention between that with which they cannot identify, a trace, and those with whom they can empathise, a traumatised ego, Sebald implicitly signals the limitations of a model of ethics that is premised on identification. Such a model is unable to extend ethical regard not only to those who have been mis-represented by history but also to those whom historians acknowledge are at risk of being subsumed by the unrepresentable: the Holocaust. In his more conventional work Austerlitz Sebald adopts a different approach and particular characters can be clearly associated with the Other. Despite this ability to identify the Other with specific corporeal individuals, Sebald emphasises the ego's relationship of subjection to the Other through clearly denoting Austerlitz's and the narrator's roles as functions, where it is Austerlitz's role to serve his lost parents and the narrator's to serve the elusive Austerlitz.
In the final section of Chapter Six, 'Ethical Remembrance,' I focus on the question that pervades Sebald's obsessive preoccupation with the past and which heightens the shadow of the Holocaust that looms over both works: what is an ethical relationship to the past? In both works Sebald emphasises the necessity of viewing the subject's relationship to the past as contingent, uncertain and, above all else, as reducing the ego to a position of passive subjection rather than one of authoritative contemplation. The ego's subjection to the past resembles the game of patience that Austerlitz plays with the many photographs he has taken over the years. Turning each one over and rearranging their order, he both pointlessly, and purposefully, seeks answers: pointless, in the sense that the future will not provide a final arrangement that will quell the ego's sense of responsibility for the Other; and purposeful, because Austerlitz's obsession and suffering emphasises that "ethics is not a moment of being; it is otherwise and better than being, the very possibility of the beyond" ("God" 141). Such a beyond is the ethical and haunting triumph of Sebald's melancholic prose.
CHAPTER FOUR

Dismantling the Authority of the Said

A fundamental tension permeates Sebald's works. On the one hand, Sebald is critical of representational practices in a variety of media that purport to provide authentic or legitimate accounts of the truth; on the other hand, he must use these media to carry out his critique and to gesture towards a more responsible mode of signification. Like Frame, Sebald harbours equal measures of appreciation and distrust of language; moreover, in Sebald's work it is not only the written word that resembles both monster and angel but also visual media.

Underlying this tension in Sebald's works over the role that media play in manufacturing truth is the priority given to the notion of truth in the Western philosophical tradition. For Levinas, "truth, before characterizing a statement or a judgment, consists in the exhibition of being" (Otherwise 23). This means that when the ego asks the question 'what shows itself?' it already presupposes the answer in terms of being or "what it wishes to discover, and already has recourse to" (Otherwise 24). Sebald's works suggest that the priority given to truth not only informs the philosophical tradition but also the disciplines of literary studies and history. In an interview, Sebald proposed that the principle of establishing truth underlies both the reader's and the critic's insistence on distinguishing between fact and fiction. Moreover, he links this to the ego's process of affirming presence when he observes that "we largely delude ourselves with the knowledge that we think we possess, that we make it up as we go along, that we make it fit our desires and anxieties and that we invent a straight line of a trail in order to calm ourselves down" ("Interview with W. G. Sebald" 89). By adopting a hybrid form—which contains both images and text, fact and fiction, and where a variety of processes of translation occur that disturb the presence of both English and German editions—Sebald's works challenge their own ability to pose the question of truth from a starting point of presence or being. The restlessness of Sebald's works, or their resistance to literary classifications, emphasises their hybrid instability. At the level of language, Sebald's disruptive literary techniques enact a disturbance of presence which complements his thematic representations of a form of ethical regard which requires a model of time and subjectivity that does not prioritise presence at the expense of the Other. Truth is
revealed in Sebald's works to be a conceit that protects the interests of the ego, leading the reader to ask, at whose expense?

Sebald's works perform a dual critique of representational practices. This critique not only addresses specific texts and images, but is also implicitly carried out against his own work, through his disturbance of the novel-form's attempt to create and project a stable present. This characteristic of Sebald's works aligns them with Eaglestone's definition of a particular branch of postmodern thought. Arguing that "postmodernism—understood as post-structuralism […]—is a response to the Holocaust" (Holocaust 2), Eaglestone describes the way in which it "focuses on both the act of comprehending, seizing, covering up, and on the resistance to that act—to the emergence, if only momentarily, of otherness" (4). Through questioning the representational techniques of various media—in particular their claim to purport truth—Sebald opens an uncertain space where an other mode of thought and time that does not commence with the ego can begin. Sebald's writing demonstrates that otherness, which Eaglestone identifies with "senses of the trace, of the human, and of the resistance to the metaphysics of comprehension" (4), does not begin with the question of truth but with the issue of the ego's responsibility. This is an issue that the ego or, in this case, the text, cannot claim to directly grasp and fulfil but that instead traverses the indeterminate borders of the hybrid text.

Originally writing his works in German, Sebald uses long sentences and untranslated phrases to undermine the assumption that the original German edition should be viewed as a comprehensive site of meaning. Similarly, Sebald's treatment of the translated editions of his novels as works in their own right overturns the privileged position that is traditionally afforded to the original text in translation theory. I suggest that these translation features of Sebald's texts contribute to his oeuvre's project of contesting a mode of thought that determines meaning from a site of presence, whether it be that of the self or of the original text. Anthea Bell, the translator of Sebald's last novel Austerlitz, acknowledges that Sebald not only had the necessary proficiency in English and experience as the founder of the British Centre for Literary Translation to translate his own works, but that he also could have written his works in English. Sebald admits in an interview that he preferred to write in German because writing in his mother tongue, after being absent from Germany for over thirty years, meant he did not feel the pressure to keep up with current language trends. Not "having to be up with the latest jargon" or under "strong pressure to be up
with the latest thing," means that Sebald, according to interviewer Michael Zeeman, uses a "cleaner language" ("Introduction and Transcript" 28–29). While, on the one hand, this notion of a "cleaner language" suggests Sebald's ongoing impulse to evade the present and turn to the past—a pressing concern throughout all of his works—it also, on the other hand, problematically presupposes concepts such as purity and origins. Attributing these concepts to Sebald's language in turn suggests that far from evading a metaphysics of presence, Sebald's archaic language reinstates its dominance. Despite seemingly avoiding the conventions of present uses of language, the adoption of an archaic language style is always at risk of utilising, and even sentimentalising, the past for the purposes of the present or, in Levinasian terms, of translating the past through the philosophy of the Same into a present that validates the ego.

However, Sebald's "classic style" largely avoids a totalising language of the past, and this, in part, may be explained by Bell's suggestion that Sebald adopted this style because "the long sentence winding its way through many subordinate clauses suited him" (12). Sebald's lengthy sentences, which reach their pinnacle in the ten-page sentence in *Austerlitz*, are fitting not only because they defy accepted writing practices but, perhaps most importantly, because the style reflects or complements the subject matter of his works. In the case of the ten-page sentence which describes Theresienstadt, the seemingly endless accumulation of clauses emphasises Sebald's predominant concern: that is, how can we ever find a mode of expression that can represent such events, and such a place, when all forms of representation seek to make comprehensible that which must continue to haunt us? Aware of Adorno's dictum, Sebald is highly conscious of ensuring that his own act of writing does not partake of barbarity. For Sebald, this requires a form of writing that does not foreclose the ethical necessity of producing ongoing attempts to respond to the Holocaust. He achieves this through creating a ten-page sentence that takes over the progression of the text, forcing the reader to breathlessly read on without looking away. Although Sebald is restricted by the convention of his medium to bring his lengthy sentence to a close, the final full stop appears arbitrary: so much more could be said; so much more must be said.

At other points in his works lengthy sentence structures provide the means through which Sebald can draw an infinite series of connections between disparate objects. Unlike tidy classification systems that can define and order the world and
people's position within it, Sebald's unruly long sentences mimic the state of an ego who can no longer presume to neatly compartmentalise and thematise the world in accordance with the dictates of the Same. Sebald's lengthy sentences have the same effect as Jorge Luis Borges's 'fictional' account of a Chinese Encyclopaedia, which classifies animals in a random manner, and which, according to Gerry O'Sullivan, is "unnerving in its ability to suggest, if not the plausibility, then at least the startling possibility of other discursive formations and classificatory arrangements" (110).

Sebald's lengthy sentences challenge "the familiar landmarks of our thought" and (Foucault, *Order* xv), in particular, the assumption that language reflects the world and is not influenced by the perceiver. In Sebald's works the lengthy sentence structures of classical German are used to upset the classificatory drives of the ego through always suggesting other possible connections, thus undermining the ego's illusion of its self-sufficiency. Moreover, their effects challenge not only Kleeman's problematic description of Sebald's writing as a "cleaner language" but also the notions of origins and purity that accompany it. Sebald's labyrinthine sentences defer the possibility of identifying an origin and locating a final point of meaning within his work.

The importance placed on origins and purity in ontological thought structures finds its natural correlate in the world of translation where the original text is regarded with reverence. Subservient to their role of replicating the original text, translators efface their own voice in order to create the illusion of immediacy in translated editions. However, the publication of a translated piece inevitably draws critical assessment of its inaccuracies, mistakes and faults *when compared with the original*. One method for assessing the accuracy of a translation is through analysing how successfully it has conveyed the meaning or content of the original. Central to this method is the belief that meaning is transcendental. John Sturrock refers to this core tenet as Platonist, and he explains further that "natural languages may have few or no signifiers in common but they can still share their signifieds, so that identical meanings can be carried by different sentences in different languages" (1005). Thus, Sturrock explains that from a Platonist view the "translator's task" is "to identify [transcendent entities] in his source and transfer them from there to a second language" (1005). However, Bell's observation that "the Theresienstadt passage was

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28 John Sturrock argues that the role of translating is a "self-effacing activity" (994), where "the source must not show through" (993).
one of those that [Sebald] adapted slightly for the English version" because of the "differences of reception in German and English-language readers" undermines the notion of transcendental meanings (13). Sebald's works contest the possibility of a 'pure translation' both because his entire work can be read as critical of the notion of transcendent meanings and because the 'original' German text reveals its dependence on a complement. According to Derrida, an original text's reliance on a complement signals that "at the origin it [the original] was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself" ("Des Tours" 188).

The original versions of Sebald's works contest their own ability to convey authoritative declarations of meaning and reveal their dependence on non-translated complements. In both texts under discussion here Sebald includes phrases from other languages which are not translated. The second epigraph of The Rings of Saturn which is taken from Joseph Conrad, for example, is reproduced in its original French. A reader unfamiliar with French must go beyond the text in order to ascertain the meaning of the quotation. Thus, Sebald not only destroys the illusion of the original's own purity but also forces the reader to recognise the "between-ness of any act of translation" (Sturrock 998). Occupying a site of between-ness where the original requires translation, the original and its traditional authority over the subordinate translated edition is dismantled. Throughout both works proper nouns, such as the names of places and, perhaps most fittingly, the title character of Sebald's last book, the enigmatic Austerlitz, are what Derrida calls "forever untranslatable" ("Des Tours" 171). The impossibility of translating the name Austerlitz is recalled throughout the novel as both Austerlitz, in his attempt to translate the past, and the narrator, in his attempts to translate Austerlitz, inevitably fail. In turn, this series of failures in translation alludes to the central, and frequently overlooked, role representation plays in theories of identity and perception. As the body of Jacques Derrida's works repeatedly highlights, "it is [...] only in the modern period (Cartesian or post-Cartesian) that what-is is determined as an ob-ject present before and for a subject in the form of repraesentatio or Vorstellen" ("Sending" 307). Thus, what would traditionally be considered failures in translation instead suggest Sebald's desire to create a model of representation that does not begin with presence or equate 'what is' with its representation. Destabilising the 'purity' of the original text, Sebald undermines the use of a conventional approach that would evaluate the translated edition of his works in terms of accuracy. Instead, we are encouraged to approach the
two texts beyond the typical hierarchal relationship employed between original and translated editions; that is to say, neither is afforded the status of master copy.

While many critics have approached the issue of translation with regard to Sebald's works in terms of evaluating accuracy, the hybridity of Sebald's works—which contain numerous examples of untranslated phrases—suggests an alternative approach. Such an approach recognises his works' inherent critique of the ontological assumption of presence which pervades all texts and asks the reader not to evaluate the written word in terms of truth and purity. Although the format of the translated editions of Sebald's works does not overtly signal their existence as translations, the correspondence shared between Bell and Sebald indicates Sebald's desire to treat the translated edition as a work in its own right. Bell fondly recalls "moments when a phrase that is not a quotation in the original instantly suggest one in English" and found Sebald receptive to such suggestions (15). Similarly, Bell would draw on her own research and knowledge to introduce Sebald to "English vernacular names" for plants and moths (15). Sebald's readiness to adopt Bell's ideas indicates that the translated editions of his texts were not intended to be pure translations but instead, as McCulloh proposes, "are works of literature in their own right" ("Introduction" 18). Mimicking the relationship Levinas describes between the ego and the Other, Sebald's texts ask the reader not to assume that authenticity and presence are the highest principles but instead to acknowledge a form of representation/translation that signals a space for the Other. This impossible space, as in the case of translations, is one where no meaning can be settled once and for all and one which traverses the hybrid space of between-ness where "this process of semantic substitution or refinement is potentially endless" (Sturrock 1006).

Credited by Carol Bere with creating a "new genre" and by Lise Patt with crystallising a new adjective which suggests a new medium (192), Sebald's works resist traditional approaches to categorising literary forms. Aptly summarising the dilemma Sebald's works pose to critics' attempts to classify them, Eric Santner observes that "the difficulty of categorizing the sort of literary practice Sebald engaged in is notorious" (xiii). This resistance is performed both within the works through Sebald's extensive meditations on the unreliability of textual and visual media

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29 One way in which translated works can indicate their relationship with the original is through an interlinear format which prints the original text alongside the translated version.

30 Lise Patt's argues that "Sebald came to serve in art's pantheon, not as a proper name […] but as an adjective that both suggested a new medium and launched a fresh critical palliative" (17).
and, stylistically, through a mode of writing and visual presentation that refuses to culminate into settled thematisations. Juxtaposing both texts and images, Sebald problematises the ability to approach his works using conventional interpretative frames. While, as Long argues, Sebald's use of multiple literary genres can be identified as a form of "generic hybridity" ("History" 117), Long's term can similarly be used to describe the uncertain relationship between text and image in Sebald's works, whereby neither medium is positioned in a subordinate or explanatory role with regard to the other. This hybridity means that the reader must focus on the relationship between the two different media rather than occupy a settled site from which meaning can be inferred. In this restless between-site, the reader is caught in a continuous process of movement which denies Sebald's works the stability of an all-encompassing presence and repeatedly distorts the reader's attempt to adopt a universalising perspective. Such a site challenges the Cartesian perspective that the 'what is' can be equated with its representation and, instead, proposes both an other mode of thought which resists presence and an other model of time which resists synchrony. This site beyond presence requires a hybrid form which, through traversing an in-between site, does not produce thematisations but indications. Such indications, according to Levinas, "reveal the withdrawal of the indicated, instead of a reference that rejoins it" ("Enigma" 69). Indicating rather than stating, Sebald's hybrid image-texts distort accepted conventions of perspective in an attempt to usurp the governing principle of presence that underlies representation.

Combining autobiography, fiction, non-fiction, historical accounts, and fantastical encounters, Sebald's works' "generic hybridity" prevents the reader from adopting the specific codes for reading a particular literary genre and, therefore cannot produce a settled meaning. Similarly, in the case of visual media, and in particular photographs, Patt argues that the viewer uses institutional frames—the pictorial equivalent of literary genres—in order to structure their interpretation of the work. The effect of these frames is to determine how we view and interpret the image before us; as Patt explains: "A type of photograph (the snapshot) and its relationship to a photographic genre (a group shot) not only influences how we see the content inside its formally visible but often socially hidden frame, but also limits the questions we can ask of this photograph to those the institutional frame has assigned it" (31). However, the variety of photographs Sebald includes in his texts—which range from inanimate objects to people, from abstract images to physical landscapes—require the
viewer not only to be constantly adopting different institutional frames but also, to adopt more than one frame per photograph. Although works which contain texts and images also have their own unique frames and settled practices for interpretation and categorisation—in documentary fiction, for example, photographs verify the written account—Sebald's works resist these frameworks and prevent the construction of a hierarchical relationship between image and text. Distorting the reader's/viewer's stable perspective from which to establish a settled meaning, Sebald's works require us not to begin from a starting point of presence but to continuously question the relationship between a medium and the meaning it transmits.

Throughout both works, Sebald draws our attention to the unreliability of written accounts and, in particular, of narratives of historical events. Despite engrossing his class audience, Hilary, Austerlitz's high school history teacher, nevertheless acknowledges the inadequacy of his account:

In the end all anyone could ever do was sum up the unknown factors in the ridiculous phrase, 'The fortunes of battle swayed this way and that', or some similarly feeble and useless cliché. All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces which have already been staged often enough by others. (101)

Similarly, in *The Rings of Saturn*, although the narrator is more condemning of visual media's claims of veracity, the narrator also emphasises the unreliability of historical accounts when he remarks, "While most of the accounts of the battles fought on the so-called fields of honour have from time immemorial been unreliable, the pictorial representations of great naval engagements are without exception figments of the imagination" (76). As if heeding Hilary's and the narrator's observations, Sebald's works are told from the point of view of a narrator who self-consciously highlights the inaccuracies of his own account. Repeatedly throughout *The Rings of Saturn* the narrator acknowledges the lacunae that surround his own attempts to narrate the past. Thus he makes such remarks as, "But no one knows what shadowy memories haunt them to this day" with regard to the Croatian children who suffering from hunger ate their own identity cards (98), or he admits that too often "memory fails us" (177). Frequently ending his extended meditations with questions rather than conclusions, Sebald's narrator emphasises his own inability to produce an account that contains and thematises the disparate and confusing events of the past and present. The overall effect of a narrator who, according to Carsten Strathausen, "explicitly welcomes interruptions and willingly follows every distraction wherever it may lead," is an
"ontological openness" (472). Such an openness, whereby the narrator does not assume a mantle of authority or project his accounts as comprehensive, is also a feature of *Austerlitz*. In *Austerlitz* a parallel structure of incomplete narrative accounts emphasises the uncertainties of the text. Not only is Austerlitz's account of his past left incomplete by his inability to remember and discover traces of his parents, but the narrator's account of his conversations with Austerlitz are unable to capture the identity of his ephemeral subject who even physically defies the narrator's ability to determine his age. The incompleteness of both characters' accounts implies that language is an unsatisfactory medium to express the past and present. Resorting to clichés and a-priori ideas, written accounts, Sebald suggests, must acknowledge their own inadequacies instead of reasserting the illusion of providing an all-encompassing perspective.

The ontological uncertainty attributed to the written word in Sebald's works is produced both by the narrator's hesitancy with regard to his own accounts of events and by the uncertain identity of the narrator. "Begin[ning] with the immobilized sensitive soul we invariably encounter in Sebald" (McCulloh, *Understanding Sebald* 60), both novels hint at the similarities between the unnamed narrator and the author. Academic exiles with melancholic dispositions who share autobiographical details with their author, the narrators of his works cannot be equated with Sebald but, as if playing with the reader's predicament, Sebald inserts photographs of himself in the text which encourage us to do just that.31 John Beck argues that the ambiguity surrounding the narrator's identity articulates the novel's preoccupation with society's "precarious relation to the real" (77) and, as he further explains, "the 'Sebald' of the text is the monstrous mirror reflection of an inaccessible 'real' Sebald" (84). Intermingling aspects of his own identity with the narrator, Sebald perverts the reader's ability to distinguish between real and unreal and, furthermore, suggests that the real is an unreal designation utilised by the ego to order its world under the ambit of a universalising perspective.

Although Stefanie Harris attributes to the photographs in Sebald's texts the power of providing "that which the text alone cannot" (379), Sebald is equally, if not more, critical of the role photographs/images play in providing the illusion of a universal perspective. The devastating potential consequences of an all-encompassing

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31 See page 263 of *The Rings of Saturn* where Sebald includes a photograph that is described by the narrator as a picture of himself but is a photo of Sebald.
gaze are revealed in *Austerlitz* when the offshoot of Descartes' philosophy—the belief that the 'what is' can be equated with its representation—is utilised by Nazi propaganda. Undertaking a general improvement campaign in anticipation of a Red Cross commission, the SS, Sebald explains, oversaw a "vast cleaning-up programme" that transformed Theresienstadt, a Jewish ghetto, into "the atmosphere of a resort" (339–40). The 'image' the Nazis created for the Red Cross—which Sebald does not include in photographic form in *Austerlitz*—highlights how the reader is to approach and interpret photographs in Sebald's works. As Carolin Duttlinger argues, Sebald's "inserted photographs" "point[s] to an element which underpins the discourse on photography throughout the novel […]: the fact that photographs, despite their representational realism and apparent immediacy, do not necessarily provide straightforward access to the scenes or experiences they record" (157). The danger of treating photographs or images as sources of direct access to the real is made abundantly clear in Sebald's account of Theresienstadt: a place of horror that was represented to the outside world as a utopia.

Hovering over Sebald's implicit critique of written and visual media's presumption of representational immediacy is Adorno's dictum that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. While never explicitly referred to within his works, Sebald's account of the epistemic violence that ensues from representational realism reverberates with Adorno's purported condemnation of art. Ryland argues that despite the readiness with which Adorno's renowned statement has either been embraced or criticised, writers "have rarely explored the full import of the proposition" (141). According to Ryland's interpretation, writers need to address Adorno's term 'barbarism' as a reference "to the state of modern late capitalist society, within which all aspects of reality submit to market forces" (142). This then means that it is impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz because "culture has become reified as an integral part of social and material reality, it cannot detach itself from that reality in order to change it" (142). Sebald's writing, I contend, explicitly engages with what Ryland argues is this neglected element of Adorno's statement. Sebald emphasises that the conceit of an all-encompassing gaze is specific to a historical and cultural era which has little ethical regard for the Other, reducing the Other to an object at the ego's disposal. Moreover, it is such a gaze that Sebald identifies being employed in literature, a product of the same culture. This gaze displays a market mentality where
the Other is a reified good to be utilised, ignored or even eradicated. Like Adorno, Sebald emphasises in an interview the interdependence between society and its art:

'Culture is not the antidote to the mayhem we wreak – expanding the economy or waging wars […] Art is a way of laundering money. It still goes on […] It's more obvious with art because it's an expensive commodity. But literature is also affirmative of society – it oils the wheels.' ("Recovered Memories")

As an affirmation of society, literature, for both Adorno and Sebald, is an unsuitable medium to challenge society and its values. The process of profiting from art that Sebald describes—where profit is both financial and ideological—resembles Levinas's sentiment that there is something unsavoury in art's facilitation of "feasting during a plague" ("Reality" 12). In the next chapter I explicitly engage with Sebald's diagnosis of modernity as a cultural era that has sanctified the ego's imperialism at the expense of the Other. But, for now, I wish to suggest that Sebald's undermining of photography's representational realism is an attempt to challenge a reality that is constructed by the ego's imperial gaze. Moreover, it is an integral part of his overall aesthetic of responding to the Holocaust in art while simultaneously signalling his awareness that the media he uses to articulate his response must be questioned.

Sebald represents the Holocaust in art through a process of questioning the reliability of his media while also only ever approaching the Holocaust indirectly. His indirect approach is an attempt to avoid what he describes as the "tactless lapses, moral and aesthetic [which] can easily be committed" ("Last Word"). Such lapses include sensationalism, over-identification, under-identification, sentimentalism and overt voyeurism. To avoid these lapses, Sebald explains that "you would have to approach it [the Holocaust] from an angle, and by intimating to the reader that these subjects are constant company; their presence shades every inflection of every sentence one writes" ("Last Word"). Through adopting an aesthetic strategy that produces ontological instability, Sebald never claims to represent the Holocaust comprehensively but, rather, renders it a haunting critique of art's representational authority. Sebald enacts his indirect aesthetics through a mode of utterance that moves hauntingly and restlessly between text and image, thus contesting both media's claim of representational mastery.

When juxtaposed, text and image form a relationship that most fully contributes to the unstable presence of Sebald's works through producing a mode of time that requires the reader to constantly shift their gaze from text to image. Existing
in an ambiguous relationship, image and text at different points in the works can occupy a complementary role and at other times may appear to be randomly linked. The "scepticism" which (76), as Beck argues, pervades the reading experience of Sebald's works means that the reader is always closely scrutinising text and image in an attempt to define their relationship. Constantly shifting between the two not only, according to Amir Eshel, "defers any immediate progression in the text," but also means that "the time of reading itself becomes an element of the narrative's temporal fabric" (94), leaving the reader unable to produce a stable present from which meaning can be induced. The time thus produced by the relationship between text and image in Sebald's works accords with the effects of a beyond which cannot be reduced to a conceit of the Same. In such a beyond, Homi Bhabha argues, "there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, [...] an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-delà – here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth" (Location 1). Adopting a 'relational' perspective that does not cohere with Descartes' distinction between subject and object, Sebald's texts exhibit a gaze that is blurred, uncertain and forever in motion. Their inability to position an exact centre of meaning for the reader to discover is not, I suggest, a failing of his works but constitutes an attempt to move beyond an enclosed system of thought that equates the 'what is' with its representation. His works invoke a model of time which undermines the stability of the present moment, the act of reading, and prevents the reader from translating the narrative into a synchronous whole. Not at home in the text, the reader of Sebald's unsettling prose models the position of the ego who is subjected to the Other in the name of ethics. The ghostly quality of his ontologically uncertain works may produce unease; however, according to Eaglestone, "it is this sense of unease, this sense that it can never quite be encapsulated that seems to give literature its most significant appeal to the ethical" ("Flaws" 85).

4.1 Disrupting Literary Conventions: A Pilgrimage without Salvation

While both of Sebald's works juxtapose the conventions of multiple genres, each work focuses on, and problematises, a particular literary genre. In the case of The Rings of Saturn, Sebald presents the trope of pilgrimage through the use of travel literature

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32 Similarly, Mark Anderson observes that the reader of a Sebaldian work must navigate "the dialogue between images and text; the alternating rhythm of reading and looking" (109).
conventions. According to Dee Dyas, "Place pilgrimages," or journeys to "specific destinations for specific reasons," such as "to learn, to visit the shrines of saints, to do penance or to evangelise," were one means by which the pilgrim sought spiritual fulfilment (95). Moreover, Dyas notes "that the motivating force" of such pilgrims "was the leaving of home in search of salvation" (97). Although Sebald chose not to include the German subtitle—*Eine englische Wallfahrt*—in the English title of *The Rings of Saturn*, the text's various allusions to the tradition of pilgrimage remain. The opening of the work recounts the narrator's hope that in undertaking a walking tour the "emptiness" which had taken hold of him would be dispelled (3). Thus Sebald appears to hint that, like the pilgrims of a previous era, the narrator's walking tour is primarily motivated by a search for salvation. Later in the work, the narrator—in a move that further confuses the reader's ability to distinguish his identity from that of Sebald's—recounts a visit to his patron saint, St Sebolt's, shrine in Amsterdam. St Sebolt's miraculous ability to turn ice into fire, however, can only lead the narrator to despairingly contemplate "whether inner coldness and desolation may not be the pre-condition for making the world believe, by a kind of fraudulent showmanship, that one's own wretched heart is still aglow" (86). Striking the narrator as a form of "fraudulent showmanship," the story of his patron saint's miracles do not move the narrator to believe in a unifying consolatory divine force and thus it seems even more unlikely that the narrator's current pilgrimage through Suffolk will provide salvation.

Mimicking the quest of the devout pilgrim, the narrator journeys to Jerusalem or, to be more precise, he heads for the model version of the Temple of Jerusalem which is being constructed by Thomas Abrams, retired farmer of Suffolk. Traversing the area known in Suffolk as 'The Saints'—a group of nine parishes which are named after saints—the narrator notes the gaps that would open in the clouds at various point of the day. He describes how "the rays of the sun would reach down to the earth, lighting up patches here and there and making a fan-shaped pattern as they descended, of the sort that used to appear in religious pictures symbolizing the presence above us of grace and providence" (241). Significantly, instead of associating the light shining through the clouds with God, the narrator links this natural phenomenon with a tradition of symbolic pictorial representations of the presence of God. Thus Sebald seems to suggest that the pilgrims' God was a 'human god' who had been created by a variety of institutions and media, including the Church and art. Like Janet Frame's troubled minister, Aisley, the narrator discovers in The Saints a God that is
manufactured by humans in order to meet their needs. This is not the radiance of a God, who according to Levinas, "compels me to goodness" (141) but, instead, is an example of "the thematization of God in religious experience [which] has already dodged or missed the inordinate intrigue that breaks up the unity of the 'I think'" ("God" 135). Such a human God never transcends the worldly realm, and while people may discover solace, Sebald suggests, it is yet another example of a fraudulent showmanship or, in Levinasian terms, of a play of being.

In addition, within the same passage Sebald contests the "popular belief" that "natural beauty is a source of spiritual sustenance" (Diffey 53). Indeed, a central element of 'place pilgrimages' is the idea that in nature the pilgrim will find evidence of God's omnipresence. Thus in Gerald Manley Hopkins' sonnet "The Windhover" a young priest who is undertaking a spiritual pilgrimage has his faith confirmed through the sight of a bird in flight. Although throughout The Rings of Saturn the narrator frequently reflects on nature, his reflections do not yield a moment of transcendence or spiritual fulfilment. Before a sleeping pig, which "sighed like one enduring endless suffering" (66), the narrator can only question the Lord's act of casting demons out of the man from the Gardarenes and into a herd of swine which, consequently, leapt from a cliff and were drowned. Similarly, during one stage in the narrator's walk when a heath opens before him to reveal flowers of the "deepest purple," the narrator does not experience spiritual sustenance but is "numbed by this crazed flowering" (171). For Sebald's narrator, Greg Bond argues, "there is no alleviation to be found in nature" (39). Instead of finding God in nature, the narrator repeatedly finds evidence of humans' destructive tendencies as illustrated by the narrator's discourse on the first settlers who used the governing principle of combustion to clear land. The overall effect of the narrator's ruminations is to dispel the belief that divine transcendence can be found in nature and to firmly position human responsibility and culpability in the realm of nature. Thus Sebald's narrator's pilgrimage cannot culminate in salvation but in an ever-growing despair at the sense of responsibility that people should harbour in their relationship with others and which has been forsaken.

In order to further emphasise that the narrator's pilgrimage will not and cannot result in transcendence, Sebald describes how when the narrator arrives at the temple of Jerusalem or rather, at Abrams' human rendition of the temple, he finds it incomplete. Working on the project for over twenty years, Abrams is unable to see a point when the temple will be finished for, as he explains to the narrator, "in the final
analysis, our entire work is based on nothing but ideas, ideas which change over the years and which time and again cause one to tear down what one had thought to be finished, and begin from scratch" (245). Moreover, as the product of imperfect ideas, the temple cannot be attributed to "divine revelation" because, as Abrams concludes, "why would I have had to make alterations as I went along?" (245). Later that evening when the narrator rests in a hotel room whose furniture resembles the furnishings of a church, he is "pursued […] by the feeling that the house was about to fall down" (249). Sebald thus suggests that the temples and churches that are built in order to bring people closer to God remain imperfect vessels that can only access a 'human god' of our own ideas and representations. Such a God may serve the needs of societies, but can never totally quell our unease. Therefore it is fitting that the narrator's pilgrimage never appears to come to an end.

Although we are told at the end of the work that the narrator is to be picked up by an unknown Clara, this event is never re-presented. Clara, whose name refers to one who brings light and clarity, never arrives; the end of the novel thus not only presents the failure of the narrator's pilgrimage to culminate in salvation but also suggests that there will be no final moment of enlightenment which would signal the narrator's metaphorical return to the home of the self. Thus it is perhaps unsurprising that a year later, haunted by the "traces of destruction" that scar the landscape of Suffolk (3), the narrator appears cursed to embark on another form of spiritual pilgrimage. Unlike the narrator's physical pilgrimage, this spiritual pilgrimage requires the pilgrim to endlessly traverse the terrain of an insurmountable sense of responsibility that, according to Levinas, "is anterior to deliberation and is that to which I have thus been exposed and dedicated before being dedicated to myself" ("Diachrony" 111). Levinas links this responsibility to his unique understanding of God when he writes, "my relation to God—comes to me in the concreteness of my relation to the other person, in the sociality which is my responsibility for the neighbour" ("Old" 136). Thus, Levinas espouses a form of religion that is "contrary to a religion that feeds on representations" ("Diachrony" 120)—or the one that the narrator has encountered on his walking tour—and suggests a form of devotion that will never culminate in salvation or resolution. Sebald's narrator exhibits this devotion and despair as he repeatedly recalls throughout The Rings of Saturn "the traces of destruction [that] reach far back into the past" and suffers under a sense of responsibility that knows no bounds (3). Sebald proposes thus the ethical importance
of another form of pilgrimage which awakens our responsibility for the Other. Exposed to a time beyond his own ontological adventure, the narrator's experiences are those of Abraham, who in Levinas's philosophy is he "who leaves his ancestral home for good, who never returns and never arrives at his destination, who encounters and is subject to the absolute alterity of God, who overthrows the idols is transformed to become his better self" (Cohen, Introduction 24).

4.2 Deferring the Said

In *The Rings of Saturn* Sebald's narrative consists of multiple series of associations that do not culminate into settled meanings but that, instead, reveal the farce of rational thought which informs the classification systems of various disciplines. Although Sebald must use the Said, or language, to re-present these networks of associations, the multiple links he creates between disparate objects and thoughts suggest the instability of the Said which is presented by the work. If the primary function of the Said is to determine meaning, then through deferring meaning the text's authority is brought into question. Destabilising his own means of representation, Sebald, Simon Ward argues, "drives to the point of crisis [...] the author's sovereignty over his material" (68). Therefore, through adopting a process of deferring the production of definitive meanings, Sebald's works not only turn the critical lens he brings to other representational practices onto his own, but also suggests an alternative means of representation that does not begin with presence. His works thus implicitly enact a model of time that is premised on ontological stability: one where the undermining of the texts' sovereignty produces a narrative that is opposed to synchrony and where the reader is unable to feel at home in the text.

The narrator's quest to discover the final resting place of Thomas Browne's skull exemplifies Sebald's process of forging links and connections between seemingly distinct subjects. What begins as a search for the skull of Thomas Browne leads to a meditation on Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson* which in turn leads to a discussion of levitation, the quincunx and ends with the narrator's ruminations on Browne's discourse on sepulchral urns which, fittingly, concludes with the narrator asking "what does it mean?" (26). While the narrator is never able to view the skull since, as he learns, Browne's body was reburied, the quest to discover the location of the skull becomes subsumed by the far-reaching networks of connections that the narrator creates. Moreover, the inclusion of a photograph that shows a skull resting on
well-known volumes of Browne's work, and that leaves the reader uncertain if the skull is Browne's, serves to further emphasise the unreliability of a system of thought that equates representations with the real or 'what is.' In place of this system, Sebald constructs networks of associations which repeatedly defer the production of meaning through preferring to pursue the possible affinities that declarations of the Said foreclose. "The flux of links that constitute Sebald's texts undermines rather than guarantees referentiality" because, as Strathausen convincingly argues, "as soon as the narrator mentions something, it has always already escaped its linguistic identification and morphed into something else by entering into a new constellation with other 'facts'" (478). Reading Sebald's works, we are exposed to the infinite possibilities of such constellations.

Constructing a network of seemingly random associations, The Rings of Saturn's narrative form resembles a library or archive. However, unlike traditional archives, which construct order and thus transmit meaning, Sebald's "archival metaphor"—a form that Gerry O'Sullivan identifies in the works of both Jorge Borges and Michel Foucault—refutes metaphysical certainties. O'Sullivan argues that the "archival metaphor suggests the undermining of unities once held to be inviolable in both historical and literary studies," and he goes on to list these as "seamless canons; isolate and individual works of genius, linear chronologies; myths of ends and origins; and the enduring presence of privileged, and ultimately authoritative, authorial voices" (110). The archive that The Rings of Saturn produces uses both historical and literary sources, it repeatedly digresses from the linear chronology of the narrator's walking tour, and any assumption of origins is refuted by the narrator's ability to create endless series of associations. Furthermore, Sebald's extensive intertextuality and paraphrasing of others' works destabilises the privileged authority of his own authorial voice. Like "Borges' libraries," which O'Sullivan describes as "mazelike suggestions of infinity" (120), Sebald's repeating motifs—such as a scrap of silk—suggest the infinite narratives that can be constructed around the seemingly most insignificant matter. Sebald's labyrinthine series of associations enact in literary form Levinas's description of the infinite as the "uncontained" ("God" 133). Adopting terms that resonate with Levinas's philosophy, O'Sullivan observes that "against the threat of difference, we have erected laws of sameness" (121); however, the archival narrative form in The Rings of Saturn dismantles these laws of sameness through requiring that infinite possible connections between all references be pursued. In his writing,
Sebald's repeated acts of undermining his narrative form's stability resemble Levinas's account of the infinite as that which "forbids me my conquest" ("Philosophy" 55). Forever in a process of pursuing possible connections, the narrator occupies an unstable ground where any finite declaration of the Said is infinitely deferred.

The ethical significance of Sebald's labyrinthine prose lies in its openness; it contests an abstract mode of thought that insists on the ability to define the world as a set of discrete objects. Constructing affinities between seemingly disparate issues, Sebald's narrative form parallels the many experiences of the uncanny that affect both the narrator and the reader. "The uncanny," according to Sigmund Freud, "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" ("Uncanny" 195). Thus, like the archive structure of The Rings of Saturn which suggests potential similarities and connections, experiences of the uncanny produce in the ego a sense of familiarity with an event or object. However, the uncanny not only produces a sense of familiarity but also that of strangeness, leaving the ego unable to account for this experience. John Zilcosky argues that the narrator's experiences of the uncanny, such as when he feels he once lived in his friend's home, mean that Sebald's subjects "can never become sufficiently disoriented, can never really lose their way" (103). While I find Zilcosky's argument persuasive, I believe the suggestion implicit in his argument that the ego never loses its ability to define events from its point of view is problematic. If we adopt Levinas's account of the traumatised subject, the narrator's experiences of the uncanny instead emerge as a sense of responsibility that haunts the subject but which never originated in the present and thus cannot be explained by intentional thought. Unable to translate these experiences into events that support and stabilise its state of being, the ego is haunted by their elusive and indefinable familiarity. For this reason I would suggest that what Zilcosky identifies as Sebald's narrators' inability to "lose their way" should not be understood as their mastery over the present but, instead, as evidence of their qualified state of always being in relation to an indeterminable Other. Like Sebald's labyrinthine prose, the ego is in a constant state of finding its affirmation of presence deferred by its sense of connection with one who eludes its grasp. Thus, adopting Strathausen's response to Zilcosky's argument that "Sebald's travelers can never get completely lost, but they never simply return home either" (489), I suggest that the narrator's inability to get lost parallels the ego's sense of familiarity with a pre-original past that it cannot thematise and, furthermore, that the ego's inability to return home suggests the ego's
state of being for-the-other. This approach suggests that Sebald's experimental narrative forms which, as Sara Friedrichsmeyer argues, "never impose a meaning" but, instead, provide "a shadowy glimpse of something beyond themselves" (83), is an ethical response to the dilemma of re-presenting an ethical beyond.33 Unable to return home or lose their way, the ego is subject to a non-intentional relationship of familiarity with an elusive Other.

*The Rings of Saturn's* infinite deferral of authoritative meaning while demonstrating an act of scholarly dexterity also conveys the ethical impetus of Sebald's prose. Bianca Theisen argues that Sebald's adoption of what she identifies as a Baroque model of pre-rationalistic thought is an "attempt to likewise eclipse the bleak light that rationalism has cast on reality, dissecting the anatomy of a world reduced to the schema and the grid, and to tone down the narrative of progress embraced by those who believed that they left the age of darkness for enlightened analysis" (563). While I agree with her identification of the models of thought that Sebald is attempting to disturb, rather than see this as the response of a scholar who wanted to forge both a place for "rationalist knowledge of specialization" and "encyclopedic generalism" (581), as Theisen concludes, I would suggest a more ethical motivation. By adopting the conventions of pre-rationalist thought, Sebald not only draws our attention to the violence of rationalist thought but his work also implies another way of being that does not begin with presence. If we view the narrator's melancholic disposition as a product of an unintentional sense of responsibility for the Other, the narrator's process of drawing connections between disparate material undermines his sovereignty and parallels the asymmetrical relationship between the ego and the Other, whereby it is the ego's presence that is disturbed by the Other. Equating Levinas's account of the traumatised ego with the narrator suggests that the narrator's process of ceaselessly shifting between specific and more general knowledge is not the response of a scholar who desires an all-encompassing gaze, but the desire of a subject who seeks to respond to the Other while being aware that his response is inadequate if it resorts to the production of meaning. Through creating potentially infinite networks of connections, the narrator defers the production of authoritative thematisations and thus the narrative form

33 While I find Friedrichsmeyer's argument that Sebald's works hint at a beyond persuasive, her conclusion that Sebald's narrative form offers "some assurance" through "holding us within a certain orb of meaning" remains unconvincing because it equates Sebald's stylistic experimentations with an ego maintaining the Same (89).
indicates the importance of a time that does not begin with presence, the ego or its
equivalent: a violent mode of being.

4.3 Disrupting Literary Conventions: A Frustrated Bildungsroman

Austerlitz's narrative is superficially modelled on the conventions of the
Bildungsroman. An eighteenth-century example of a novel genre that originated in
Germany, the Bildungsroman traces the psychological development of a protagonist
who moves from childhood into adulthood, culminating in the protagonist's
achievement of the mantle of selfhood. The Bildungsroman's concern with the
formation of the individual or with what Martin Swales identifies as "a particular kind
of bourgeois humanism" reflects "that the Bildungsroman genre was born in specific
historical circumstances, that is, within the Humanitätsideal of late eighteenth-century
Germany" (German Bildungsroman 14). In Levinasian terms, then, the
Bildungsroman is a genre that depicts the ego's sovereignty over the present as the
ultimate goal of its protagonists and thus is primarily focused on self-awareness at the
expense of the Other. Sebald's depiction of Austerlitz's failure to reach a stage of self-
fulfilment thus not only subverts the conventions of the Bildungsroman but also
contests the priority that the genre affords to a humanist model of identity.

Adopting a traditional psychological plot line which depicts a subject 'working
through' his past in order to achieve resolution in the present, Austerlitz reverses the
trajectory of the Bildungsroman. However, if we adopt a Freudian model and view
Austerlitz as a patient who uses a form of talking therapy to 'work through' the
memories of his past which are stored unprocessed in his unconscious, then Austerlitz
never experiences a cure. His journey back in time does not produce the defining
accomplishment of the protagonist in a Bildungsroman: a sense of self. Only ever able
to recall fleeting fragmentary memories of his parents, such as "a sky-blue shoe"
(228), Austerlitz is unable to affirm his identity. Sebald's "ironic recontextualisation
of a hero's underworld journey," according to Russell Kilbourn, "connects his
protagonist to a line of thoroughly modern seekers whose ultimate goal is always
knowledge of self via an other" (152). Unable to define this Other, Austerlitz remains
adrift from the present and from a stable and self-affirming sense of identity. In
Levinasian terms, what is initially presented as a journey that is centred on need, or
"which seeks to fill a negation or lack in the subject" (Wild 19), becomes a journey
propelled by desire. Distinguishing between need and desire, Levinas describes how
"in need I can sink my teeth into the real and satisfy myself in assimilating the other; in Desire there is no sinking one's teeth into being, no satiety, but an unchartered future before me" (Totality 117). Austerlitz is not the story of a journey to restore the self and thus is not shaped by the egotistical need that drives the protagonist of a Bildungsroman. Instead, Austerlitz presents another form of subjectivity that begins with the Other and an overwhelming, insatiable desire.

In response to his realisation "that all my life had been a constant process of obliteration, a turning away from myself and the world" (174), Austerlitz attempts to 'work through' his past. While Austerlitz traverses both mental and physical landscapes through an alternating process of reclaiming suppressed memories and visiting his childhood home, his search does not culminate in a stable and assured sense of identity. During what could be called Austerlitz's epiphany in the Ladies' Waiting-Room of Liverpool station, Austerlitz recalls his arrival in England as a young child. While Austerlitz's recovery of part of his forgotten past would seem to suggest that he is on the verge of 'working through' his past and thus restoring a sense of identity, he is unable to identify with the four-year-old boy. Instead of recalling his arrival at the station, Austerlitz watches the memory from the viewpoint of a spectator: "I […] saw the boy they had come to meet. He was sitting by himself on a bench over to one side. His legs, in white knee-length socks, did not reach the floor, and but for the small rucksack he was holding on his lap I don't think I would have known him" (193). When Austerlitz realises the boy waiting on the bench is his four-year-old self, he does not experience the warmth and security of self-recognition but a "sense of shame and sorrow, or perhaps something quite different, something inexpressible because we have no words for it" (194). Austerlitz's epiphany is not a moment that rejoins time and allows him to construct a linear account of temporality from the ego's point of view. "Beyond the ontology of past-present-future," as Eshel argues, Austerlitz's "experience of simultaneous temporality" cannot restore the ego and its ability to construct time as synchrony (78).

Later that night, after Austerlitz has left the waiting room, his disturbing dreams suggest that the return of his past has further discounted the possibility of locating a stable point of view to carry out his search for meaning and truth. Austerlitz's "nightmarish, never-ending dream" begins with his attempts to find a path out of a star-shaped fortress (196). Throughout the novel fortresses are depicted as the ultimate product of rational thought and are potent symbols of both physical and
epistemic violence. Thus Austerlitz's attempts to escape the fortress's suffocating walls not only suggest his desire to evade a metaphysics of presence but also hint that his search for the past is not an attempt to erect the fortress-like identity of the ego. Interrupted by other episodes, Austerlitz's dream provides him first with a "bird's-eye view" of a train and then positions him as a passenger in the train looking out (196). Austerlitz's dream suggests that neither an overarching view, such as the distanced perspective Austerlitz has adopted with regard to his past throughout his life, nor a view from within, such as the perspective that the recovery of his past will potentially offer him, can provide him with the meaning and truth that he seeks. For Levinas, "the unconscious, in its clandestinity, rehearses the game played out in consciousness, namely, the search for meaning and truth as the search for the self" ("Substitution" 83). However, for Austerlitz, his journey through the suppressed memories of his unconscious does not produce meaning, truth, or a stable sense of self. While the meaning he finds there may be capable of quenching need, Austerlitz is not content to settle for a construction of identity that is no different in form from the one that he purposefully built in his adult life in order to protect himself from suppressed memories of the past. Such identities, which are erected from the ego's stronghold on presence, may afford the self protection but also permit no form of contact. For this reason I would suggest that despite mimicking the Bildungsroman's defining feature, a quest for self-identity, Sebald's subversive treatment of the genre means that the overall goal of his protagonist was never a quest for the self or presence. Thus, when his former nanny shows Austerlitz a photo of himself as a child dressed in an elaborate page-boy costume, there is no moment of recognition, only a frantic search for the "slightest clue" and the feeling of being accused by the "piercing, inquiring gaze of the page boy who had come to demand his dues" (260). Unable to identify with the boy in the photograph, Austerlitz is like one who is beset by the 'responsibility of obsession' which, according to Levinas, "implies an absolute passivity of a self that has never been able to depart from itself so as to return within its limits and identify itself by recognizing itself in its past" ("Substitution" 89). Unable to identify with his past self, Austerlitz's quest is not focused on the self but on the Other.

*Austerlitz*, as Bauer argues, "is an inversed Bildungsroman that leads to perpetual wandering and not to a resolution, the discovery of the self, personal growth or the comfort of home" (235). Responding to the Bildungsroman's historical
associations with humanism, Sebald's subversion of the genre proposes an other form of subjectivity: one that originates in the self's subjection to the Other. Like *The Rings of Saturn*, *Austerlitz* depicts its central protagonist undergoing a journey which will not eventuate in a return home. Austerlitz's attempt to reconcile himself with the past and with his parents' fate inevitably fails. This failure to return home marks *Austerlitz* as a work that is preoccupied not with the issue of self-discovery but with the perpetual wandering that the ethical self is forced to undertake in its obsession by the Other.

4.4 Disrupting the Said: The Language of Trauma

While in *The Rings of Saturn* the production of the Said was problematised by a narrative structure which insisted on deferral, in *Austerlitz*, the Said is similarly destabilised, but here through a process of disruption. Sebald carries out these disruptions through transforming the psychological conditions of trauma into literary techniques which interrupt the production of meaning in *Austerlitz*. If, as Critchley proposes, "Levinas seeks to think the subject at the level of the unconscious in relation to an original traumatism" (*E-P-S* 194), then we can argue that the narrative techniques Sebald employs in *Austerlitz*, which mimic the effects of trauma, are an attempt to realise a Levinasian form of subjectivity. In turn, such a subjectivity can only ever be gestured at through a form of language that problematises its own ability to provide authoritative declarations of the Said. Furthermore, *Austerlitz*'s traumatic effects resist the reader's attempts to translate them into a coherent meaning and thus parallel what Critchley argues is a central thesis of Levinas's work: "the ethical relation [...] takes place at the level of pre-reflective sensibility and not at the level of reflective consciousness" (*E-P-S* 188). This means that ethics is carried out prior to conscious decision and that the subject cannot elect or choose to be an ethical being but is obsessed by the Other due to an original trauma that problematises the ego's way of being in the world. The ego then experiences its ethical responsibility not within consciousness but at the level of the body. Fittingly, the experience of trauma, which for Levinas is a non-intentional affectivity, recalls the subject's ethical responsibility through a series of incomprehensible and often traumatising experiences that the ego cannot translate in its consciousness. Similarly, Sebald's literary traumatic effects scar the body of the text and resist the reader's attempts to translate them into causal connections. These textual and visual scars perform the
untranslatable and disruptive experience of trauma, exposing the reader to the Saying which, as Critchley argues, "circulates as a residue or interruption within the said" (Introduction 18). As such an interruption, *Austerlitz*'s literary traumatic effects enact the pre-original trauma of responsibility that contests the Said.

Trauma, according to Cathy Caruth's groundbreaking work in the field, "is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history" (5). She further explains that "the traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (5). If we adopt Caruth's argument that trauma is a symptom of an 'impossible history' rather than a symptom of the unconscious, then we can see, as Critchley argues in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity*, how integral the notion of trauma is to Levinas's work. Beset by an "anarchic traumatism" ("Substitution" 94), the ego is overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility that it cannot rationalise and connect to events that occurred in its present. Unable to possess this impossible history, the ego cannot reduce it to a moment of its own presence. Instead of being able to reclaim mastery over time, the ego, according to Levinas, "in suffering, in the original traumatism and return to self, where I am responsible for what I did not will, absolutely responsible for the persecution I undergo" ("Substitution" 90), is overwhelmed by its responsibility for the Other and reduced to a state of being-for-the-other. The traumatic effects interwoven into *Austerlitz*'s narrative structure—such as the missing contexts and the silences—parallel the experiences of the self when traumatised by the Other. This suggests in turn that *Austerlitz* is not a study of one man's quest for identity but of the indefinable relationships that traumatisate his existence.

*Austerlitz*'s narrative structure parallels the belated experience of traumatic neurosis: the novel does not represent Austerlitz's personal account from the present but is narrated from the point of view of an unknown narrator who recounts Austerlitz's story. Traumatic neurosis, Sigmund Freud argues, occurs when "a man who has experienced some frightful accident […] leaves the scene of the event apparently uninjured. In the course of the next few weeks, however, he develops a number of severe psychical and motor symptoms" (*Moses* 309). Significantly, the subject experiences the trauma as a range of symptoms but is unable to account for their origin and his consciousness thus cannot decipher the underlying cause. Unable to deduce the source of the trauma, a traumatised subject lacks control over their
present, which is subject to symptoms they cannot explain. Like a patient suffering traumatic neurosis, the narrative cannot provide direct access to the experience of trauma or to the present moment which, for Levinas, is the site of the ego's "self-conceit and its imperialism" ("Substitution" 88). The unstable temporality produced by the narrator's secondary account reflects the traumatised subject's confused experience of time. The overall effect of "the muddled rhythm created by the narrative's gesture of quotation—the repetitive 'said Austerlitz'," is, according to Eshel, to "further enhance the seemingly endless temporal elasticity" (92). As a repetition of his conversations with Austerlitz, the narrator's account parallels Freud's notion of the repetition compulsion which compels the traumatised subject to repeat or return to the experience of trauma in order to achieve mastery over it. However, as Ceuppens argues, despite being a repetition, the narrative cannot restore the present through providing a comprehensive account of events: "witnessing, or bearing witness, is always in some way a repetition without a final word: the narrator is no more able to turn the stories into a final statement than are the other characters" ("Seeing Things" 191). Although no narratives, as re-presentations, can ever grant direct access to events, Sebald denies even the illusion of immediacy that many narratives provide when they present authoritative accounts from the perspective of the present. Instead, Sebald's narrator provides a mediated version of events that openly acknowledges that it is a secondary account, attempting the impossible task of re-presenting a present that was never the narrator's own.

Like Austerlitz—who is unable to work through his past and create a comprehensive narrative that supports his sense of identity—the work Austerlitz fails to translate the effects of trauma into a unified narrative. According to Long, "the purpose of therapy is to turn […] compulsive, 'traumatic' memories into genuinely 'narrative' memories via a process of working through" ("History" 125). By contrast, Austerlitz is permeated by a number of missing contexts, leaving the reader to wonder, for example, at the mysterious and troubled identity of the narrator who records Austerlitz's account. These missing contexts suggest the absences and unanswered questions that haunt the subject of trauma. Sebald, Santner argues, even goes so far as to make the reader a participant in the experience of repression when, for example, despite his passion for railway stations, Austerlitz fails to mention his obvious namesake. As Santner concludes of this experience: "one is thereby seduced, in a sense, into participating in the repression" (57). These silences suggest a weakness in
the ego's mastery and while they may disturb the reader's ability to immerse themselves in the world of the work, they should not be viewed as failures in narration but as gestures to another mode of being and time that language, according to Levinas, will ultimately always betray. The reader's failure to comprehend Austerlitz's trauma-like silences signals the text's resistance to literary practices of identification. Observing the "strong ethical significance" of genre techniques that prevent identification (Holocaust 6), Eaglestone distinguishes interruption as a literary technique that does not perform the "reduction of otherness" (6). Thus the silences and inserted images that interrupt Austerlitz prevent the "reduction of otherness" and reveal a text that, like its central protagonist, is beset by an original traumatism that cannot be 'worked through' once and for all but will that continue to restlessly permeate the reading experience.

The spectral quality of the photographs that are included in Austerlitz suggests the text's physical scarring by trauma. The unique temporality of photographs means, according to Santner, "a certain spectrality belongs to the medium" (154). For Freud, as Anne Whitehead explains, trauma also contains a spectral element: "In its disturbed and disrupted temporality, trauma is inextricable […] from the ghostly or spectral, and it testifies to the profoundly unresolved nature of the past" (13). It is thus possible to read the haunting quality of Sebald's photographs as examples of the effects of trauma imprinted on the page. Viewing these spectral images, the reader is exposed to the unique temporality of photographs, which is derived from their ability to convey what John Berger calls a "shock of discontinuity" (86). Like the sufferer of traumatic neurosis, the viewer of Austerlitz's photographs is subjected to a disjointed experience of time. This rupture originates, as Berger explains, "between the moment recorded and the present moment of looking at the photograph" and overwhelms us with the awareness of "absence or death" (86–87). This sense of absence is not only a feature of Sebald's photographs of people but also of his abstract images that resist the viewer's ability to translate them. Viewing Sebald's photographs, the reader is often confronted with their inability to decode the images and, as in the case of the title page photograph of a young Austerlitz, is unable to reduce and assimilate a subject who always remains Other. We never know the outcome of Austerlitz's quest to discover the fate of his father, much as we never know who the mysterious and troubled narrator is; and nor are we ever able to thematise the elusive Austerlitz.
"Photographs of trauma," according to Ulrich Baer, "turn the viewer into a latecomer
at the depicted site" and "thus summon him or her to a kind of vigilant and responsible viewing that will not foreclose the potential for understanding the full range of human experience" (181). In many respects all of the images in *Austerlitz* can be described as "photographs of trauma" not only because they remain untranslatable but also because of the reader's awareness that they belonged to a man who could never reclaim his past. Thus, in many respects, the reader is positioned with regard to the work as a latecomer, and it remains our responsibility to accept the challenge of ensuring that our readings of *Austerlitz* do not begin from a metaphysics of presence but instead allow the spectre of Austerlitz to continue his haunting.

The hybrid form of Sebald's works traverses an in-between space which resists the production of settled meanings. Neither concerned with metaphysical certainties nor with the pursuit of truth, Sebald's relentless critique of representational practices inverts the traditional form of the novel, so that it no longer re-presents a site of presence, but be-comes a site that defers, in the case of *The Rings of Saturn*, and interrupts, as in *Austerlitz*, the production of meaning. This disturbance of his own works' presence constitutes Sebald's gesture to a beyond that resists the modalising processes of language and time. Like the protagonists of both works, Sebald's preoccupation with creating a means of re-presentation that resists violence exhibits an ethical concern, one could even say an obsession, with the writer's ethical responsibilities to signify a language beyond language, a saying that "does not communicate anything except the desire to communicate" (Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism* 142). The difficulties critics have in categorising Sebaldian works, paired with an ongoing fascination with them, suggest that Sebald may have achieved this impossible task: works of language that gesture beyond language. In the next chapter I will explore both works' obvious distaste for a synchronised model of time that, for Sebald, characterises modernity's time-consciousness: one that treats the beyond of the future and the before of the past as subject to the present's needs.
CHAPTER FIVE

Autonomy: The Time of the Self

In Sebald's prose clocks assume an omnipresent, ominous and even coercive quality. In both novels discussed here, Sebald's protagonists abhor the convention of abiding by clock-time: in *The Rings of Saturn* clocks are noticeably absent from the narrator's pilgrimage across East Anglia and, in *Austerlitz*, Sebald's eponymous character refuses to own clock-time's instruments, declaring them "something ridiculous" (143). This evidence of Sebald's characters' disdain for clocks renders *The Emigrants* narrator's delight in a teas-maid a surprising anomaly in Sebald's oeuvre. A teas-maid, a contraption that is both alarm clock and tea-making machine, captivates Sebald's narrator, becoming his inanimate companion during a period of intense loneliness. Despite the tone of humour that surrounds the narrator's solidarity with an absurd oddity of mechanical kitsch, Sebald's implication that an inanimate instrument of time-keeping can become a consolatory companion alludes to a central preoccupation of his works: the influence that clock-time has had on human relationships in the modern era.

In this chapter I will focus on the allure that Sebald suggests that clock-time—and in particular the abstraction of synchronised time that it represents—harbours within modern societies. Clock-time's governance of human affairs is evident in the effect it has had on both practical and conceptual manifestations of time. Practically, clocks are integral instruments in the management practices of economic, political and social institutions. Clock-time's reduction of time to an abstract mathematical measurement of discrete units is paralleled ontologically by the ego's translation of its experience of time into the comparable units of past, present and future. In this conceptual framework, the present, like a clock, is the instrument through which the ego reduces the past and future to identifiable elements, rendering them derivatives of the present. As an instrument, a clock however cannot assume governance of human affairs; instead, it is clock-time's symbolic association with the epoch of modernity that leads Sebald to endow clocks with coercive properties. The era's "radical

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34 In *W. G. Sebald: Image Modernity, Archive*, Long argues that the "individual topoi" of Sebald's writing—which include the Holocaust, trauma, memory, melancholy and photography—"can in fact be seen as epiphenomena of a much wider 'meta-problem' [...] that is the problem of modernity" (1). Long's central focus is the relationship between modernity, and the photographic image and the
concentration on the present," as Eshel describes it (82), models the ego's sovereignty over the present and also suggests a model of human interaction that protects the interests of the ego at the expense of the Other. In Sebald's prose, clocks are not only a metonym of a metaphysics of presence but also historicise a mode of systematic and rational thought that was ushered in with the Enlightenment and which, Sebald suggests, continues to govern human relationships today.

Clock-time indirectly perpetuates a mode of thought that reduces people to a sum total of their work in both an economic and ideological sense. Economically, the global introduction of a standardised measurement of time enabled a system of measuring people in terms of a capitalist market's agenda, that is to say, with regard to their work output and efficiency. Explaining the effect that clock-time has on people's experience of time in the economic realm, E.P. Thompson argues: "in mature capitalist society all time must be consumed, marketed, put to use; it is offensive for the labour force merely to 'pass the time'" (90–91). Clock-time not only affected how people were defined in the economic sphere but also marked an ideological shift in how people were evaluated. Sebald suggests that clock-time encourages the reduction of people to a sum total of their work—where in a Levinasian framework work, which derives from an economic system of evaluation, measures the identifiable and 'measurable' qualities of an individual which define their identity. "Delivered over to the anonymous field of the economic life" (Totality 176), the Other, Levinas argues, is symbolised by his or her work. Such a system of appraising identities assumes that the ego can identify and 'measure' the Other before them; alterity is henceforth excluded and the ego's sovereignty affirmed.

The form of sociality produced by modernity's time-consciousness is one that excludes or translates all forms of otherness into identifiable entities. Alterity is not tolerated. For Zygmunt Bauman, modernity's belief that abstract thought could govern human affairs under the tutelage of rationalism has made catastrophic and traumatic events such as the Holocaust possible in the twentieth-century. Bauman carefully resists claiming that "the Holocaust was determined by modern bureaucracy or the culture of instrumental rationality" (Modernity 17–18). Instead he insists that the Holocaust "is a legitimate resident in the house of modernity" because,
At no point of its long and torturous execution did the Holocaust come in conflict with the principles of rationality. The 'Final Solution' did not clash at any stage with the rational pursuit of efficient, optimal goal-implementation. On the contrary, *it arose out of a genuinely rational concern, and it was generated by bureaucracy true to its form and purpose.* (Modernity 17)

It is for this reason that clocks, the principal instrument necessary for efficient bureaucracy and regulation, assume an ominous symbolic presence in Sebald's prose. Hovering above travellers, the clock in Antwerp station "reigns supreme" (13), simultaneously surveying and obliging travellers "to adjust their activities to its demands" (14). Sebald equates his protagonists' distaste for the menacing coercive chimes of clock-time with their distrust of modernity's time-consciousness which made events such as the Holocaust possible.

Through suggesting that modernity is an era that epitomises the ego's measures of affirming its presence, my own argument touches on what Dan Stone identifies as the "modernity debate" at the heart of historians' evaluation of the Holocaust (240). Summarising the two opposing arguments of the debate, Stone explains that the Holocaust is seen as "either totally irrational, or totally rational" (244). The first argument assumes that the Holocaust was an irrational event that was born from primitive instincts and thus cannot be categorised as a legitimate product of modernity, an era that adhered to principles of rationality. By contrast, the second argument proposes that the Holocaust, the calculated and systematic genocide of the Jewish people, is a possible and indeed 'rational' product of an era that championed the power of reason to govern human affairs. While revealing a preference for the second account of the Holocaust's origins with regards the modernity debate, Stone, nonetheless, suggests the necessity of a more nuanced account which would acknowledge the "irrational drives," forming an undercurrent to modernity's rationalism. These irrational drives—such as existing hatreds—I contend are present in the ego's process of affirming its sovereignty through approaching the Other as a known entity—where to be 'known' can mean to be an object of hatred or passion. In either case the ego achieves mastery over the Other. I suggest that viewing modernity's time-consciousness as a macrocosm of the ego's stronghold on presence reveals how reason can further irrational impulses.

In Sebald's prose clock-time's governance of human affairs demonstrates a violent regulation of human relationships. The conceptual reduction of humans to identifiable measurable entities or abstractions resembles the ego's use of the
philosophy of the Same to translate radical alterity into identifiable and thematisable differences that do not threaten the ego's sovereignty. At the Greenwich Royal Observatory, the official site from which global mean time is calculated, Austerlitz expresses his puzzlement that the "most artificial of all of our inventions" (141), time, has been universally implemented in and accepted by modern societies. As he ponders Isaac Newton's conception of time as a flowing river, Austerlitz poses a series of questions which Newton's theorem cannot answer. Gazing back over the city of London, Austerlitz recalls paintings of Greenwich Park which reduce people to "very small, isolated human figures" (145) and which depict a "bend in the river" that weaves towards "the city of uncounted souls" (145). The river, an emblem of Newtonian time, traverses a landscape where humans have faded into the background. Sebald's specific use of the term soul, which in this example denotes an essential feature of being human, emphasises that Newtonian time has paradoxically overlooked the humans that it purportedly governs and regulates. Reduced to identical figures in the conceptual framework of clock-time, humans are regulated in accordance with their sameness not their differences.

Undoubtedly critical of modernity's time-consciousness, Sebald's prose also insinuates that there was another possibility, an Other mode of time that could have emerged from modernity. In many respects the turn of the twentieth century was an era marked by its optimism that progress would ensure greater opportunities for people. Both Eshel and Todd Presner argue that standardised time—and in particular, the rapid advances and availability of rail travel which it governed—is a symbolic emblem of both the positive and negative potential of modernity. Accordingly Eshel argues that "the railway system and its 'time' – the 'governor' of the modern era – signify both modernity's promise and its perils, both humanity's seeming freedom from the boundaries of nature and the all-encompassing, unprecedented alienation of humans" (86). Similarly, Presner suggests that Sebald's prose identifies the dual possibilities of standardised time; he explains thus that "the promise of world standard time was, on the one hand, the hope of global communication and unity and, on the other hand, the horror of coordinated destruction and disunity achieved on a global scale" (277–78). Although Sebald's descriptions of the perils of modernity's time-consciousness predominate, he also acknowledges the positive potential harboured in standardised time which indirectly precipitated a mobile and fluid experience of time.
The possibilities for mobility that were sparked by rail travel also led to a proportionate increase in non-regulated, accidental and chance encounters between people. Erratic, coincidental and incalculable, such encounters did not conform to the dictates of clock-time. It is this fluid, non-regulatory time that precipitates human encounters that Austerlitz longs for on the summit of the Greenwich observatory hill. Insofar as a model of non-regulatory time opens the present to infinite possibilities, it hints at the opportunity for encounters between people that do not conform to regulations and timetables. Such encounters in Levinas's philosophy reveal that "before any participation in a common content by comprehension, it [the encounter with the Other] consists in the intuition of sociality by a relation that is consequently irreducible to comprehension" ("Is Ontology Fundamental?" 7). While Sebald's characters' chance encounters with others embrace the possibilities of a fluid experience of time, they are anomalies in a world that has largely accepted the ontological framework of clock-time: the ego's ability to comprehend the Other before them. The reign of the clock, people's temporal deity, ensures that the ego's sovereignty over the present is affirmed and that human relationships are similarly prescribed and regulated.

I will now turn to specifically address Sebald's representation of how the present, future and past are conceptualised through the framework of a synchronised model of time. I will first examine how modernity's radical consciousness of the present is represented, and subsequently criticised, by Sebald through the image of the ego's sovereign and all-encompassing gaze. Linking this gaze to the Enlightenment's light of reason, Sebald suggests that it blinds the ego to the plight of the Other. For Sebald, the consequence of the ego's ontological approach to the present is reflected by the devastation wreaked by mass industrial projects, colonialisation and the Holocaust. They all demonstrate an ideological preference for the illusory world that is constructed by the ego's sovereignty over the present. However, for Sebald's narrators, such a world must be criticised for its preference for an illusion of sameness that while benefiting the ego has had traumatic consequences for the Other. In the second section of this chapter I will examine Sebald's depiction of the modern era in terms of its taste for the novelty of the new and optimistic anticipation of the future which, he furthermore suggests, is sustained through an overarching belief in the benefit of progress for humans. For Sebald, the monumental buildings, which were erected at the turn of the twentieth century and which were meant to embody the
vision of a society afloat on the current of progress, are evidence of this era's self-deceptive practices. It was an era more interested in presenting a façade of a bright future than addressing the issue of at whose expense this future was achieved. Finally, in the third section, I will examine Sebald's depiction of the process through which the past is treated as a "storehouse" for the present.\textsuperscript{35} This means that the past is endowed with an artificial stability through communal memorialisation practices that encourage a domestication of the past for the ego's benefit. Such practices, while originating at the turn of the century, are utilised today and the past thus continues to be subservient to the present's needs. For Sebald, the ego's synchronised mode of time is inextricably linked to the disastrous projects of the twentieth-century which affirmed the priority of presence at the expense of the Other. This past commands that the ego's memorial conventions be held accountable for their acts of sentimentality and forgetting.

5.1 Present-Presence: Let there be Light

In response to Sebald's predominant focus on modernity's time-consciousness, this section examines this era's conceptual understanding of the present as an all-encompassing moment. Thus while Sebald's protagonists inhabit the late twentieth-century, Sebald nonetheless diagnoses an earlier era's abstraction of time as an ongoing influence on the current epoch's time-consciousness. Modernity is an epoch which illustrates Peter Fritzche's original thesis that the French Revolution changed and shaped the way the West thought and still thinks about time and history. To conceive of the past as radically distinct from the present and, consequently, as the present's to define, is a relatively modern phenomenon. According to Fritzche, after the French Revolution "the disconnection between the past and the present made the past an object of intense scrutiny" (7). While, as Fritzche argues, this led both to "the past appear[ing] increasingly different, mysterious, and inaccessible" and to a greater variety and versions of the past (7), this modern understanding of time also indirectly supports the ego's reign over time. For, if the past can no longer be taken for granted as a stable, indistinguishable and known element of the present, then it falls to the ego and society collectively to tame the strangeness of the past. The turn of the twentieth

\textsuperscript{35} I have borrowed this term from Ronald Schleifer who, when distinguishing between Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought about time, argues that in the case of the latter, "there is not a […] present moment simply using the 'storehouse' of the past for its own purposes" (50).
century, the era that receives the most attention in Sebald's prose, is typified by the variety of measures that were undertaken, both collectively and individually, to domesticate the strangeness of the past. Such measures adorn today's physical and mental landscapes and catalyse Sebald's protagonists' interest in the time-consciousness that emerged from modernity.

The radical concentration on the present which, as Eshel argues, defines the epoch of modernity is symbolised in Sebald's prose by imagery of light. In Levinas's philosophy, vision, illumination and light are key motifs for the ego's process of encountering the external world as if it came from the self. Accordingly, as Levinas explains in *Totality and Infinity*, "vision is essentially an adequation of exteriority with interiority" (295). The ego's process of converting (or in Levinasian terms, adequating) its experience of the exterior world into a content of the Same that does not disturb the ego's domain of presence relies on a belief in the all-encompassing grasp of perspective. Thus, light originates not from the exterior world but from the self: "reason and light consummate the solitude of a being as a being, and accomplishes its destiny to be the sole and unique point of reference for everything" (*Time* 65). Sebald's works propose that the relationship between light, reason and a model of ontology, which places the ego at the centre of the pursuit of reason, originally emerged during the Enlightenment where, as Iain Whyte observes of the period, "in replacing the darkness, chaos, and mysticism of earlier history, enlightenment science brought order and illumination to the world" (43). For Sebald, the Enlightenment cemented a way of being that prioritised the present, the logic of reason and the vast reach of the ego's all-encompassing perspective and, moreover, institutionalised a model of ontology which continues to be validated in modern societies.

Despite the Enlightenment's self-belief that it would "liberate human beings from their chains" (13), Sebald exhibits the "suspicion" which, according to David Harvey, grew out of the destruction wrought in the twentieth-century, that "the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation" (13). Describing the view from a plane, which symbolically represents the viewpoint of the enlightened ego, the narrator observes: "one sees the places where they live and the roads that link them, one sees the smoke rising from their houses and factories, one sees the vehicles in which they sit, but one sees not the people
themselves" (Rings 91). Thus, Sebald suggests that the Enlightenment's knowledge of the external world and its accompanying belief that the ego's vision could penetrate all areas of darkness produces the invisibility of people and fails to serve the interests of humanity. Since the Other can only ever be encountered as an illuminated object that comes from the ego, the ego's all-encompassing vision "opens nothing that, beyond the same, would be absolutely other" (Totality 191). Moreover, there is no encounter which would challenge the ego's all-encompassing gaze and sovereignty over the present. Like the narrator's account of Dowager Empress Tz'u-hsi, whose pursuit of power at all costs produced a view from above that reduced her people to "tiny figures," the ego's sovereign view cannot recall "the natural occupations and feelings of human kind" (Rings 150). Instead, the bird's-eye view that the Enlightenment epitomised through its pursuit of knowledge represents the ego's vision of an authoritative present that affirms its sense of self through excluding the Other.

The ego's view from above—whereby the ego's "gathering and synthesizing reign" is a product of its vision (Levinas, "Transcendence" 157)—reduces the ego's encounters with people to encounters with things. This objectification of people is evident in Rembrandt's painting The Anatomy Lesson which Sebald uses to represent the age of reason's belief that all areas of darkness, including the human body, could be illuminated. However, before the flayed flesh of Aris Kindt, where sinews and tendons are represented in detail, the surgeons see only a reflection of the anatomical model contained in their textbooks. For this reason, as the narrator in The Rings of Saturn concludes of The Anatomy Lesson, "it is debatable whether anyone ever really saw that body [Kindt]" because the surgeons preferred the authority of the "anatomical atlas" over an encounter which could not be reduced "to a diagram, [or] a schematic plan of the human being" (Rings 13). Thus, Sebald proposes that the ego's adoption of an all-encompassing perspective has only further dispelled the ego's awareness of the Other's plight and, moreover, may in fact increase its potential to inflict human suffering. Returning to the painting in his collection of essays in On a Natural History of Destruction, Sebald concludes that "Rembrandt's picture of the dissection of a hanged body in the interests of higher ideals is an unsettling comment on the particular kind of knowledge to which we owe progress" (178).

In Sebald's prose, fortresses are a metonym of the Cartesian reduction of humans to schematic plans or thematisable entities, which is contested by Rembrandt's painting. Mimicking the ego's process of entrenching itself in the
present, fortresses are Sebald's ultimate symbol of "how we feel obliged to keep surrounding ourselves with defences" (17). How far the ego will go to protect its sovereignty is demonstrated by the narrator's horror before the ego's symbolic equivalent, the fortress, which he describes as a "monstrous incarnation of ugliness and blind violence" (26–27). Although the construction of the fortresses represents an example of rational planning and the light of reason, the world illuminated by such foundations is not only repugnant but is also, as the narrator suggests, "cut off for ever from the light of nature" (30). In this example, nature, a notoriously porous concept, is positioned in opposition to the light projected by the fortress's "few dim electric bulbs" (30), suggesting that there is another form of light or mode of being that does not originate from the ego and its presence, and which does not enact violence.

Although Sebald's use of the term 'nature' may suggest a world devoid of humans and may appear to elevate the realm of nature as exemplary of a pristine original state that is devoid of violence, it is important to remember that for Sebald, as John Beck argues, nature does not represent a "benign non-human world" (76). Instead, I propose that when we take into account the difficult, but obviously valued, relationship between the narrator and Austerlitz, Sebald is not championing a world without humans but a world without human violence. Such a world is only possible if the light that originates from the ego, and which is illustrated by the vast projects of modern societies, is not allowed to radiate or, to rephrase this in temporal terms, if the presence of the ego is disturbed. However, the epoch of modernity did not adopt this vulnerable form of temporality; instead, it promoted knowledge as beneficiary to humankind through the implementation of its extensive social and economic enterprises.

For Sebald, "the relentless conquest of darkness" is epitomised by the vast economic, social and 'humanitarian' enterprises which were characteristic of the nineteenth-century (Rings 59). Turning to the herring trade in The Rings of Saturn, the narrator sees evidence of Western societies' desire to penetrate the perceived darkness of both non-Western societies and that of their own past. Sebald presents the herring industry as an example of the vast organisation systems that were implemented by societies in order to reap commercial benefits from nature through aligning it with the quest for light. Sebald's narrator recounts how the peculiar illuminating properties of the herring were investigated by two scientists in a time "when projects for the total illumination of our cities were everywhere afoot" (58). Although this eccentric
scientific quest ultimately failed, it symbolically represents modern societies' desire to illuminate all spheres of life and thus to achieve a conquering overall perspective in order to affirm presence. The insertion of a grainy photograph of an illustration that depicts an indistinct city street—which is lined with electric lights and where it is difficult to perceive exact detail—reflects Sebald's own scepticism with regard to such illuminating projects (58). For Sebald, projects of light are too intimately connected with projects of conquest, as aptly illustrated by the link that he establishes between the egocentric desire to render the world and the Other known, and the colonial enterprise.

The declared aim of the Belgian colonial enterprise "to break through the darkness in which whole peoples still dwelt, and to mount a crusade in order to bring this glorious century of progress to the point of perfection" produced "scarcely a darker chapter" of European history (118), as the narrator of The Rings of Saturn concludes. The light that the Europeans brought to Africa was a self-sustaining source of illumination that buoyed their own sense of superiority and provided vital commercial and trade benefits. Sebald includes a photograph of an illustration of a group of Belgian officials who are attending a banquet to celebrate the construction of the railway (122). Gathered round a lantern, the group solely consists of European officials and conspicuously absent is the colonial other. While it is Sebald's narrator who queries the fate of the officially unacknowledged colonial other, he, like the official photograph of the colonial enterprise's success, does not re-present the colonial other. However, the narrator's failure, unlike that of the photographs, is an attempt to refrain from assuming the sovereignty to authoritatively re-present an Other—whether through stereotype or, as in the case of the photograph, through assuming the colonial other's insignificance as evident in their symbolic absence from its frame. In The Rings of Saturn, Sebald concludes that modern societies' economic and colonial enterprises projected a self-sustaining light that affirmed presence at the expense of the Other. Moreover, as the narrator of Austerlitz observes, so entrenched is the belief in the illuminating projects of modern societies that when we turn to face a landscape that "perhaps [was] a place of water meadows in the past" we find "now the reflected light from the blast furnaces of a gigantic iron foundry" (37). In turn, this light source reflects the assumed progress of Western industrial societies which considered it their noble burden to conquer space and people alike. For modern societies and the ego, there can be thus no encounter with the external world which is
not illuminated by its own perspective. This meant that during the period of widespread Western imperial expansion whole groups of people were 'translated' by colonial discourse into known and thus non-threatening others, demonstrating the underlying premise of the ego's affirmation of ontological presence that "our relation with the other certainly consists in wanting to comprehend him" ("Is Ontology Fundamental?" 6).

In Austerlitz Sebald's inclusion of a single external detail—an illuminated light bulb in his description of the trade fair where Austerlitz's mother is forced to wait before being transported to Theresienstadt—links Nazism with the "light projected by a universal knowledge" (Levinas, "Peace" 163). Recollecting the trade fair, Vera, Austerlitz's nanny, recalls how the entrance was "faintly illuminated by a single electric light bulb" (252). Like the many other seemingly insignificant details in Sebald's works, this single light bulb acts as a cue that triggers a series of associations which, in this specific example, link the Nazi Regime to an entire network of light symbolism. Austerlitz's father's recollections of the Nürnberg Rally, as recounted by Vera, describe the "overawed spectators [who] witness the Führer's aeroplane descending slowly to earth" (239). Borrowing images reminiscent of Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film, Triumph des Willens (Triumph of the Will), Austerlitz's father's account symbolically links Adolf Hitler's bird's-eye view with the systematic and wide-spread growth of the Nazi Regime which infiltrated both Germany's public and private spheres. The breadth and all-encompassing vision of the Nazi regime is bitterly observed by Austerlitz's father when he recalls the production of a boiled sweet which at its centre contained a "raspberry-coloured swastika" (237). From heavy industry to the manufacturing of children's sweets, Sebald depicts a German nation that reorganised its production in accordance with the intoxicating vision of the Nazi regime which, according to Vera, affected the German people with "a kind of euphoria, such as one feels at high altitude" (249). For Sebald, a single light bulb epitomises the vision that the Nazi Regime projected to the German people—a vision which persuaded them that through following the 'light of reason' they too could experience the euphoria of an all-encompassing presence. The cost of this vision, as history tells us, was the systematic implementation of social policies that blinded the ego to its ethical responsibilities and thus also to the Other's plight.

Sebald's identification of specific historical events that epitomise the ego's desire for an omnipresent gaze is juxtaposed with his more metaphorical examination
of the modern era's conceptual preference for illusory worlds. In *Austerlitz*, Sebald builds on the treatise explored in *The Rings of Saturn* that light is the source of the ego's self-assurance in its own presence, and focuses on the ego's preference for reflections. In Levinas's philosophy, the ego's encounter with the world is like a reflection. Through vision, the ego produces a reflection of the exterior world which meets its own needs. Levinas's account of the ego is drawn from a Cartesian model of subjectivity which, as Drichel argues, is a "modern re-figuration of Plato's allegory of the cave" (192). Expanding on this parallel, Drichel explains that "where for Plato the Forms are the originals of which the elements in our everyday world are only the shadows, for Descartes it is the subject that is the primary and 'real' substance, while the external world, or object, is its secondary and derivative reflection" (192). In *Austerlitz*, the narrator inhabits a social environment where a Cartesian form of subjectivity, which Sebald symbolically associates with mirrors, holds sway. Entering Antwerp Centraal Station Waiting-Room, the narrator observes the "half-obscured mirrors" that surround the "few travelers [who] sat far apart, silent and motionless" (5). The narrator first notices Austerlitz because, unlike the other passengers, he did not stare apathetically into space. By contrast, the passengers that are surrounded by mirrors do not seek human contact and prefer a self-reflecting space that symbolically represents their grasp over the external world. Later in the novel, Austerlitz, upon entering a railway carriage, describes the other passengers "who were all looking out of the side windows of the train into the darkness, where there was nothing to be seen but a pallid reflection of the carriage where they sat" (375). In this example, Sebald draws on Plato's allegory of the cave and suggests that the shadows produced from a reflected light provide the ego with comfort and security. Moreover, the parallel that Drichel draws between Plato's cave and a Cartesian form of subjectivity suggests that the passengers' preference for the safety of a reflected environment over the uncertainties of turning into the carriage and encountering its occupants is also a preference for a mode of being which can tame the potential threat that exteriority poses to the ego's stronghold on presence.

In Sebald's prose mirror reflections are symbolic of the ego's process of assuming sovereignty over exteriority and thus "offer only the tale of a personal adventure, of a private soul, which returns incessantly to itself" (Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" 10). In *Austerlitz* the narrator sits "entranced" by the reflection of the fire in the window of Austerlitz's flat but he, nevertheless, remarks on
the "incomprehensibility of mirror images" (169). Breaking through his entrancement, the narrator of Austerlitz refuses to find comfort in a glow that emanates from presence. Similarly, at first Austerlitz himself is seduced by the stability that a reflected world affords him. Composing his work on architecture, Austerlitz ponders: "how secure have I felt seated at the desk in my house in the dark night, just watching the tip of my pencil in the lamplight following its shadow, as if of its own accord and with perfect fidelity" (172). Following the shadow of his pen, Austerlitz finds comfort in a world of reflections or, in Plato's terms, the shadowy enclosure of the cave. Throughout Austerlitz, McCulloh argues, there are various versions of 'false worlds' or deceptive realities, such as Austerlitz's "counterfeit childhood" in Wales, which provide the illusion of stability (Understanding Sebald 113). However, the protagonist and Austerlitz turn away from these 'false worlds' and, in terms of Plato's philosophy, they represent the select few who seek a higher wisdom: not the reflection of the object, but an encounter with the original form itself. This search for the original, however, cannot take place from presence: such wisdom and truth must somehow lie beyond presence and being. For Sebald, the light that shines forth from the ego's presence does not reveal the external world but leads both to further concealment and to the entrenchment of the ego in the present of its defences: its own personal adventure.

Primarily focusing on the conceptual and historical ramifications of modernity's marked 'present-consciousness,' Sebald, nonetheless, also addresses his protagonists' experience of time which, he suggests, is marked by temporal instability. They inhabit a world where they cannot use the present as a comprehensive point from which to measure the past and the future. Instead, they experience weariness and unease as their present moment is repeatedly subject to interruptions by a past that refuses to be subsumed. For this reason, Presner argues that "Austerlitz could be read as a history of the present, intimately connected to and motivated by the uncertainty and contingency of the German/Jewish remains of the catastrophic past" (271). Presner's paradoxical description of Austerlitz's temporality as a 'history of the present' encapsulates Sebald's protagonist's experience of the present as that which is subject to the past rather than able to subject the past to its gaze. Thus while at the turn of the twentieth century societies promoted human mastery over the external world through the conceptual conceit of an all-encompassing present moment, Sebald implies that societies at the turn of the twenty-first century must not repeat this error.
However, it remains increasingly uncertain if Sebald's protagonists, who are subject to an unstable, contingent and uncertain present moment, are anomalies among a majority who continue to abide by modernity's present-consciousness. Unlike this majority, Sebald's protagonists' gaze is radically foreshortened by evidence of a previous era's self-deceit. Strangely, and perhaps poetically, they encompass a present moment that is reminiscent of the positive potential that modernity's increased opportunity for mobility possessed. Through accidental encounters, they forge intimate relationships that suggest an era's mightiest projects do not lie in an ontologically stable present but in a temporality characterised by contingency. They find in the smallest of gestures—such as an accidental encounter or a publican's gesture of bidding his customers "good night" (Austerlitz 137)—evidence of the possibility for ethical relationships. These examples of "everyday actions of generosity or goodwill towards the other," for Levinas, exemplify that "even the smallest and most commonplace gestures […] bear witness to the ethical" ("Interview" 68). Such interactions cannot emerge from the violent world of an ontologically stable present, but rather may tentatively arise from a present moment subject to contingency, difference and uncertainty. For Sebald, this is the forgotten potential of modernity's temporality which, as history shows us, was overlooked in the era's haste to consume the future under the guise of progress.

5.2 Future-Presence: A Misplaced Optimism

All of Sebald's works are characterised by an obsessive focus on the past. Thus, it seems contradictory to examine representations of the future in his work. Sebald himself acknowledged that he wrote in German in order to avoid the dictates of trends and in his own life he avoided acquiring the latest commodities, such as computers.36 Like Sebald's representation of present-presence, then, his discourse on future-presence is historicised. His examination, and subsequent critique, of the ego's future consciousness is thus staged from the perspective of modernity's time-consciousness. He depicts the consequences of the ego's mastery over the future through focusing on the rapid technological and social developments which have shaped modern societies. Nevertheless, it remains questionable what role the future can play in an era

36 In the Symposium which honoured Sebald's contribution to literature, Arthur Lubow observes that "most of modern life repelled him." See, http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/sebaldsympos_sp02.htm
characterised by its preoccupation with the present. However, if we read Sebald's representation of the violence of presence through Levinas's essay "The Old and the New," we find it is not that a discourse on the future is absent at the turn of the century; rather, as both works diagnose, the future was so thoroughly consumed by the present it was difficult to identify as future.

In "The Old and the New," Levinas argues that humans are characterised by their desire for the new. However, the new—which Levinas equates with the modern—is not a novelty that exists outside of human knowledge and challenges the ego. Rather,

The novelty of the modern is understood as the supreme freedom referring to all possibilities, to all the acquisitions of European civilization, reuniting all types of knowledge, and interpreted as progress toward absolute knowledge knowing itself absolute and synonymous with Spirit. (126)

The freedom that Levinas refers to is that of an ego which can assert its mastery over the external world and encounter nothing that can trouble its presence. In turn, the ego's mastery is made possible by knowledge which is the product of intentional consciousness. Levinas's references to progress and Spirit connect the ego's mode of synchronising time with a Hegelian account of progressive time. In his philosophy, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel presents time as a linear continuum which charts the progress of the 'world spirit' towards its ultimate goal, the truth of self-certainty. Of central importance to Hegel's philosophy is the assumption that the new or the future confirms that "World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom" (402). The future or the new do not challenge the ego's presence because, in accordance with Hegel's philosophy, they take their place in the triumphant narrative of the progressive unfolding of human freedom, where "freedom, by definition, is self-knowledge" (402). European civilisation, as Levinas indicates, is evidence in Hegel's temporal framework that humans are moving closer and closer to the attainment of absolute knowledge or full-consciousness. Levinas's use of specific Hegelian terms to describe the modern suggests a conceptualisation of time where the future does not disturb the ego's present but, rather, represents the advanced state of the ego who can convert the formerly unknown into knowledge. The new or modern cannot threaten the ego because it is experienced as though it came from the ego who sits at the head of a linear continuum of progressive time. Thus for Levinas the opposition between the old and the new is converted by the ego into a unity: "Reminiscence and imagination
secure the synchrony and unity of what, in experience bound to time, was doomed to
the difference between the old and the new" (125). The overall effect of the ego's
mastery over the external world is that "the new as modern is the fully arranged state
of the self and world" (125). Both the ego and modern societies incorporate
experiences of the new into a narrative, frequently a progress-orientated account that
supports presence. Thus we can see that Sebald's examination of modernity's
experience of the future in his works is difficult to identify because the new or the
modern is swiftly incorporated by the ego under the auspices of progress into a
synchronised mode of time that affirms presence.

For Sebald, modernity's radical optimism that the future was at its disposal is
exemplified by the facades presented by its monumental buildings. Sebald's
descriptions of public buildings support Austerlitz's treatise that the architectural style
of the capitalist era is characterised by a "compulsive sense of order and the tendency
towards monumentalism" (44). According to David Frisby, in modernity the
collective consciousness of societies is embedded in its "monumental architectural
representations" (9). In turn, this consciousness—which embodies rational planning
and the projection of mastery over the new as exhibited by monumental structures—
can be understood as a macrocosm of the ego. Such buildings illustrate that the new is
not to be feared but can be contained and organised into a system that reflects the
mastery and advanced state of progress of society. An example of the symbolic
function of monumental buildings is evident in *Austerlitz* when Austerlitz recounts to
the narrator how the "boundless optimism" of the Belgian people, who believed they
were "about to become a great new economic power" (9), motivated their leader, King
Leopold, to commission the construction of a number of public buildings. Austerlitz
further explains, "it was the personal wish of King Leopold, under whose auspices
such apparently inexorable progress was being made, that the money suddenly and
abundantly available should be used to erect public buildings which would bring
international renown to his aspiring state" (9–10). Antwerp Centraal Railway station,
thus, as Austerlitz observes, far exceeded any utilitarian function and was intended to
represent the power and authority of a country that embodied the optimism of
modernity. The dome structure of the railway station, which Austerlitz remarks upon,
resembles that found in rail transport's successor, the airport, where according to
David Punter high ceilings are not "practically essential" but "suit symbolic norms"
(96). Like a Church, Antwerp station, as Austerlitz indicates to the narrator, displays
its deities on the wall: "mining, industry, transport, trade and capital" (13), and positioned above all of these is a clock. While Antwerp station was intended to symbolise the Belgians' harness of progress, for Austerlitz it suggests the institutionalisation of a model of progressive time where humans are positioned secondary to modern societies' economic and trade aspirations.

Embracing and presenting their facades as the embodiment of progress, modernity's monumental public buildings, for Sebald, signal the increasing isolation and alienation of people. The Palace of Justice in Brussels, which Austerlitz describes as an "architectural monstrosity," is meant to house and represent "sanctioned authority," but is far from user-friendly (38–39). The twisting labyrinth design of the building, which "contains corridors and stairways leading nowhere" (39), does not allow the ordinary citizen to penetrate and thus, most importantly, to seek redress with the authorities. Attempting "to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign-system of the surrounding city" ("Postmodernism" 80–81), modernist buildings, like the Palace of Justice, as Fredric Jameson's argument reveals, also demonstrated an "elitism and authoritarianism" which overawed the ordinary subject (54). While the turn of the twentieth century's monumental modernist buildings do not produce what Jameson describes as postmodern architecture's "alarming disjunction between the body and its built environment" ("Postmodernism" 83–84), they do precipitate the subject's growing social alienation. For Sebald, the sense of self-affirmation which the ego experiences alongside such monumental structures comes at the price of human contact.

Sebald's examination of modernity's experience of the future-present reveals an increased objectification of the ego's relationships: whether with time, objects or even people. The future—the new—is symbolically converted into an object that the ego can possess. For Sebald, the ego's taste for the new or modern in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is channelled through excessive consumption and the commodification of social relationships. According to Karl Marx's diagnosis of the capitalist era, "the devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things" (Economic 37). When the narrator of The Rings of Saturn visits Somerleyton Hall, his description of entrepreneur Merton Peto's residence turns into an inventory of the goods Peto used to furnish his "princely palace" (33). Now in a derelict state, the rooms present the narrator with a "disused and dispirited impression" (35), however, as the narrator observes, in its heyday the
residence, equipped with the latest lighting technology, shone as a beacon of what the entrepreneurial spirit could achieve. At the time of the Hall's construction, England's economy became increasingly centred on industry and the mass production of commodities. For Marx, such an economy "conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual producers" (*Capital I* 68). The commodities that furnish Peto's estate bear no mark of their production; instead, they serve as objects that confirm his status. Like neatly arranged botanical and zoological collections, Peto's collection represents a systematic attempt by a man to embrace the new and categorise his possessions in accordance with their status-value in order to confirm his own presence.

For Sebald, an external world that is reduced to things that the ego can possess and itemise informs the capitalist era's mass industrial projects. Examining the herring and silkworm trades in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's narrator notes that both projects infiltrated education programmes in schools. Through educational films and pamphlets that depicted the respective industries, modern societies indoctrinated their youth with the idea that the external world, and in particular the natural realm, was a resource at their disposal. However, such films obscured what Daniel Pick identifies as the close relationship between industrial production and calculated death which arose in the 1860s, revealing "a new systematic mechanisation of death in both military and industrial killing machinery" (185). By contrast, Sebald highlights this relationship through asking us to consider the experience of the herring and through describing in detail the cruel method used by humans to kill silkworms. In *Austerlitz*, Sebald suggests that people's preference for the new and their belief that it represents progress produces its most devastating consequences when the relationship between industrial production and calculated death is applied to humans. Overlooking the extensive plan which depicts the organisation of the Theresienstadt Ghetto system, Austerlitz notes the inclusion of a section on the construction of "primitive factories" which were to produce a vast variety of commodities with "a view to generating actual profit" (333). Interestingly, the ground plans of Theresienstadt, which Sebald includes in a diagram over two pages, resemble a star-shaped fortress (328–29).

Sebald thus insists that the defence structure of the fortress is not only emblematic of individuals but also of societies, and in this case, a Nazi German society that sought to eradicate an entire population of people. Providing extensive detail on how the Jewish people were to be managed, these plans reduce the residents of the ghetto to itemised
objects that can be utilised, transported and ultimately disposed of once they had served their use. In both works, Sebald suggests that the ego's embracing of the modern, and in particular a market economy which reduces the ego's interactions in the external world to acts of possession, ultimately includes the reduction of people to objects.

Railway stations, the site of so many possibilities for human contact, are places in Sebald's prose that house the human cost of a society's increasing regulation and thus objectification of human relationships. At the turn of the twentieth century the rail network was attributed with conquering space for the benefit of people. Instead of "exemplify[ing] the emancipatory promise of capitalist modernity" (14), as Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman argue, railway stations, Sebald suggests, lead to the increasing isolation of people. In his descriptions of railway stations, Austerlitz refers to London's Liverpool station as an "entrance to the underworld" (180) and recounts his impression of Paris's Gare d'Austerlitz that it swallowed entering trains (406). Andrew Thacker argues that railway stations, and in particular the underground, are "a place that is somehow not a place, where the opening to voluminous numbers of other people rarely results in strangers being comforted, but rather with a further alienation" (119). Reading Austerlitz's sombre and menacing descriptions of stations through Thacker's argument, we find that for Sebald, the many railway stations that were built in the nineteenth-century, and which were intended to epitomise modern societies' progressive achievements, alienated people. Eshel advances Thacker's argument a step further. He finds in Sebald's descriptions of the bodily remains that emerge from the sites of former railways today evidence of the extreme consequences of social alienation: people have been reduced to "human material" that must be disposed of to make way for the new (87).

Traversing the physical terrain of East Anglia, Sebald's protagonist stumbles across the ruins of a secret research site. Emblematic of the modern desire to harness progress for the purposes of military defence, the site resembles "the remains of our own civilization after its extinction in some future catastrophe" (237). While the secret of the experiments undertaken in this place remain censored, its temple-like ruins suggest a Babylonian intention of "transcending the profane" (236). However, before the narrator's eyes lies evidence of this vanity: "ahead lay nothing but destruction" (235). Such a site embodies the modern desire to harness progress at all costs. In the place of the optimism that marked the turn of the twentieth century's
triumphant pursuit of progress, Sebald's narrator is disturbed by a growing sentiment of "emptiness" (234). The haunting site bears witness to what Lawrence Langer identifies as the Holocaust's "ghostly legacy" (that) the issue of human advance cannot be separated from the idea of a total defeat of the human" (92). No humans inhabit this place, only a distressed and frightened hare which is the only witness to the final result of a progress-driven temporality: an external world devoid of people.

Observing that "whenever one is imagining a bright future, the next disaster is just around the corner" (226), the narrator of The Rings of Saturn demonstrates a pessimistic counterpoint to modernity's optimism. In both works, Sebald warns that a society that uses consumption as a model for human relationships may find in the new a reflection of progress but also creates a sociality where people have faded into the background. Infatuated with the new, modernity, as the next section argues, predominantly regarded the past as an object at its disposal, a perspective that Sebald suggests continues to govern relationships with the past today.

5.3 Past-Presence: Preservation and Wilful Forgetting

According to Jens Brockmeier, "memory and remembrance are the subject, method, and goal of Sebald's writing" (347). However, despite Sebald's obvious reverence for the past, like the future and present, the past falls under his intense scrutiny. Sebald is suspicious of any account of the past that arises from a totalistic thought structure that erases heterogeneity. In Levinas's philosophy, accounts of the past are a product of the ego or presence and, as such, are recounted and represented in a way that discounts heterogeneity and produces unity. Historiography, Michel de Certeau argues, "endlessly presupposes homogenous unities […] and cannot give way to the vertigo that critical examination of these fragile boundaries might bring about: historiography does not want to know this" (343). Sebald's works illustrate how the ego's all-encompassing perspective, a characteristic of Enlightenment thought, constructs the past in order to affirm presence and keep vertigo at bay. In his examination of the role that the past plays in affirming collective and personal identities, David Lowenthal argues that in the late-eighteenth century the past "came to be cherished as a heritage that validated and exalted the present" (xvi). Modernity's present time-consciousness paradoxically relies on the past to confirm its own exalted position at the head of a linear continuum of progress. This particular view of the past, as a construct of present needs, continues to hold sway as Lowenthal's provocatively entitled work, The
Past is a Foreign Country, reveals: "The past is a foreign country whose features are shaped by today's predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges" (xvii).

In The Rings of Saturn, Sebald reveals that accounts of the past are constructed from the vantage point of an all-encompassing perspective. Visiting the historical memorial site of the Battle of Waterloo, the narrator enters the Waterloo Panorama. "Housed in an immense domed rotunda," Sebald's narrator occupies an observing position at the centre of the panorama where the battle can be viewed "in every direction" (124). The structure of the panorama thus offers the viewer the illusion of a total and unified account of the Battle of Waterloo. However, for the narrator the panorama reveals that "the representation of history [...] requires a falsification of perspective" and, as he explains, this perspective entails that "we, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was" (125). Offering a panoramic representation of history, the memorial site, like the ego, constructs the past from the perspective of the present. Forming the "highlights of history" (256), battles, as Sebald wryly observes, are commemorated by nations in order that the past can serve the present whether that be "to secure the pedigrees of existing rulers [...] or to promote patriotic zeal, or to sanction religious or revolutionary causes" (Lowenthal 235). The memorial site of the Battle of Waterloo exemplifies Paul Ricoeur's argument that "what makes a monument suspect [...] is its obvious finality, its commemoration of events that its contemporaries—especially the most powerful among them—judged worthy of being integrated into the collective memory" (Time 118). In line with this perspective, the very real human cost of battles, the dead, are notably absent, as Sebald's narrator aptly asks, "Whatever became of the corpses and mortal remains?" (125). The 'falsification of perspective' produced by memorial sites mirrors the ego's construction of a past-presence that confirms its authority and negates heterogeneity.

The various references Sebald makes to theatricality and performance in his descriptions of the memorial site emphasise the process of construction behind the production of an overall perspective of the past. Upon first approaching the site, the narrator observes a group of "mummers" in Napoleonic costume surrounding the otherwise "deserted stage" of the site (124). Thus, before even viewing the memorial, the protagonist's descriptions suggest that the presentation of the past ultimately takes the form of a spectacle or performance. The description of the panorama as a "circus-
like structure" only adds to Sebald's implicit suggestion that the representation of history is characterised by theatrical properties (125). Like a play, the representation of history is performed for an audience and presents a story-like version of past events. The implied audience to the theatre of history, Sebald argues, is the current-day society that finds in such theatre support, legitimacy and confirmation of its present state. For Sebald, such so-called historical sites and monuments do not reveal the past as it was but instead reveal the present societies' version of the past. This, in turn, means it is vital to question the assumptions and interests behind any act of preservation.

Adhering to the view that the past is a construct of the present, Huyssen warns that the present's translation of the past has consequences: "inevitably, every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence" (4). The task of Sebald's works is to reveal the 'dimension of betrayal, forgetting and absence' which informs every present moment's account of the past, including his own. To do so, Sebald exhibits what Huyssen identifies as the "time-consciousness of the late twentieth century" which, as Huyssen explains, "involves the no less perilous task of taking responsibility for the past" (16). For Sebald, this responsibility involves revealing the motivations behind the present's account of the past and the many unacknowledged absences that haunt its structure. While on the surface preservation appears to restore the past, Sebald suggests that what Huyssen names the current "musealizing culture industry" transforms the past through its acts of preservation (24). The decision of what a society preserves from its past is made in accordance with present needs and also ultimately ignores or overlooks other areas of the past that were not considered worthy candidates for preservation. Sebald's analysis of various commemoration institutions and archival resources uncovers preservation's destructive properties.

Visiting Terezín, the town where the Theresienstadt Ghetto was located, Austerlitz hopes to understand what happened to his mother. However, instead of providing access to the past, the many photographs of closed doors which are inserted in the text suggest the unwillingness of the town to divulge its past. Nevertheless, Austerlitz discovers the Ghetto Museum, an anomaly of preservation which, unlike the memorial site of the Battle of Waterloo, has preserved a past that does not legitimise the current society but indicates its troubled and shameful history. However, Sebald presents the museum's preservation practices as first and foremost
protecting the interests of the present generation. Thus, as the narrator learns, not only are out of town visitors rare but the people of Terezín do not visit the museum. Later, when Austerlitz leaves the museum, he observes that all of the passengers on the bus are asleep as though lulled into an insensate, and comforting, sleep that the horrors of the past, which have been taken care of by the museum, cannot disturb. Unlike Levinas's account of the vigilant wakefulness of the insomniac, the passengers are immune to a past that would call them into question. The museum not only reassures the people of Terezín that the past is confined to the past and cannot interrupt their present serenity but it also dictates where and even when the past may be consumed. Austerlitz's visit to the museum is cut short when the caretaker informs him that she must soon close. It is perhaps for this reason that Austerlitz remarks that "whenever I think of the museum in Terezín now, […] I see the framed ground-plan of the star-shaped fortifications, […] the model of a world made by reason and regulated in all conceivable respects" (280). The museum, Sebald implies, although attempting to honour the past, is borne from the same model of time or totalistic thought that informed the constructions of fortresses and the Nazi regime.

Displaying detailed maps, objects and registers of the dead, the museum presents an all-encompassing representation of the past. But despite the almost obsessive detail of the museum's display, the victims are virtually absent. While the visitor can learn "the origins and places of death of the victims" and see "items such as handbags, belt buckles, clothes brushes and combs," the dead, as Austerlitz concludes, "far exceeded my comprehension" (279). As Richard Crownshaw convincingly argues, the museum "can represent Jews only in death or in terms of abstract, universalized identity, which actually facilitated death, thereby homogenizing the otherwise heterogeneous nature of Jewish culture and society" (225). The universalised identity of the victims as Jewish was the defining characteristic that led to their death under the Nazi regime. The museum continues to represent and categorise the victims in terms of this generic identity and thus continues to perpetuate the logic of the Nazi regime. Like the objects which fascinate Austerlitz when he comes across the Antikos Bazaar's display window, the victims are given their identity through the concealed and ultimately unifying perspective of the observer. Sebald includes a photograph of Antikos Bazaar's display where the reflection of the observer—in this case Austerlitz, or even Sebald?—is indistinctly rendered in the window (276). If we apply the Bazaar's shop window's lesson to the
museum, we should not treat the museum's representation of the past as final but as the culmination of the perspective of the creators of the museum. Like a shop, the museum translates the past into something more easily consumed by the present generation.

 Responsible for constructing homogeneous accounts of a nation's past, the preservation practices of archives, in particular state-funded archives, fall under Sebald's scrutiny in *Austerlitz*. Upon visiting the Grande Bibliothèque in Paris, Austerlitz remarks that its "monumental dimensions [...] were evidently inspired by the late President's wish to perpetuate his memory" (386). Thus, like Antwerp Station, the monumentalism evident in the Grande Bibliothèque's structure is a product of one man's optimistic vision of his national identity. Beneath the surface of the library's dominating presence, Austerlitz discovers an architectural design, which instead of facilitating the public's access to the library's resources, discourages the visitor. As Austerlitz observes of the library, "both in its outer appearance and inner constitution [it is] unwelcoming if not inimical to human beings, and runs counter, on principle, one might say, to the requirements of any true reader" (386). From entry into the building, which requires the visitor to illogically climb stairs only to climb back down, to the security measures, which require an elaborate procedure of requesting books and waiting in queues, the Grande Bibliothèque seeks to exclude the visitor. The library illustrates a key characteristic of the archive, which according to Long, is the way in "which humans become subservient to the demands of the apparatus" (*W. G. Sebald* 10). The building's "Cartesian overall plan" (392), renders a site which, as Austerlitz emphasises, is supposed to "serve as the treasure-house of our entire literary history," subject to "constitutional instability" (393). While a Cartesian plan would seem to suggest that the library's rational and logical construction will facilitate its use, Sebald reminds the reader that such a model of thought has a long history of not acting in the best interests of humans. Unsurprisingly, the library proves unable to assist Austerlitz's search to discover his father's fate.

 In *Austerlitz*, Sebald's representation of the Grande Bibliothèque implies the violence and forgetting that, according to Derrida, is inherent in the archive. According to Jacques Derrida, archives rest on the principle of consignation which, he

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37 I am indebted to Richard Crownshaw's article "Reconsidering Postmemory: Photography, the Archive, and Post-Holocaust Memory in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*" for highlighting the connection between Derrida's theory of the archive and Sebald's representations of structures such as the Terezin museum.
explains, "aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (Archive 3). In order to create such an ideal configuration, the archive, which initially seeks to be a finite record of an infinite scope, must carry out selections, categorisations and inclusions which create an overall unity or perspective that does not permit heterogeneity. Thus we can see a direct reflection of the ego's violent mode of synchronising time and thought into an overall unity that supports its presence. However, in discouraging heterogeneity, the archive's content is limited and thus ultimately its own project self-contradictory, as Derrida argues: "the archive always works, and a priori, against itself" (12). Applying Derrida's theory of the archive to Austerlitz, Crownshaw emphasises that "the archive is as coterminous with the contents it will consume from its very 'commencement'" (220). Appropriately, the very physical construction of the Grande Bibliothèque exemplifies the archive's process of consumption.

During Austerlitz's visit to the library, Henri Lemoine, a librarian, strikes up a conversation with Austerlitz. One of their topics of conversation—"the dissolution, in line with the inexorable spread of processed data, of our capacity to remember"(398)—reflects the consuming practices of the archive, which in order to present an 'ideal configuration' or a unity where all relationships and materials are clearly defined, must incorporate and translate heterogeneous elements. Austerlitz and Lemoine's observation of current societies suggests that society's overall approach to the past, which is characterised by archival practices, encourages forgetting and leads to individuals replacing their unique memories with state-sanctioned versions. As their conversation continues from the vantage point of the library belvedere, Lemoine reveals that the foundations of the building itself conceal and encourage the forgetting of the past. Lemoine informs Austerlitz that "where this Babylonian library now rises, there stood until the end of the war an extensive warehousing complex to which the Germans brought all the loot they had taken from the homes of the Jews of Paris" (401). Lemoine's revelation emphasises the degree that the library is premised on an archival structure. The construction of the library, an archive which is meant to facilitate access to the past, involved the enforced concealing and consequential forgetting of the past. Now, the monumental building's foundations rest on a site that is symbolic of human suffering; it symbiotically feeds from the past, controlling how the past is represented to the public. Sebald concludes his treatise on the structure of the library with a seemingly insignificant reference to Austerlitz's observation that the
city lay "sparkling in the light of its lamps" (403). However, as in Sebald's earlier references to light and illumination, the glowing city of Paris recalls the violence enacted by a metaphysics of presence which the current society's archival practices have played a role in advancing.

Throughout both The Rings of Saturn and Austerlitz, Sebald draws the reader's attention to the areas of the past that have been forgotten. These events may have been forgotten because of the present's projection of a version of the past that meets its own needs, as in the case of memorial sites, or because of the traumatic nature of the past that the ego in an act of self-preservation represses, as in the case of Austerlitz's lost childhood. Like a fortress himself, Austerlitz refines his "defensive actions" in order to keep memories of his childhood at bay (198). In his academic research, Austerlitz does not venture beyond the nineteenth century and substitutes his personal past with a "compensatory memory" that is created by his "accumulation of knowledge" (198). Austerlitz's process of constructing a past that meets his present need for stability, and of utilising the logic of reason and totalistic thought in order to achieve this goal, recalls Levinas's account of the ego. However, as Austerlitz's search for his past emphasises, such a version of the past ultimately always proves unsatisfactory: the ego is left desiring more.

This desire for a past that is not a product of the present permeates Sebald's writing but, nevertheless, seems to lead to an impossible stalemate. If there are some events of the past that must not be forgotten but, that at the same time, if represented, risk being forgotten because of the structural violence of representation practices, how can we serve the dead without first serving our present needs? The specific context which traverses both Levinas's and Sebald's thought has made our desire for the past both pressing and at the same time insatiable: the Holocaust leads us to acknowledge, with Adorno, the impossibility of art after Auschwitz and our ethical obligation not to forget. It is this dilemma that shadows Sebald's critique of totalistic thought and a mode of being that begins with the present and ultimately the ego. Again and again we find in Sebald's prose oblique references to World War II that haunt his protagonists' present. They are examples of Sebald's form of "realism" which, according to Presner, "is not attempting to represent the reality of the past but rather to create a reality effect of the present in all its uncertainty and contingency" (270). For Eshel, the series of connections Sebald's prose establishes between modernity and the Holocaust leads to "a questionable teleology in which modernity is all too clearly
configured as necessarily leading to Theresienstadt" (88). In this chapter I have argued that Sebald is not suggesting that modernity per se led to the Holocaust but rather a particular model of time-consciousness, which produces a form of ontology that promotes the self's presence at the expense of the Other. "Modern man," as Levinas reminds us, is the "miracle of modern Western freedom unhindered by any memory or remorse, and opening onto a 'glittering future' where everything can be rectified" ("Ethics" 78), including human relationships. Sebald's examination of the violent temporal process through which the ego constructs its presence, has taken the form of a balance sheet that tallies the historical consequences that such a mode of being has had in modern societies. While this chapter has consisted of an inventory of the destruction that Sebald attributes to a synchronised form of time that begins with the ego, in Chapter Six I will examine how Sebald seeks to disturb this tradition through adopting the foundational tenet of Levinasian ethics: a form of time that begins with the Other.
The "traces of destruction" that scar the external worlds of *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* foreshadow Sebald's narrators' experience of an overwhelming sense of melancholy (*Rings* 3). Accusing W. G. Sebald's narrators of indulging in "melancholy narcissism," Peter Morgan argues that they fail to take "'responsible ownership' of the past" (92). By contrast, this chapter argues that it is, in fact, through their experience of melancholy that Sebald's narrators portray an ethical commitment to the past which is neither indulgent nor narcissistic. Overwhelmed by the experience of an "unconscious loss" (*Collected Papers* 155), which Sigmund Freud describes as a key characteristic of melancholy, Sebald's narrators are unable to translate their trauma into a "narrative of psychological recovery" (Ilsemann 303). Sebald's characters' inability to 'cure' their melancholy, however, is not due to the failure of the deep recesses of the unconscious to come to light; since, as Mark Ilsemann points out, *Austerlitz*, despite remembering his repressed memories, remains a melancholic figure (303–04).

Obscuring and thus at the same time negating the importance of attributing a personal source to his characters' melancholy, Sebald's representation of the condition, Ilsemann argues, "depsychologizes suffering, turning it into a universal condition of the modern age" (305). While, for Ilsemann, melancholy is symptomatic of a general malaise in society which, in turn, is symbolic of a perceived lack at the centre of modern existence, his argument that "an excess of rationalization" subjects humans to the "incomprehensible" and produces melancholy mirrors Levinas's model of an ego at home in the world who is interrupted by the Other and traumatised (305). Both Ilsemann and Levinas undertake a subtle shift: melancholy is no longer perceived as produced by a despairing mind wearily contemplating the violence it witnesses, but is a pre-condition of the subject's constitution. Throughout his works, Levinas associates an excess of rationalisation with particular historical events, for example, colonialism, war and genocide. Similarly, while Sebald is undoubtedly critical of modern society, his critique, as the preceding chapter has shown, concerns the various technological developments and social institutions that have aided, and indeed institutionalised, the sovereignty of the ego. Thus Sebald's focus is not the violence of societies *per se* but
the violence of societies that support the self's egoist endeavours. Despite adopting an ontological focus when examining the violent ramifications in society of the ego's mode of existence, the more pressing concern of Sebald's prose is to undertake an ethical enquiry into how this mode of being can be interrupted. Thus when Sebald highlights the trauma of individuals' existence in the modern world he is not attempting to present them as victims of social forces. Instead, Sebald's melancholic narrators display a guilty conscience which is not attributed to any action that they may have undertaken. Like a Levinasian ego, they are guilty and traumatised by a pre-conscious experience of melancholy which signifies their subjection and pre-original indebtedness to the Other. In this chapter I directly respond to those critics—such as Peter Morgan—who view Sebald's works as an appropriation of the victim's voice by arguing that the priority his works afford to ethics over ontology is an attempt to prevent such appropriations taking place.

Sebald's characters' experience of melancholy is pivotal for tracing an ethical impetus in his works. While he, like Janet Frame, re-presents physical manifestations of the ego's vulnerability, such as vertigo, Sebald's primary indicator of the ego's corporeal sensibility is the traumatic effects of melancholy on the subject. In turn, through signifying the ego's vulnerability, Sebald undermines the ego's mastery of alterity and reveals what according to Critchley lies at the heart of Levinas's philosophy: "a subject of melancholia" (E-P-S 195). Austerlitz, perhaps the most melancholic of all of Sebald's characters, repeatedly remonstrates against the arbitrary logic of clock-time—which is symbolic of the ego's construction of modalised presents into a linear continuum—and, in turn, describes experiences of time that do not adhere to conventional time. Austerlitz's experiences of non-linear time, which are marked by confusion and disturbance, suggest that in a traumatised state he encounters a mode of time that does not originate from the self. In Levinasian terms, such examples of unsettling experiences of time through undermining the ego's sovereignty over the present propose that subjectivity is not a feat of the ego but, instead, is determined by the subject's indebtedness to the Other. Thus it is possible to read Sebald's protagonists' predilection towards melancholy through the lens of ethics as a preconscious presentiment of their responsibility for the Other.

Like Levinas, Sebald enacts in his prose a "laying down by the ego of its sovereignty" in order that "we find ethics" ("Ethics" 85). This is evident in his self-reflexive and self-critical use of representational devices as discussed in Chapter Four.
and, as will be discussed in this chapter, in his narrators' melancholic condition. In order to explore the ethical impetus informing Sebald's thematic representations of the ego and the Other, this chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, 'A Melancholy Ego' I examine the predominance of three Levinasian tropes in Sebald's works: weariness with being; the horror of the 'there is;' and the traumatised subject. Sebald's literary evocations of these Levinasian themes highlight the vulnerability of the ego and the inadequacy of the subject as an origin that can comprehensively define the external world and its relationship to others. The second section of this chapter responds to the question implicitly posed at the end of the first: if the ego is not unified to begin with and thus is not the primary mode for understanding its relationships with others, what precedes the ego? In response to this question, I examine how Sebald's prose affirms the importance of ethics before ontology through using alternative Levinasian tropes: the trace in *The Rings of Saturn* and the ego's relationship with an unknown Other in *Austerlitz*. Despite adopting divergent approaches, both novels prioritise the ego's asymmetrical relationship with the Other—whereby it is the ego that is subject to the Other. In doing so, Sebald highlights the ego's indebtedness to the Other. Moreover, like the melancholic's loss, the ego's debt cannot be compensated for and thus we find in Sebald's works what Levinas calls a mauvaise conscience: an identity that recoils before its affirmation and one that is constituted through its subjection to a time dedicated to ethical responsibility.

In the third, and final, section of this chapter, I address what sort of possibilities Sebald's works hold for ethical forms of remembrance. In both works discussed here, he develops metaphors for representing the ego's relationship with the past: enigmatic references to silk in the case of *The Rings of Saturn* and the ephemeral passage of moths' flights in *Austerlitz*. Underlying these metaphors' message that the ego's relationship with the past is governed by uncertainty and contingency rests the haunting legacy of the Holocaust. Instead of offering his reader a restored past, Sebald performs a postmodernist sleight of hand through suggesting that the present generation's relationship to the past requires an ongoing "process of negotiation" (Jay 104). Thus Sebald's re-presentations of an uncertain past are attempts to signal the ego's indebtedness through emphasising that we can never assume that we can be done with the past once and for all or, to borrow a metaphor from *Austerlitz*, through requiring that the ego undergo an infinite game of patience.
6.1 A Melancholy Ego

Observing the fishermen who erect makeshift tents along East Anglia's coastline, the narrator of The Rings of Saturn expresses his doubt that "these men sit by the sea all day and all night so as not to miss the time when the whiting pass" (52). Instead, the narrator draws his own conclusion of the fishermen's solitary pastime: "they just want to be in a place where they have the world behind them, and before them nothing but emptiness" (52). The general sentiment of weariness with existing which the narrator attributes to the fishermen also pervades his own contemplative mood. From the opening pages of The Rings of Saturn, which depict the narrator's experience of "emptiness" (3), Sebald proposes that it is not a fear of death that preoccupies his narrator but fear of existence itself. This feature of Sebald's work is important because, when interpreted through a Levinasian framework, the narrator's fear of existence challenges the value that Western philosophy attributes to being. Sebald implicitly asks whether the ego's sovereignty and European civilisation's evolution towards self-certainty is cause for self-congratulation or cause of our untold weariness. Unable to break free of existence, Sebald's characters reveal that the ego is an insufficient ground from which to begin to understand the ego's primordial relationship with others, which precedes the ego's sovereign and synthesising grasp.

Reading Sebald's representations of his characters' weariness with being through Levinas's earlier work—in particular Existence and Existents—suggests that despite his characters' attempts to master the world, they experience fatigue at always being tied to being. According to Levinas, "in weariness existence is like the reminder of a commitment to exist, with all the seriousness and harshness of an unrevokable contract. One has to do something, one has to aspire after and undertake" (Existence 24). Enchained to being, Sebald's characters experience the compulsion to exist but are overwhelmed by a sense of weariness at their own "fraudulent showmanship" (Rings 86). The ego's weariness with being, as Lingis explains, highlights that "in the core of an existent [ego]" rests "nostalgia for escape" (Translator's Introduction 10). Integral to the ego's existence, the desire for transcendence or escape cannot occur through measures undertaken by the ego, since it is always enchained to its own being. The tragic qualities of the ego's enchainment reveal that the present, the temporal designation of its "self-reference" (Existence 87), is also the site of its "positive enchainment to one's self" (Existence 87). Unable to escape the self, the writer and historian always approach their subject from their unique speaking-position.
and thus are guilty of usurping the Other's position and of committing a trespass. Therefore, to borrow Peter Morgan's terminology, "responsible ownership of the past" (92), or our indebtedness to the past Other, cannot be conducted from the standpoint of the ego or through the Said; instead, it is these sites which require interruption. The narrator's experience of weariness with being undermines the sovereignty attributed to ontology in Western thought through indicating that the ego by itself cannot transcend meaning.

While the notion of fear of death is a familiar trope that is frequently represented as emblematic of human existence—and which is perhaps best epitomised through Martin Heidegger's terminology as anxiety of being-toward-death—fear of existence is rarely construed as an elemental or integral part of being. Instead, fear of existence is represented in literature as the secondary by-product of psychosis, social conditions or an experience that occurs during a particular stage of human development. In all of these examples the fear of existence is either overcome or outgrown. The one exception to viewing fear of existence as a short-lived or exceptional experience is the philosophy of existentialism. For Jean-Paul Sartre, the founder of existentialist philosophy, sheer existence is essentially meaningless: pure being is a "limiting-concept and as such cannot be grasped" (Being 83). However, nor can being be escaped; the subject is thus fearful of existence and, to borrow Sartre's specific metaphor for this experience, suffers nausea. This then raises the question: is Sebald's characters' experience of weariness or fear of existence existentialist in nature? This would mean, in accordance with Sartre's philosophy, that Sebald's characters' always exist in an antagonistic relationship with others, who remain the fundamental entity from which the subject distinguishes itself.

For Sartre, "Conflict is the original meaning of Being-for-others" (Being 364). Caught in a fluctuating process of gazing upon the other as an object and having that gaze returned as the other, in turn, reduces the subject to an object; the subject's relationship with the other, Sartre argues, is antagonistic. According to Mary Warnock, Sartre's concept of Being-for-others can produce "three different patterns of behaviour": first, the subject may consent to being an object; second, the subject is indifferent; and third, the subject "attempt[s] the immediate appropriation of the Other by violence" (86). However, as Warnock concludes, "none of these devices can satisfy me in the end" (86). In The Rings of Saturn Sebald is critical of discourses that attempt to appropriate the Other through a form of conceptual violence, pointing both
to the impossibility of subduing the Other through this technique and, moreover, to the undesirability of such measures. Far from being indifferent, the novel as a whole is concerned with exploring a relationship with the Other that is not predicated on the subject's violent reductions. Thus Sebald's characters' experience of weariness with being is not a form of existentialist anguish at the "hell" which, according to Sartre, "is other people" (No Exit 47). Instead, Sebald's representations of 'weariness of being' resemble Levinas's own earlier work on the subject. For Levinas, unlike for Sartre, this weariness not only reveals the ego's insufficiency as a ground to explain its relationship with others but also proposes the ethical significance of the ego's pre-original relationship with the Other, which occurs in a time beyond the self's gaze.

The ego's weariness with being produces both a desire to evade its own existence and "announces the horror of il y a" (Thomas 43). The ego's encounter with the il y a or the 'there is' is a confrontation with "the most indeterminate and qualified beingness, almost nothing, which we experience as an anonymous rumbling and rustling in the background of the world, inspiring horror and vertigo" (Peperzak 157). Tied to being, the ego can never overcome the horror of the 'there is' which reveals its enchainment and the impossibility of thus ever being truly free. Behind every act through which the ego attempts to master alterity is the anonymous rustling of the 'there is' which serves as a painful reminder to the ego that they cannot transcend being altogether.

The anonymous rustling of the 'there is' is represented in Sebald's works through his characters' experiences of vertigo. The importance of the experience of vertigo in Sebald's works is reflected by the number of his characters who suffer from the condition and by the title of his first prose work Schwindel. Gefühle—translated as Vertigo for the English edition's title. While in English vertigo refers to the experience of dizziness, in German Schwindel also refers to an act of deception. Although the translation of Schwindel into vertigo in the English edition of The Rings of Saturn fails to convey this second meaning, the text, nevertheless, retains episodes, such as the narrator's experience of horror before a Levinasian 'there is,' which preserve the notion of vertigo as an act of deception. In The Rings of Saturn vertigo is not only an experience of dizziness but also refers to the narrator's act of deception as he attempts to postpone a confrontation with the 'there is.'

Becoming lost during his pilgrimage along the English coast, the narrator of The Rings of Saturn is "overcome by a feeling of panic" (172). Suddenly finding
himself on a country lane, the narrator recounts how "the horizon was spinning all around as if I had jumped off a merry-go-round" (172). Sebald imbues his narrator's experience of vertigo with symbolic significance through juxtaposing the narrator's account of getting lost with a dream the narrator has months later of being lost again on Dunwich Heath. In his dream, the narrator describes reaching a vantage point: "I saw the labyrinth, [...] a pattern simple in comparison with the tortuous trail I had behind me, but one which I knew in my dream, with absolute certainty, represented a cross-section of my brain" (173). Although the narrator may continue on his physical journey across the English landscape and thus appears to break free of the labyrinth-like heath, symbolically he can never escape his own mind. Tied to being, the narrator cannot find transcendence through his own thoughts and, as a consequence, he experiences his enchainment as the dizzying experience of vertigo which, in Levinasian terms, heralds the anonymous rustling reminder of the 'there is.' Appropriately, the narrator's account of his dream ends with the sighting of "a solitary old man with a wild mane of hair [who] was kneeling beside his dead daughter" (174). The appearance of King Lear, who perhaps of all Shakespeare's characters best epitomises weariness with being, emphasises the narrator's own fatigue and longing for release.

'Escaping' the labyrinth-like heath, the narrator visits a friend in the village of Middleton but is still overcome by a longing for escape from his very self. At his friend's home, the narrator recounts how "I instantly felt as if I lived or had once lived there, in every respect precisely as he does" (183). The narrator's identification with the house is an attempt to evade his enchainment to being and, through usurping his friend's place, occupy a site that is not tied to being. Thus, in this encounter, through an act of deception which is carried out against his self, the narrator attempts to evade being. However, the narrator fails to carry out a successful metamorphosis and as he leaves his friend's house he is once again assaulted by the horror of the 'there is.' Waiting for a taxi, the narrator recounts: "by the faint light that fell from the living-room window into the well I saw, with a shudder that went to the roots of my hair, a beetle rowing across the surface of the water, from one dark shore to the other" (190). The beetle, an allusion to Gregor Samsa, Franz Kafka's unfortunate commercial traveller who is transformed into a beetle in Die Verwandlung (Metamorphosis), represents the narrator who, unlike Gregor, has actively sought a form of metamorphosis in order to escape being. However, the dark waters that continue to
stir beneath the enterprising beetle reveal that the anonymous rustling and rumbling of the 'there is' has only been suspended momentarily; the narrator is still tied to being. The narrator can neither escape nor deceive being and thus is always susceptible to the horror-inducing effects of being enchained to 'oneself'—with the oneself, as in this example, being the unavoidable oarsman which must accompany the ego throughout life.

The narrator's weariness with being is accompanied by a melancholic disposition which defies diagnosis. The melancholic resonances of *The Rings of Saturn* are foreshadowed by the title's reference to Saturn, the planet associated in medieval times with the condition of melancholy. However, Sebald resists attempts to attribute his narrator's melancholy to an event in his personal past through providing little biographical detail about the narrator. Despite experiencing fatigue or weariness with being, the ego cannot call into question its own existence because the terms it would use to contemplate such questioning remain tied to the realm of existence. For Levinas, as Elisabeth Thomas argues, "the inadequacy of the subject to its own phenomenality is not a constitutive lack at the heart of subjective identity but is experienced in an encounter with the Other" (82). Moreover, this pre-original encounter with the Other traumatises the subject and reveals, according to Critchley, the site from which ethics takes place: "the level of sensibility or pre-conscious sentience" (*E-P-S* 194). Thus in the opening pages of *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's narrator never provides a psychological narrative of recovery, which would occur at the level of conscious reflective thought, in order to explain his breakdown and ongoing melancholic disposition. While the narrator does recall that his experience of paralysing horror was a response to the "traces of destruction" that confronted him on his pilgrimage (3), his use of the term 'traces' already suggests the ephemeral quality of these sources which resist contracting into a unified contemplation. Like the Levinasian ethical subjectivity which Critchley so richly describes, the narrator, under the effect of […] the deafening shock or the violence of trauma […] becomes an internally divided or split self, an interiority that is radically non-self-coincidential, a gaping wound that will not heal, a subject lacerated by contact with an original traumatisation that produces a scarred interiority inaccessible to consciousness and reflection. (*E-P-S* 194)

As a subject of melancholy, the narrator is unable to use reflection to diagnose and 'cure' his own condition and, instead, remains subjected to a "fissure" that, as he remarks, "has since riven my life" (18).
Affecting the subject with melancholy, the Other's command over the ego renders it vulnerable and exposed. Thus we find in *The Rings of Saturn* numerous photographs and descriptions that depict the corporeal vulnerability of the subject. From Rembrandt's painting of the exposed tendons of Aris Kindt, to the skull that may or may not be Thomas Browne's, Sebald represents the body in varying degrees of exposure. Santner's argument that in *Austerlitz*: "the depiction of flayed flesh, along with that of skull and skeleton is, perhaps the single most potent image of exposure one could imagine" (111) can equally be applied to *The Rings of Saturn*. While Santner argues that Sebald's theme of exposure is endemic of modernisation which, as he suggests, "opened the skin of the city, exposing it to never-ending streams of traffic and commerce" (112), the predominance of images of 'exposed' bodies in Sebald's works can also be read as an emphatic assertion of the corporeality of humans. Seeking to distinguish between the mind and body, Descartes, according to Sebald, teaches "that one should disregard the flesh, which is beyond our comprehension, and attend to the machine within, to what can fully be understood, be made wholly useful for work" (13). However, Sebald suggests that acts of disregarding the flesh, the essential vulnerability of humans have carried out numerous acts of violence. Instead of being turned towards the trials and tribulations of individual existence, Sebald's representation of his narrator's melancholic condition emphasises the importance of the ego's indebtedness to the Other. The subject's weariness with its own enchainment to being, moreover, highlights that the ego can never be the ground through which we transcend being. Through his representations of corporeal exposure, Sebald proposes that the defining element of the subject is their vulnerability which, in turn, suggests that subjectivity should not be equated with interiority but rather with what makes humans human: not their rationality but their susceptibility to the Other.

Despite the "instantly recognisable matrix of psychological confession" in *Austerlitz*, Martin Swales argues that the novel remains "inconclusive" (*Intertextuality* 84). Like *The Rings of Saturn, Austerlitz* contains melancholic characters who are traumatised by an unconscious loss. However, in *Austerlitz*, Sebald presents a more overt connection between the possible personal and biographical sources behind the condition. In the latter part of his life, Austerlitz, who as a child was evacuated from Europe to Wales as part of the Kindertransport initiative, finds memories of his past returning to haunt his solitary existence. Austerlitz's profound melancholy thus appears attributable to the unconscious loss of his childhood past and
the trauma of having to confront this loss years later. However, as Swales argues, there is an "unmistakeable refusal on the part of the text to psychologise or explain, to fill in emotional or cognitive gaps" ("Intertextuality 84). Critics such as Katja Garloff and Mark Ilsemann go a step further than Swales and argue that the text's refusal to provide a psychological narrative of recovery indicates that Sebald's depiction of melancholy is emblematic of what Ilsemann identifies as greater "irrational quasi-natural forces" (303) and what Garloff calls "a poetics of history" (162). Both of these approaches displace the concern with the subject that characterises psychological interpretations of melancholy and, instead, focus on the ego as a site of subjection whether to nature, as Ilsemann argues, or history, as Garloff argues. This model of melancholy, as a condition that subjects the ego to something other or not originating from the ego, does not have to entail obscuring the personal dimension to Austerlitz's suffering. Instead, I argue that reading melancholy as the ego's state of subjection to a form of 'postmemory'—Marianne Hirsch's term for the second-generation's mediated memory of the preceding generation's trauma—provides the specificity and uniqueness that Levinasian ethics demands. In turn, Levinasian philosophy can contribute to postmemory's ethical impetus through emphasising that the recipient of postmemory must not appropriate the position of the Other.

The addition of the prefix 'post' to memory is meant to convey, according to Hirsch, postmemory's "temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary, or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its vicariousness and belatedness" (9). Moreover, according to Hirsch, "postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation—often based on silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than visible" (9). Austerlitz—who attempts to reconstruct his parents' past through photographs, oral testimonies and archival records—rarely remembers his parents directly but rather uses secondary sources, that is to say, a form of postmemory. Frequently reflecting on and experiencing the past as a present moment that is yet to occur, Austerlitz refutes the possibility of constructing time into a linear continuum of events and thus relegating the past to the past. For this reason, Austerlitz never occupies the stable position of the ego with regard to the past. Unable to determine his parents' fate once and for all, Austerlitz is left searching and scanning a variety of secondary sources that never culminate into a narrative that could both fill the silences
of the past that haunt his secondary experience or provide him with the control over time that the sovereign ego possesses.

At the heart of both Levinasian ethics and Hirsch's notion of postmemory lies a common denominator: the traumatised subject. Similarly, both attribute the subject's experience of trauma to a pre-original responsibility for the Other. Thus Levinas argues: "the condition, or non-condition, of the Self is not originally an auto-affection presupposing the Ego but is precisely an affection by the Other, an anarchic traumatism [...]" ("Substitution" 93–94). Levinas's notion of an 'anarchic' traumatism that cannot be resolved corresponds with Hirsch's argument that the overall effect of postmemorial examples of representations is that "they reconstitute a viewing relation that cannot be repaired, but that can perhaps be reenvisioned in ways that do not negate the rupture at its source" (33). For Hirsch, the "lines of relation and identification" inherent to postmemory's structure are subject to an ethical obligation whereby "identification can resist appropriation and incorporation [and] resist annihilating the distance between self and other, the otherness of the other" (11).

However, within the same article, Hirsch proposes that "[p]erhaps it is only in subsequent generations that trauma can be witnessed and worked through, by those who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions and symptoms of the previous generation" (12). Thus, on the one hand, Hirsch argues that postmemorial representations must maintain a rupture which prevents identification with victims being assumed by the artist but, on the other hand, she appears prepared to assume that the second generation's postmemorial experiences may be capable of healing this rupture. For Levinas, Hirsch's argument that the recipients of postmemory may be able to resolve the preceding generation's trauma undermines the ego's ethical obligation to the Other. Interpreting the concept of postmemory through a Levinasian model of ethics reveals that if postmemory is to accept its ethical obligation not to annihilate the distance between the self and the Other, both postmemorial representations and experiences cannot claim the ability to work through the previous generation's trauma. In this respect, the emphasis

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38 I am not the first to use Hirsch's concept of postmemory as a framework to interpret Sebald's works. In his article "History, Narrative, and Photography in W. G. Sebald's Die Ausgewanderten," Long argues that Sebald's juxtaposition in The Emigrants of representations of postmemory and literary techniques which resemble the processes of postmemory "counteract the dispersal, dissipation, and rupture inherent in the historical process" (137). However, Long appears to neglect Hirsch's ethical requirement that representations of postmemory do not negate the 'rupture' inherent in postmemory's historical process.
Levinasian ethics places on the subject's indebtedness to the Other over and above resolution ensures that the ego's appropriation of the Other, a risk Hirsch herself acknowledges, does not take place.

In turn, reading Austerlitz's melancholy through Hirsch's concept of postmemory provides the specificity that Levinas requires of the ego's obligation to the Other. Central to Levinas's characterisation of the ego's ethical indebtedness to the Other is the ego's uniqueness. Accordingly, Levinas argues that "the responsibility to which I am exposed [...] does not apprehend me as an interchangeable thing, for here no one can be substituted for me" ("God" 143). Levinas carefully distinguishes his account of the ego's responsibility from a libertarian or even utilitarian model of society which views the ego's responsibility for others as a condition of membership in the community or a calculation which promotes the majority's interests. Instead, it is the ego's uniqueness and not its hope for reciprocal respect that commands its responsibility. Similarly, Hirsch's specification that the trauma and ethical obligation evoked by postmemory affects the second generation emphasises the uniqueness of the ego's position. While Levinas might object to the responsibility of postmemory requiring a familial relationship, it is interesting that Hirsch also argues that the ethical obligation evoked by postmemory "need not be restricted to the family, or even to a group that shares an ethnic or national identity marking" (9). Thus, it is not the familial, cultural or national ties of the ego which subject it to the traumatic effects of postmemorial responsibility for the Other but, as Levinas would argue, the fact of being accused, summoned and thus, "the impossibility of slipping away and being replaced" (Otherwise 56). Hirsch's requirement that it is a member of the second or, to be more precise, of the present generation who responds highlights that it is not a universal presentiment of loss which affects the ego but a trauma which is specific to the ego's relationship with the Other; moreover, this is a relationship which does not have to presume familial or cultural ties. When read together, Levinasian ethics and Hirsch's concept of postmemory provide a framework through which to view Austerlitz's melancholy as both a pre-condition of his self and as illustrative of his ethical indebtedness to the Other. As a subject of postmemory, Austerlitz is traumatised by an ethical obligation which subjects him to the Other, and requires him, and him specifically, to respond. The effects of this trauma are rendered through Sebald's representations of Austerlitz's corporeal vulnerability.
As in The Rings of Saturn, Sebald uses the theme of exposure in his later work to represent the corporeal vulnerability of his title character Austerlitz. Moreover, inevitably following Austerlitz's various encounters with exposed sites are his experiences of vulnerability and disturbance which call into question his presence. Visiting Liverpool station, the site where Austerlitz undergoes an epiphany of sorts and recalls his traumatic past, Austerlitz recounts how many of the English stations were constructed on land plots which were once cemeteries. During alterations made to the Broad Street Station in 1984, skeletal remains are exposed which Austerlitz photographs and which are included, in photographic form, in the novel. The grim full-page photograph shows four skulls emerging from the muddy terrain of the excavation site. Two pages later, a photograph of the engineers' plans of the city, which, according to Austerlitz, look like "muscles and sinews in an anatomical atlas" (186), recall the exposed skeletal remains upon which the station is built. Through juxtaposing images of stations—a practical site of human encounters in modernity—with images of bodily corporeality and exposure, Sebald highlights the inherent vulnerability of the ego. Austerlitz's remark that "I felt at this time as if the dead were returning from their exile and filling the twilight around me with their strangely slow but incessant to-ing and fro-ing" (188) further emphasises that the ego's corporeal vulnerability exposes it to the dead and undermines the division between the living and the dead, present and absent, modern and past. When undermined, these binary oppositions—which form the conceptual framework which support the ego's presence—expose the ego to its own vulnerability and failed self-sufficiency. Significantly, it is following his visit to the museum of veterinary medicine, where Austerlitz views a variety of animals flayed, exposed and preserved, that he encounters what Santner identifies as a "horrific emblem of absolute, bodily exposure" (112): a life-sized figure of a rider and horse. Before this emblem of corporeal vulnerability, which exposes "tensed muscles," "panic-stricken expression," "congealed blood," and "the ochre yellow of the sinews and ligaments" (373), Austerlitz recoils, and upon leaving the museum he suffers the "first of […] several fainting fits" (374). According to Swales, Sebald's recurring images of traumatised and wounded physical bodies are at risk of culminating into "a pornography of violence" ("Intertextuality" 87). Nevertheless, Swales concludes that "not to insist on precisely that physicality is to find refuge in abstraction and discursivity and intertext, is to avert the attention from the battered body" ("Intertextuality" 87). Swales'
comments suggest that we read Austerlitz's encounter with a violent exposure of bodily corporeality as a necessary step towards acknowledging the inherent vulnerability of humans; a condition which Austerlitz's own body symptomatically portrays. Rather than packaging and glorifying violence into a consumable image, Sebald's photographs' main emphasis is human vulnerability, a condition which precipitates ethical responsibility.

Austerlitz's sovereignty over the external world is further undercut by his increasing inability to master language. Once Austerlitz's most vital ally in constructing a compensatory past and the source of his "favourite occupation" (171)—reading and writing—language increasingly becomes for Austerlitz the basis of his melancholy. Overcome with a sense of aversion and distaste with his work, Austerlitz compares his condition to that of a tightrope walker who can no longer maintain a balancing act. Austerlitz's inability to utilise language in order to re-present the external world authoritatively is symptomatic of a melancholic condition where, according to Kristeva, "the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin; melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue" (53). Unable to harness language, Austerlitz cannot use language to connect signifier and signified and his ability to use language to re-present the external world is thus undercut. Finding "the entire structure of language […] enveloped in impenetrable fog" (175), Austerlitz's own work becomes a series of failed attempts and incomplete sentences. Austerlitz's painful battle to control language leads him to conclude wearily that language is a mere tool which is utilised by humans in order to exert control over the external world:

All I could think was that such a sentence only appears to mean something, but in truth is at best a makeshift expedient, a kind of unhealthy growth issuing from our ignorance, something which we use, in the same way as many sea plants and animals use their tentacles, to grope blindly through the darkness enveloping us. The very thing which may usually convey a sense of purposeful intelligence—the exposition of an idea by a means of a certain stylistic facility—now seemed to me nothing but an entirely arbitrary or deluded enterprise [which] increasingly filled me with feelings of horror and shame. (175–76)

Affecting him corporeally, Austerlitz's discovery that language is a medium designed to insulate the ego from encounters with the external world produces horror and shame. Adhering to the romantic belief that language allows the subject to transcend being and gain a greater truth, Austerlitz discovers instead that language is the
medium which secures the ego's presence and facilitates its violent appropriations of the Other. Austerlitz's painful realisation is that his greatest ally has also been his greatest foe. Unable to master language and screen himself from direct contact with the external world and others, Austerlitz's body is rendered vulnerable. Through a series of melancholic symptoms, Sebald represents the inherent corporeality of his subject who comes to signal both a site of trauma and the beginning of ethical responsibility.

During the period of his life within which he despairs of language, Austerlitz's attempts to overcome his sense of horror through a series of actions reminiscent of Levinas's account of the ego's endeavours to postpone the horror of the 'there is.' Burying his work in the garden and undertaking renovations in his home, Austerlitz initially feels relief. Through attempting to control his physical environment or dwelling, Austerlitz is also symbolically trying to reaffirm his presence and sovereignty. However, as was the case in Frame's writing, Sebald presents the dwelling as a structure that attempts to keep outside the world but also requires contact with that world to seize what it needs. According to Elisabeth Thomas, the term 'dwelling' in Levinas's philosophy describes "a movement of contraction of identity" (68), which reveals that the ego is not a fixed and static entity but must actively construct its interiority in response to the external world. Thus the dwelling or ego can never overcome the 'there is' or the anonymous rustling because it can never shut out the external world. Instead, the ego must exist alongside what continuously eludes its grasp and threatens its equanimity: a region of being that is prior to the ego.

Despite his attempts to erect a dwelling which would shelter him from the 'there is,' Austerlitz suffers from insomnia. For Levinas, as Michael Brogan argues, it is "the depersonalizing and seemingly interminable experience of insomnia, […] which poetically evokes […] the anonymous and purely present character of the il y a" (147). Exposed to the 'there is' of anonymous pure being, Austerlitz is "submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it" (Existence 58). Caught in the eternal state of watchfulness of insomnia, Austerlitz begins his "nocturnal wanderings through London" (178). It is during these nocturnal excursions that Austerlitz encounters "familiar faces" that are imbued with a spectral quality which prevent him from identifying them and, as a consequence, continue to haunt him (179). Despite being haunted or traumatised by these indistinct faces, Austerlitz's subjection to these
others represents a turning point in Austerlitz's despair. Shifting his focus from the horror experienced by Austerlitz at the intrusion of anonymous currents—which signify the 'deluded enterprise' of the ego's sovereignty—to the trauma experienced by Austerlitz when disturbed by others, Sebald imbues his representations of Austerlitz's plight with ethical significance. Sebal's Levinasian depiction of the 'there is' is necessary to understand not only why Austerlitz is unable to transcend being through language but also why the work as a whole is not a meditation on ontology. Through concluding his representations of Austerlitz's period of melancholy with depictions of his encounters with ghostly others, Sebald indicates that his primary concern is not Austerlitz's solitary attempts to reconstitute his subjectivity through time but, rather, the way in which his subjectivity is dependent on the time of the Other. Fittingly, Austerlitz's experience of melancholy culminates in being "irresistibly drawn back" to Liverpool station (180): the site emblematic of exposure and the place where his sense of indebtedness to the previous generation is evoked.

6.2 The Other's Interruption

Unlike Austerlitz, The Rings of Saturn, Sebald's more experimental work, represents his narrator's responsibility to others through paradoxically never presuming the ability to present the Other. Throughout his walking pilgrimage across East Anglia, the narrator of The Rings of Saturn is exposed to ephemeral traces which disturb his ability to order time and resist his powers of comprehension. Never culminating in a physical encounter where the narrator coincides with the Other in the present, these traces problematise the narrator's synchronised experience of time, invoking his responsibility to the past. Distinguishing between a trace and a sign, Levinas argues that a trace cannot be translated in terms of its position in a larger order: "In a trace has passed a past absolutely bygone. In a trace its irreversible lapse is sealed. Disclosure, which reinstates the world and leads back to the world, and is proper to a sign or a signification, is suppressed in traces" ("Trace" 357). Thus a trace, to borrow one of Levinas's similes, is not like a detective's clue; it cannot produce a moment of identification which, symbolically, leads to the solving of the crime. Irreversible, a trace resists the ego's ability to define and translate its meaning; instead, it remains irreducible. Encountering these traces, the narrator is disturbed, traumatised and incapable of reducing them to the Same or to a moment of its own present, but neither can he ignore their strange non-presence. Like the spectral presences which distort
Frame's characters' vision in *The Adaptable Man*, these traces take on a haunting quality.

Following his various encounters with traces of past others, the narrator is unable to retrieve, catch up with or coincide with time. For Levinas, time announces the "interhuman relationship" ("Interview" 57). However, unlike a synchronised mode of time which originates from the ego and prioritises the present, the time which signifies the ego's ethical relationship to the Other is characterised by rupture and therefore signals the ego's inability to synchronise and thematise its experiences of the external world. Asserting the centrality of time to his account of the ethical relationship, Levinas argues:

> The relationship with the other is time: it is an untotalizable diachrony in which one moment pursues another without ever being able to retrieve it, to catch up with or coincide with it. The non-simultaneous and non-present is my primary rapport with the other in time. Time means that the other is forever beyond me, irreducible to the synchrony of the same. ("Interview" 57)

Thus, in order to assess the ethical impetus behind Sebald's representations of time in *The Rings of Saturn*, instead of seeking to identify the Other with specific characters—an approach the text resists—it is necessary to examine those moments when the narrator experiences time as a diachrony. These occur when the protagonist is exposed to a trace, an excess of signification, which resists his power of comprehension, leading to instability. It is from this compromised position that the ego suffers from a mauvaise conscience. Such a conscience in Levinas's philosophy, despite carrying the connotation of guilt, is prior to intentionality and thus is "prior to any fault" or self-reflection undertaken on the ego's behalf ("Ethics" 81). Instead, a mauvaise conscience is open to question and is an "identity [that] recoils before its affirmation" ("Ethics" 81). These moments in Sebald's prose when the protagonist's time is interrupted or disturbed undermine the priority afforded to existence in Western thought and, instead, gesture towards the protagonist's transcendence. However, unlike traditional conceptions of transcendence, which centre on the individual's achievement of elevation above worldly concerns, Sebald's moments of transcendence turn the ego to the Other. In Levinas's philosophy, ethics requires these moments of transcendence because, as Robert Gibbs explains, "[e]thics demands a transcendence in the material world, a gap or shadow, an aura, a flashing, that orients us towards others and toward the transcendent responsibility for others" (13). In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's traces of non-presence are the necessary 'shadow' or 'aura'
that contests the ego's self-sufficiency, orientating it towards others. While the reader will proceed to identify the Other with collective groups who have suffered under regimes that prioritise a metaphysics of presence, it is important to note that *The Rings of Saturn* does not itself carry out these acts of identification. Both examples discussed here, a disturbing night in the Hague and an intrusive photograph, are traces that first and foremost disturb the ego's equanimity prior to its fault, self-reflection, and its contextualisation of these traces within a specific political context. Sebald's depiction of these strange forms of non-encounter with trace-like past others, which are not premised on identification, respond specifically to the problem of how to signal ethical regard for those who have been mis-represented in history, such as the colonial other, and those whom historians have struggled to represent: the victims of the Holocaust.

In an episode that covers a mere few pages, Sebald contrasts the protagonist's encounter with an alterity that he reduces to the Same with an encounter with the trace of a non-presence or radical alterity that cannot be reduced and thus one that, in Gibbs's terminology, represents a 'gap' in the ego's material world. The protagonist's initial encounter with a thematisable form of alterity highlights a larger cycle of violence that recurs throughout the pages of *The Rings of Saturn*. For Sebald, the scholar's endeavour is premised on a fluctuating process of violence: the awareness that the pursuit of knowledge is a violation (dissection of the other) which in turn requires a further violation (vivisection of the self). Caught in this self-perpetuating cycle of violence, Sebald's narrator appears confined to a process of providing representations and then calling these representations into doubt. However, the narrator's encounter with a radical form of alterity, a trace, gestures beyond this cycle through the emphasis it places on his traumatised state and consequent inability to harness his thoughts. For this reason, I argue that Sebald prioritises the threat of the narrator's latter encounter over and above the former, in order to signal the protagonist's *ethical* responsibility. While the narrator's night in The Hague can only ever gesture towards an encounter with another Other that never occurs, it is this non-encounter that leaves a residue of disturbance that is experienced by the narrator as a profound melancholy and is registered in his inability to adopt a synchronising gaze.

Walking down the streets of The Hague at night, the narrator recounts glimpsing an open doorway to a mosque which he is unable to enter. From this insignificant incident, Sebald's narrator experiences a number of unsettling
encounters: first with a pimp in a limousine, then with a black man waving a knife which, as the narrator emphasises, "passed by me so close that I imagined I felt it piercing between my ribs" (82). The juxtaposition of these incidents confronts the reader with an unexpected encounter in Sebald's work; namely, Sebald appears to be prioritising the sovereign desire to occupy a position from which the ego can extend its all-encompassing gaze. Upon being unable to enter the mosque and gain a glimpse of its secrets, the narrator is barred from his pursuit of obtaining knowledge of the Other. In turn, when he encounters a corporeal other, he resorts to exotic stereotypes which depict the other as potentially harbouring both sexual and physical violence. Through resorting to such colonial tropes, Sebald's narrator carries out an act of self-preservation; namely, when faced with the unknown, rather than concede the self's inability to know, the narrator reasserts the sovereignty of the ego. Sebald's Cartesian sleight of hand is surprising and even disappointing: how can a writer who repeatedly condemns the universalising frameworks of colonialism, ontology, history, and even of his own writing, have made such a blunder? However, through foregrounding the night in The Hague as one that continues to 'trouble' his narrator, Sebald insists on the narrator's conscious realisation of the violence that his point of view has enacted (a vivisection).

After his unsettling encounter, the narrator visits the Mauritshuis Gallery and gazes upon Rembrandt's "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp." While the novel opens with a lengthy discussion of the number of inconsistencies that lie at the heart of a painting which is celebrated for its verisimilitude, upon initially viewing the painting, the narrator is unable to harness his thoughts. Displaying the exposed and vulnerable body of the subject of the autopsy, Aris Kindt, the painting depicts the guild of surgeons looking away from the body and towards an anatomical atlas. The surgeons' textual attitude shelters them from "direct encounters with the real" (Said, Orientalism 93). In turn, the narrator's inability to reflect on the painting in this initial viewing suggests his awareness that, like the surgeons, he is guilty of preferring the textual authority of exotic stereotypes of the other over contact with the real Other. The narrator's guilty conscience and process of dissecting his own mode of seeing is further emphasised when he turns to another painting. Attempting to quell his sense of unease, the narrator gazes upon Jacob van Ruisdael's "View of Haarlem Bleaching Fields" but he realises that the view which the painting depicts is constructed from an imaginary viewpoint. The illusory and seemingly infinite scope of the painting
parallels the narrator's desire that the ambit of his scholarly enquiries should encounter no obstacles or closed doors. Interwoven with the narrator's reflections on both paintings is his awareness that in his encounter with the man with the knife, like Rembrandt's surgeons, he has performed a violent autopsy of the Other: he reduced the man to an object of discourse through exotic stereotypes. The narrator's view of the paintings thus produces a self-vivisection through which the narrator recognises the violence of his own gaze.

The narrator's self-critique of his observing position signifies how readily the ego resorts to a synchronising and thematising gaze when encountering the Other. For this reason, Levinas insists that the ego can never encounter the Other in the present and that the Other is "without any cultural ornament" ("Meaning" 53). Consequently, the narrator's encounter with the other, whom he translates into an exotic discourse, cannot evoke his ethical responsibility. In this case, the narrator is able to thematise and identify the other and his presence is not disturbed. However, neither does the narrator's self-critique of his observing position signify the site of ethics since ethics, for Levinas, must lie outside the realm of the comprehending ego. Rather, I suggest, the reason that this night continues to haunt the narrator is because at the end of his account lies an encounter with a trace, an excess of signification, which produces the narrator's mauvaise conscience: not a conscience that assumes the ability to critique its own trespass but, rather, one that finds its presence undermined.

Leaving the gallery, the narrator considers the fate of the eleven Indian dancers that Governor Johann Maurits brought over from Brazil in order to dance in a ceremony which celebrated the construction of his palais. Unlike his encounter of the previous night, the narrator does not resort to stereotypes to identify the dancers. Never literally encountering the dancers in the temporal present moment, the narrator also never symbolically reduces them to a moment of his presence through the thematising gaze. Instead he acknowledges that the dancers lie outside the ambit of his comprehension:

These dancers, about whom nothing else is known, have long since disappeared, as shadows, soundless as silent as the heron I saw when I set off once more, flying just above the shining surface of the water, the beat of its wings calm and even, undisturbed by the traffic creeping along the bank of the Hofvijier. Who can say how things were in ages past? (83–84)

Concluding his thoughts with a question, the narrator accedes that the dancers are beyond the scope of his contemplations. Acknowledging both the temporal and
metaphysical distance that separates him from the dancers, the narrator's own presence is called into question. Despite comparing the dancers to a heron, the narrator's simile does not signal a movement back to the ego through a process of identifying the Other but, rather, describes the ephemeral and trace-like quality of any possible encounter with the past Other. The narrator's exposure to a past that cannot be reduced to the Same, as represented by the dancers, exemplifies how the trace in Levinas's philosophy evokes the ego's ethical responsibility. According to Michael Bernard-Donals, the trace in Levinas's philosophy signals the ego's ethical role as a witness. He explains

He [Levinas] opposes […] history as a repetition of the same […] with a temporality that repeats with a difference or surplus, in which events cannot be made commensurable with the narrative accounts we produce for them […] Their juxtaposition produces a trace that cannot be converted into a category or concept and return to the self that originated them. This trace […] is what troubles the speaking subject, the witness to events, and compels him to speak, though of what he speaks is sometimes uncertain. (4)

Sebald's protagonist's encounter with the unknown dancers of the past is an example of a trace. At the site of the palais, the time of history is juxtaposed with the time of diachrony, that is to say, a time that undermines the ego's retrieval of past events. Like a trace, the dancers undermine the protagonist's mastery over time and trouble his speaking position. The protagonist admits the limitations of his attempt to reconstruct their lives and speaks from a position that is both one of responsibility and uncertainty. Thus the haunting impact of the narrator's stay in The Hague is ongoing neither because of the physical threat which was posed by his encounter with a corporeal other nor due to his self-critique of the violence of his observing position. Rather, it is a much greater threat that continues to haunt the narrator: one that arises from an encounter with the Other that never took place. This second encounter produces a residue of disturbance that haunts the narrator's pilgrimage through East Anglia a year later and produces the narrator's mauvaise conscience. Confronting the scarred terrain, the protagonist repeatedly encounters incomprehensible traces that cannot be assimilated by historians' narrative forms. Turned to the Other's plight but unable to respond, the narrator exists in the tormented state of one who has been interrupted, traumatised and called to responsibility.

While The Rings of Saturn prioritises the ego's ethical responsibility to the Other, it also evokes the reader's sympathy for the traumatised ego. At the heart of the
work's representations of ephemeral traces of the past Other lies the desire to prevent ready identifications which result in the ego appropriating the Other's position. Through not specifying the Other's identity in terms of ethnic, cultural or gender demarcations, Sebald prevents his characters and reader from identifying with the Other. However, through moving away from the specific, *The Rings of Saturn* divides the reader's sympathies. Like Sebald's characters, the reader experiences their encounters with a trace in the work as a moment that does not conform to a linear model of time. Unable to integrate these moments within the conceptual whole of the novel, the reader is haunted by their incomprehensibility. However, their very incomprehensibility leads the reader to resort to familiar territory, and thus empathise with the plight of characters who are traumatised by such encounters. Representing an eclectic collection of melancholic figures, *The Rings of Saturn* divides the reader's attention between that which they cannot identify with—the trace—and those with whom the reader can empathise, an identifiable and knowable traumatised person.

Directing the reader's attention to well-known historical figures who have been associated with the condition of melancholy, such as Roger Casement and Algernon Swinburne, perhaps *The Rings of Saturn*'s most haunting depiction is of the purportedly real figure of Major George Wyndham Le Strange. Le Strange, as the novel reports, "served in the anti-tank regiment that liberated the camp at Bergen Belsen on the 14th of April 1945" (59). Turning the page, the reader does not find the rest of the incomplete sentence but, instead, a photograph which covers two pages. The photograph interrupts the text's progression and serves as a chasm that deflects the reader's attention away from Le Strange and towards the photographic image. However, gazing at the photograph, the reader struggles to decipher the image. Underneath a forest canopy the uneven ground of the forest floor rises and falls in a series of undulating surfaces. Upon closer inspection, the reader observes legs and arms protruding from what was mistaken to be the forest floor; they are not gazing upon an uneven dirt ground but a collection of bodies shrouded in blankets. Like a mnemonic clue, the interrupted sentence's reference to Bergen Belsen contextualises the photograph. However, this does not lead to comprehension. According to Adriaan Daub, Sebald's decision to select this image over the many hundred photographs taken
following the liberation of the concentration camps is significant. Daub explains that in the majority of such photographs either "the dead bodies are the landscape" or "the picture is carefully orchestrated so as to contextualize the dead bodies" through including in its gaze physical signifiers of the camps (322). By contrast, Daub argues that the image Sebald selects "stands out" because, as he explains:

It emphasizes the landscape in which the atrocity took place. In fact the framing of the picture is downright off-putting since it seems to put the trees in the center and turn the dead into almost unidentifiable hovels on the ground. Furthermore, the three trees in the foreground seem to block access to the kind of gaze that landscape photography usually invites. Rather than opening up before our eyes, this landscape is closed to us, offering no place in which the subject can 'find' itself within the picture frame. (322)

Despite attempting to contextualise the image through viewing it as an historical referent of the concentration camps, the reader remains unable to identify with the image before them. The bodies remain shrouded, incomprehensible and forever haunting. Like a trace, they refute the ego's ability to assimilate them within a narrative account.

Turning the page, the reader is returned to the comforting plane of language and the second half of the sentence describes the eccentric behaviours that Le Strange adopts on his return to Britain. Discharging his household staff, bar his housekeeper, Le Strange requires that his housekeeper dine with him every evening but remain silent. On the accompanying page, Sebald includes a clip of a newspaper article which describes Le Strange's silent dinners and his bequest that upon his death his estate be left to the housekeeper. Although the text refrains from explicitly stating that Le Strange's eccentricities are produced by what he saw as a liberator of the camps, the reader readily makes these causal connections and is able to return to the familiar ground where the assumptions of a metaphysics of comprehension apply. Moreover, the plight of the traumatised major evokes empathy. Able to comprehend or diagnose the Major's melancholic condition, the reader is moved by his plight. To a certain degree The Rings of Saturn prevents identification with the figure of the Major, through leaving it uncertain whether or not he is a fictional character and through the narrator's own assertion that "I do not know what to make of such stories" (64).

39 Like Daub, Dan Stone observes the continuity in concentration camp iconology which, he furthermore argues, "is testimony to the enduring desire for order and the power of coherent narrative in providing it" (28). In contrast, the photograph that Sebald selects, an atypical example of the concentration camps, simultaneously exposes the viewer's desire for order and denies it.
Nonetheless, even if the Major is regarded as a figure that the reader can in fact identify with, the abrupt insertion of the photograph in the midst of the narrative of the major's life suggests that ethical regard is located beyond the calculations of the contemplating mind. Moreover, the interruption of a narrative on life by evidence of death reveals what Langer describes as "intrinsic to Holocaust discourse, where the opposition between living and dying vanishes forever and the autobiography of a life coexists with the biography of a death" (96).

Despite, and because of, good intentions, empathy remains an emotion that is produced in accordance with the ego's calculations of potential benefits, such as self-respect, gratitude and civil standing. Thus the ego can only ever empathise with those it encounters and with whom it can identify. Such a model of ethics would instantly exclude ethical regard for those who were culturally and ethnically different from the ego and would be unable to encompass future generations. By contrast, a Levinasian ethics, by refusing to characterise the Other, except in terms of one who demands ethical regard, locates ethics beyond the self. Thus, while the reader empathises with Le Strange and a number of other melancholic figures in *The Rings of Saturn*, Levinas's philosophy would only recognise the narrator's encounters with trace-like others as invoking ethical responsibility. *The Rings of Saturn* prioritises such ethical encounters over and above the reader's experiences of empathy for the known. It affects the reader with the ongoing haunting impact of an incomprehensible photograph which will traumatisethe reader beyond their final act of reading, undermining their ability to defer to firm distinctions between the living and the dead. Character and reader alike are subject to a mauvaise conscience which, according to Levinas, "poses the question of my right to be which is already my responsibility for the death of the Other, interrupting the carefree spontaneity of my naïve perseverance" ("Ethics" 86). With such interruptions, *The Rings of Saturn* contests the imperialism of the ego and introduces the significance of a melancholic disposition which is a sign of our indebtedness to the Other for our humanity.

In *Austerlitz*, the eponymous hero's proposal of a model of time that does not position the ego at the centre of its structure is the implicit means through which Sebald presents the ethical relationship between the self and the Other. Shifting the emphasis away from the ego's vision of the world and towards its relationship with the Other, Austerlitz's Levinasian-like philosophy of time provides a framework through which to understand the various relationships within the novel. Both Austerlitz's
relationship with his mother and the narrator's relationship with Austerlitz are structured around a model of time where the ego is traumatised by its encounter with the Other. In turn, in this traumatised and interrupted state, the ego (whether Austerlitz or the narrator) is reduced to a passivity whereby they are first and foremost obligated to the Other but unable to fulfil their obligations.

Sebald's depiction of his character's relationships within the larger historical context of the Holocaust suggests the importance of viewing these relationships specifically in terms of the "logic and the dynamic of witness" (Douglass & Volger 44). Both Austerlitz (with regard to his mother) and the narrator (with regard to Austerlitz) occupy the role of a witness. While Levinas does not specifically use the term witness to describe the ego's relationship and obligations to the Other, his use of terms such as "obligation" and "responsibility" in order to characterise the ego's debt to the Other evoke the role of witness. Moreover, the impossibility of overcoming the ego's obligation through acts of benevolence, empathy or a process which seeks recompense through gratitude parallel the impossibility of fulfilling the responsibilities of the witness. Fredric Jameson captures the impasse of the witness's role when he argues that: "To forget the dead altogether is impious in ways that prepare their own retribution, but to remember the dead is neurotic and obsessive and merely feeds a sterile repetition" ("Marx's Purloined Letter" 103). Thus, he concludes, "there is no 'proper' way of relating to the dead and the past" (103). Rather than propose a possible way of overcoming this impasse, Sebald highlights the ethical necessity of maintaining what Ana Douglass and Thomas Volger, drawing on Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, describe as a system of haunting. For Derrida, a system of haunting or spectrality refutes the possibility that the ego can fulfil its ethical responsibilities once and for all because to cease responsibility is to return to a mode of existence that prioritises the ego above the Other. Instead, Derrida proposes a principle of responsibility which extends "beyond all living present […] before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead" (*Specters* xix). Such an extensive principle of responsibility is evoked by the open ending of *Austerlitz*, which does not conclude with the characters' fulfilment of their obligations but, instead, signals an indeterminate future which remains open to generations yet to come. Moreover, like Sebald's characters, the reader must also learn to accept the various gaps, fissures and silences of the text and allow them to resonate.
Critical of a Newtonian form of time, Austerlitz proposes that "time does not exist" (261). Instead, as he explains to the narrator of the novel:

It does not seem to me, [...] that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the rules of a higher form of stereometry, between which the living and the dead can move back and forth as they like, and the longer I think about it the more it seems to me that we who are still alive are unreal in the eyes of the dead [...]. (261)

In rejecting time altogether, Austerlitz both responds to the assumed universality of Newton's theories which are treated as the definitive model of time and reveals his own desire to distance himself from them. However, I suggest that Austerlitz's discussion does in fact propose a model of time; moreover, a model that shares similarities with Levinas's descriptions of the time of the Other.

Like Levinas's time of diachrony, Austerlitz's alternative vision of time does not position the ego or self at the centre of the experience of time; instead, as Austerlitz proposes, "we who are still alive are unreal in the eyes of the dead" (261). Prioritising the vision of the dead—who can be seen as an example of a Levinasian Other—Austerlitz's philosophy of time does not begin from the contemplating mind of the self or the ego. Instead, Austerlitz suggests a model of time that through beginning with the concerns of the Other disturbs and interrupts the ego's present. In the novel we witness thus Austerlitz's increasing uncertainty whether the dead have truly gone or whether they may continue to exist beyond the ego's limiting vision. Austerlitz effectively negates the various binary constructions, such as past and present, absent and present, dead and living, which form the conceptual framework through which the ego constructs the present and its sense of presence. His emphasis that this experience of time is spatial further highlights an experience of time that is inter-relational or, as Levinas describes it, that is the "temporality of the interhuman" ("Interview" 57). Rather than prioritise the ego's present, Austerlitz focuses on time across space or as a relationship between people. For Austerlitz, this inter-relational model of time is characterised by the 'appointments' that the ego is obligated to keep with the future and past; as Austerlitz explains:

It seems to me then as if all the moments of our life occupy the same space, as if future events already existed and were only waiting for us to find our way to them at last, just as when we have accepted an invitation we duly arrive in a certain house at a given time. And might it not be [...] that we also have appointments to keep in the past [...] and must go there in search of places and people who have some connection with us on the far side of time. (359–60)
Austerlitz's proposal of an Other time emphasises the ego's indebtedness and obligations to keep its appointments with future and past generations. In turn, the novel traces both Austerlitz's and the narrator's attempts to keep their appointments with the past and future and, in accordance with Levinas's maxim that "time means that the other is forever beyond me" ("Interview" 57), emphasises their inability to translate their response-ability into an adequate response.

As a postmemory recipient, Austerlitz is charged with the responsibility of dealing with his parents' traumatic past. Austerlitz's ethical responsibility is complicated by his own desire to overcome the sense of dislocation and isolation which has affected his adult life. While Austerlitz's attempts to reconstruct his parents' past undoubtedly retains a personal dimension, his intense melancholic disposition suggests that Austerlitz is subjected or obligated to his parents and not that the past is subject to Austerlitz's needs. His traumatised state and sense of being drawn towards seemingly familiar sites, such as the Liverpool station and his childhood apartment in Czechoslovakia, suggest that the past has a hold over Austerlitz and not vice versa. Unable to identify himself with the photograph of the small page boy, which adorns the cover of the novel, Austerlitz symbolically does not reassert his presence. Without a present from which to recuperate the past, Austerlitz can never re-claim his parents' past but is left in a perpetual state of being subjected to an experience of haunting with more and more appointments to keep with the past and no possibility of respite.

Austerlitz's quest to discover the fate of his parents is always at risk of turning into an act of appropriation, whereby Austerlitz reduces his parents into thematisable entities that assure his sense of identity. However, instead of achieving a universalising perspective which can authoritatively determine his parents' fate, Austerlitz's quest—like the novel's narrative structure—seems to lead further away from the discovery of truth. Relentlessly scanning the Nazi propaganda film of Theresienstadt in order to discover his mother, Austerlitz eventually finds the face of a young woman who could be his mother. However, Vera, his former nanny, when shown the photograph that Austerlitz produces from the film, "spent some time studying the face […] before shaking her head and putting it aside" (353). By chance, Austerlitz discovers in the Prague theatrical archives a photograph of an anonymous actress whom Vera "immediately and without a shadow of doubt […] recognized [as] Agáta as she had then been" (353–54). The photograph—which is included in the novel—shows a "ghostly white face, marked by the mother's penetrating eyes and
ominous expression" which, according to Maya Barzilai, "heightens the ambivalent response toward this form of the return of the dead that threatens to haunt and torment the protagonist" (213). The photograph produces an ambivalent response because, despite seemingly representing Austerlitz's mother, the spectral qualities of the photograph, which shows the face receding into darkness, suggests the impossibility of ever definitively re-presenting a subject that is already in the process of disappearing from Austerlitz's view. The spectre, Critchley argues, "is precisely that which refuses phenomenologization, that retreats before the gaze that tries to see it" (E-P-S 150). Thus, the return of Austerlitz's mother as a spectre, which by definition disturbs ontology, means that Austerlitz cannot use the photograph to order time and reconstitute a sense of self.

The effacement of Austerlitz's identity is performed throughout the novel, as Sebald reduces his eponymous hero to a function that serves the needs of the Other. Narrated at one remove, the novel presents the narrator's account of his conversations with Austerlitz. The reader is never provided with direct access to Austerlitz's thoughts and struggles to create a strong mental image of a man who, according to the narrator, physically defies time and does not age. Through only providing photographs of Austerlitz as a child and not as an adult, Sebald emphasises that Austerlitz's identity must be defined in the context of his relationship to his parents. Sebald thus presents Austerlitz's quest as an adult for self-discovery as secondary to his role as a mnemonic signifier of his parents' fate. Austerlitz's existence is therefore not structured in accordance with a metaphysics of presence but in relation to his role as a survivor and witness to his parents' traumatic past. According to Douglass and Volger, "Survivor witnesses of traumatic events do not provide knowledge or information in the usual sense; they are themselves the evidence, the knowledge, that we receive from their existence as survivors" (38). Similarly, Austerlitz's life is defined not in terms of presence but, instead, through his function as a survivor who acts as evidence of his parents' fate. Structured around mediated conversations, the novel emphasises Austerlitz's role as a device that both facilitates the narrative and directs the reader's attention towards past generations. Despite Austerlitz's name serving as the title of the novel, it does not represent a unique emblem of individual identity and singularity but, instead, as Katja Garloff suggests, "assonates with 'Auschwitz,' the most frequently used metonym for the Holocaust" (158). As a part that speaks for the whole, Austerlitz is less character and more function or role, which
means that Sebald's eponymous hero's quest for self-discovery is secondary to his obligations to the Other.

The effacement of Austerlitz's identity by the Other is highlighted through his role as a witness to his parents' past. However, despite being unable to re-construct his parents' past, Austerlitz does not fail to fulfil his ethical responsibilities; rather, as his ongoing quest to seek out his father illustrates, he accepts the infinite scope of his obligation. By not foreclosing or concluding his quest, Austerlitz, like Frame's character Mattina, accepts the infinite responsibility of the witness whose duty ironically depends on failure for its success. The success of witnessing does not depend on the production of an authoritative account of what happened (the Said) but, instead, on its very failure to produce such account. This failure, in turn, is the very success of witnessing since, without such an account, the witness's obligations to the Other cannot end and the past cannot be laid to rest. Identifying the paradox of the witness's position as one who is responsible but without the ability to respond adequately, Douglass and Volger argue that "the universally acknowledged inadequacy of words leads to the production of yet more words that can only confirm their inadequacy because more is never enough" (44). Thus, they conclude, "nothing can be added, in the sense of contributing towards an advance, […] towards some conceivable form or mode of closure" (44). Austerlitz can never close the door on his parents' past but must continue searching. Moreover, he sacrifices the personal interest he has in recuperating his parents' past when he gives all of the photographs in his collection to the narrator. Through this act, Austerlitz relinquishes a universalising perspective that attempts to claim sovereignty over the present and the Other, and accepts the burden of the witness which extends to an indeterminate future.

Like Austerlitz, the narrator's role, according to Greg Bond, "is reduced to that of witness" (42). However, while Bond considers Austerlitz to be a more "authentic" text than Sebald's other works because, as he explains, it "is refreshingly free of Sebald's own confessional, first-person accounts" (42), the narrator shares with Sebald a familial connection to the German aggressors of World War II. The narrator's biographical background raises a number of pressing issues about the structure of a novel which presents a German narrator recounting the traumatic past of

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40 Using Levinas's philosophy to theorise a post-Holocaust ethics, Bernard-Donals emphasises the importance of the witness's account which, he argues, "produces not so much an account of events (a testimony) as an account of the rupture of language and the void of memory" (2).
a Jewish child survivor of World War II. Through presuming to speak on behalf of Jewish victims, is the narrator repeating the crimes of the Holocaust and silencing the Jewish population with his own authoritative version of what happened? Or, are Sebald's descriptions of the narrator's struggles with his own traumatic past perhaps even more disconcerting in that they disperse the reader's sympathy between World War II victims and perpetrators? Reading the narrator's relationship with Austerlitz as an example of the ego's indebtedness to the Other, I argue that the narrator neither appropriates the Other's voice nor occupies the position of victim. Instead, Levinas's account of the ego's asymmetrical relationship with the Other and the ego's passivity in its role as the one accused, obligated and even persecuted by the Other provides a framework for reading the narrator's ethical role as a responsible witness and not a usurper of the Other's plight.

Sebald maintains a distance between the narrator and Austerlitz which prevents the narrator from identifying with Austerlitz. Instead, Austerlitz resembles a Levinasian Other who both disturbs and interrupts the narrator and who remains elusive. While the narrator's initial encounter with Austerlitz at a train station appears like an example of the typical casual acquaintance which is formed between travellers who are attempting to pass the time, it already begins by establishing their prospective roles: Austerlitz is the narrator and the narrator is the listener. Their subsequent encounters are either marked by their randomness or initiated by Austerlitz who, in one example, sends the narrator a postcard with the simple inscription: "Saturday 19 March, Alderney Street, followed by a question mark and a capital A for Austerlitz" (166). Like the ego, who is assigned to subjectivity by the Other, the narrator is "summoned to appear [and] called to an inalienable responsibility" ("Enigma" 74). Thus the narrator is subject to Austerlitz's summons. Lacking the typical stock-phrases of the postcard format, Austerlitz does not translate the intimacy of their acquaintance into conventional language. Similarly, in each subsequent meeting with the narrator, Austerlitz does not bother with conversational formalities but continues his narrative as if no time has passed. Sebald does not present the intimacy between the two men through conventional patterns of social behaviour; instead, as the narrator realises, his relationship with Austerlitz is both "a close and a distant one" (46). While the narrator initially worries over why Austerlitz has taken so long to arrange their next meeting, he later realises that Austerlitz does not abide by a Newtonian form of time but exists in a time where "certain moments had no beginning or end" (165).
Outside of time, Austerlitz resembles a Levinasian Other who cannot be classified in terms of presence and absence and whose pattern of behaviour does not coincide with the ego's own. Nevertheless, the narrator is drawn to Austerlitz and experiences an intimacy which, if judged in accordance with conventional social standards, is distant, but when viewed in terms of ethics is the greatest intimacy the ego will ever encounter.

While the novel juxtaposes the narrator's record of his conversations with Austerlitz alongside his thoughts on Austerlitz, the narrator's attempts to categorise Austerlitz always remain incomplete. It is not the narrator's role to define Austerlitz but, instead, as Sebald suggests, it is the narrator's passivity which defines his responsibilities to Austerlitz. Sebald illustrates the narrator's subjection to Austerlitz when they meet twenty-years later. Visiting an optometrist in London, the narrator undergoes a series of tests in order to address his failing vision. While initially the narrator is concerned about his declining sight, he also comes to welcome the "release" it will provide him from the external world (48). Thus the narrator envisions and even welcomes the possibility of "sitting in a wicker chair in a garden, surrounded by a world of indistinct shapes" (48). Weary with the world, the narrator seeks an escape from existence and a relinquishment of his responsibilities. However, it is at this point that he encounters Austerlitz again and is symbolically summoned to face his obligations and responsibilities. Despite his weariness with existence, the narrator is subjected to Austerlitz and required to undertake the role of witness.

Passive, obsessed, and even persecuted by Austerlitz, the narrator's identity is determined by his role as a witness to Austerlitz's story. While the danger of identification and appropriation always hovers over the narrator's account of Austerlitz, Stuart Taberner argues that in Austerlitz "the temptation to submerge the German experience of this catastrophe into the Jewish is always rejected" (189). According to Taberner, the narrator's role as a "literary device" is highlighted through "the insistent insertion of markers of Austerlitz's ownership of his history" (189). These include the 'he saids' which repeatedly conclude each section of the narrator's accounts, the insertion of photographs taken by Austerlitz and the narrator's passivity before the enigmatic Austerlitz. The narrator's ongoing indebtedness to Austerlitz and inability to assume and present an authoritative account of the past is emphasised by the conclusion of the work. The novel ends with the narrator turning to a book that was given to him by Austerlitz, a symbolic gift that emphasises the narrator can never
claim direct access to the past but must work from secondary sources. Moreover, the book, which contains the account of another Austerlitz-like figure's attempt to uncover his family's past, highlights that the narrator's role as a witness to the past, even if indirect, does not end with Austerlitz but is ongoing.

While, in Austerlitz, unlike in The Rings of Saturn, specific characters perform the role of the Other who traumatises the ego and awakens ethical responsibility, these characters remain elusive and indeterminate. Thus even the readers of Austerlitz find themselves summoned by the Other and they too must ensure that when they finish Austerlitz they do not attempt to foreclose the enigmatic incomprehensibility of the eponymous hero through viewing his identity as the product of a causal pattern of identifiable loss. If the condition of melancholy is to reach its ethical potential in Sebald's works, we must allow its traumatic and incomprehensible traces to resonate.

6.3 Ethical Remembrance
The overarching ethical impetus that drives Sebald's works' obsessive preoccupation with the past is an attempt to respond to the question, what characterises an ethical relationship with the past? For Sebald, an ethical form of remembrance must evoke the infinite debt of the present to the past, but at the same time requires that this debt remain unfulfilled and ongoing. This ensures a model of time as openness which will not foreclose the future, allowing future generations to enter a more just society. Through inserting enigmatic references to pieces of silk and moths, Sebald performs a model of remembrance that exceeds the present of the text. These puzzling references, whether to silk in The Rings of Saturn or to moths in Austerlitz, evoke the principles and structure of an enigma. For Levinas, the enigma disturbs the ego's being and resists being incorporated into the ego's presence. As an indication that simultaneously signals its withdrawal, an enigma neither belongs to the present nor to the past charted by a Newtonian form of time. Instead, for Levinas, the enigma concerns subjectivity and re-presents the state of an ego that has been summoned and assigned. Disturbing the linear narrative, Sebald's enigmatic references create their own network which both induces the reader to construct an overall comprehensive schema and simultaneously refutes the comprehensibility and plausibility of such an order. Sebald's enigmatic references are an example of a literary mode of representation which, according to Simon Ward, enacts a "simultaneous process of destruction and preservation" (64). Moreover, Ward argues that Sebald is an "artist
[who] sets about destroying his signifiers in order to arrive at an approximation of the trace" (64). The complex interweaving structure of the narrative indicates enigmas while, at the same time, signalling their withdrawal. This model of disturbance, or what Levinas calls the trace of the infinite, indicates Sebald's own treatise on ethical remembrance.

In *Austerlitz* Sebald alludes to the mind's inability to contain and capture the past through the analogy of developing photographs. Recounting his fascination with his "photographic work," Austerlitz describes "the moment when the shadows of reality […] emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long" (109). In its relationship with the past, the ego is capable of only ever carrying out an alternating process of underexposure, where the past remains forgotten, or overexposure, where the past is darkened by the ego's recollections. Like the Parisian Library which carries out its own process of overexposing the past, the ego always encounters the past on its own terms. As a consequence, the past recedes further and further from the ego as it creates and constructs a version of the past which meets its own needs. Sebald thus suggests that if we are to allow the past to resonate, it must, like the enigma, remain beyond the grasp of the present. Similarly this is the role that Dan Stone affords to the historian: one of "ensuring that the presence of the past is never assumed, and instead stressing the fact that in its perpetual coming to presence, it is radically unattainable" (31–32).

In the discipline of history there is an increasing recognition of the ethical importance of relationships with the past that do not presume the present generation's sovereignty to authoritatively and comprehensibly present the past. In *Constructing the Holocaust*, Stone singles out the Holocaust as that which "requires us to rethink our relationship with the past" (1). According to Stone, the Holocaust has given historians cause to reflect on their methodologies and revealed the numerous "pitfalls of historicism," including "teleology, implicit progress, an objectification of the past, [and] determinism" (2). These frameworks of historicism are rendered questionable by the Holocaust because, as Stone explains, "the Holocaust […] questions notions of historical truth and cognitive rationality, because these concepts are part of the cultural and scientific milieu implicated in the rise of Nazism" (22). Stone thus proposes that the methodologies utilised by historicism are inappropriate tools to represent the Holocaust, an event which demonstrates the violent consequences of
assimilative practices. Like Stone, LaCapra, questions whether historians' "conventional techniques [...] are ever sufficient" ("Representing the Holocaust" 110). In response to the impasse which studies of the Holocaust precipitate—between silence on the one hand and normative narrative practices on the other—LaCapra argues that historians must acknowledge the "dialogic dimension of historical study" ("Representing the Holocaust" 127). This characterisation of the historian's relationship to the past as dialogic or as a "process of negotiation" (104), as Jay proposes, contests the traditional view of the past as at the disposal of the all-encompassing gaze of the historian. Stone thus proposes that historians need to work within, and not attempt to evade, "the logic of representation [which] includes its own impossibility (the desire to give presence to what is not present)" (30). This requires that "the recognition of this condition should become the starting point for renewed thought" (30) which not only undermines historians' assumed sovereignty over the past but also renders redundant their utilisation of assimilative techniques. This model of thinking of the historian's relationship with the past as contingent, and thus subject to future interruptions, indirectly enacts a form of ethical justice.

Unlike the justice of the political realm, ethical justice is defined by the ego's asymmetrical relationship to the Other or what Levinas describes as the ego's obsession and persecution by the Other which precedes intentional reflection, judgment or action. The ego does not occupy the position of judge but rather that of the accused and thus becomes an indirect messenger of the Other's plight. In accordance with Levinas's critique of a metaphysics of presence, the ego as messenger that attempts to represent the fullness of the past (the Said) will always produce a betrayal. However, in accordance with Stone's argument, the self as passive messenger, who always begins and ends his account with an acknowledgment of its contingency and reliance on an absence, forgoes his or her sovereignty for the sake of the Other. Such accounts respect the asymmetrical relationship between the ego and the Other, that is to say, an ethical relation of justice.

In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's fleeting references to silk in a variety of different historical contexts evokes a model of time where the past is not at the beck and call of the narrator but, instead, intrudes and disturbs the narrative. Sebald first refers to silk when describing the scrap of silk which Thomas Browne found in one of the urns he was investigating when writing *Urn Burial*. While for Thomas Browne, as the narrator explains, the surviving relics found in such urns were "symbols of the
indestructibility of the human soul" (26), the narrator is more hesitant in his interpretation, and thus asks: "That purple piece of silk he refers to, then, in the urn of Patrolus – what does it mean?" (26). Located in an urn at an archaeological site, Sebald's enigmatic piece of silk reverberates with Freud's archaeological metaphor for how the mind stores the past. Freud argues that the human mind's relationship to the past resembles an archaeological site where remains of the past lay covered by layers of the earth. Thus Freud proposes that "just as the archaeologist builds up the walls of the building from the foundations that have remained standing [...] so does the analyst proceed when he draws his inferences from the fragments of memories, from the associations and from the behaviour of the subject of the analysis" (Standard Edition 259). However, Sebald's narrator does not share Freud's certainty that "it depends only upon analytic technique whether we shall succeed in bringing what is concealed completely to light" (Standard Edition 260). Unlike Freud, the narrator, upon finding fragments of the past, repeatedly refrains from imposing his own interpretation on its meaning.

In response to the question posed at the end of chapter one, "what does it mean?" Sebald encourages the reader to respond through inserting various references to silk throughout The Rings of Saturn. From the silken tapestries which adorn Somerleyton Hall in chapter two to the silken rope which is used by a member of the House of Lords to end his own life in chapter nine, Sebald inserts enigmatic references to silk which the reader is unable to translate into a comprehensive interpretative schema. In the last chapter, Sebald provides his most extensive discussion of the silk trade and the effect it had on all aspects of society, whether economic trade in the nineteenth-century or the subsequent utilisation of silk production by the Nazi party in the twentieth-century. However, despite following these traces, the reader comes no closer to creating a comprehensive framework which can explain the overall meaning of silk in the economy of the text. Sebald's enigmatic references serve only to emphasise the elusive nature of the past which, like its silken emblem, appears and disappears in the present without assuming a presence which could contain its meaning. Both the narrator and reader are unable to produce a comprehensive narrative that can position the past in a linear continuum.

Similarly, in Austerlitz, Sebald's references to moths invoke the reader's frustrated ability to define and contain Austerlitz's and the narrator's past. Sebald's moths signal the ephemeral passing of the past which continues to shadow the present
but fails to come to light. Describing the "trails of light" which moths appear to leave, Alphonso explains to his nephew Gerald and Austerlitz that they "were merely phantom traces created by the sluggish reaction of the human eye, appearing to see a certain afterglow in the place from which the insect itself, shining for only the fraction of a second in the lamplight, had already gone" (131). The phantom-like traces of the moth's flight act as an analogy of Austerlitz's relationship to the past. While at times it appears that Austerlitz has recalled his past, when he looks more closely he finds it is a trick of the eye and his parents continue to recede from his gaze. Like the moth's flight paths, the past acts as an enigma which simultaneously disturbs the present and indicates its own withdrawal. Both the character and the novel, Austerlitz, espouse a relationship to the past which insists on humans' ethical responsibility while also warning of the violence of presuming that the past can be recalled in accordance with the ego's terms. Ephemeral, evanescent and spectral, the past is not for the ego to define but that which defines humans as, above all, subject to the Other. This is perhaps best illustrated by the game of patience that Austerlitz must play with regard to the past as he shuffles the many photographs he has taken throughout his life:

He sometimes sat there for hours, laying out these photographs or others from his collection the wrong way up, as if playing a game of patience, and that then, one by one, he turned them over, always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw, pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances, or withdrawing them from the game until [...] there was nothing left but the grey tabletop. (167–68)

Austerlitz accepts his subservience to the past; it is not his role to dictate its emergence but instead to await the inevitable interruptions of his present by past and future generations.

Not seeking justice on his own behalf or a form of justice that is played out in legal institutions, Austerlitz desires the justice that Levinas argues originates in the ethical relationship. He recognises that there is something disturbing, perhaps even abhorrent, in the practice of linking memory to 'political' justice. Writing in the context of the Nazi War Crime trials that followed World War II and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that followed the end of Apartheid in South Africa, Langer argues that "the effort to link memory to justice is nothing more than an illusion fostered by our own wish to believe that we can somehow compensate for the anguish" (83). Critical of the healing paradigm that these political forums adopted
with regard the survivors' traumatic memories, Langer, in contrast, insists that "such memories have no motive. They are 'kept alive' and refuse to die by their own forlorn gravity" (96). Sebald's enigmatic references to scraps of silk and moths are metaphors for this type of disinterested enduring memory. They position the narrator as a passive messenger who must allow the enigma of memory to upturn his present. So too, perhaps, the same can be said of the readers of Sebald's enigmatic works. They are also obligated by an ethical responsibility which requires that they do not curtail Sebald's representations of the past: it is not their role to decipher these enigmatic images or to provide an answer to Sebald's question—'what does it mean?'—but, instead, they are compelled to pursue the enigmas' trails through history and play a game of patience. Such patience is preferable to what Langer describes as "preposterous" healing paradigms (96); moreover, such patience precipitates a form of ethical justice that serves enduring memories. It is, perhaps, in recognition of the way in which an enigmatic form of memory work can serve ethical justice that Sebald declared in an interview: "I content myself with the role of messenger" ("Recovered Memories"). The enduring significance of Sebald's prose may lie in the fact that like his eponymous protagonist, Austerlitz, Sebald now occupies the posthumous role of a facilitator for the ongoing dialogue between literature, history and ethics, a subject to which I will now return to in my conclusion.
CONCLUSION

Literature as an Ethical Openness to the Future

Janet Frame's and W. G. Sebald's repeated reflections on the violence that has ensued from an ontological model of time renders it unclear if they are also potentially acting as doomsday prophesiers, that is to say, if they are restricted to viewing the future as a continuation of the physical and conceptual violence that they have both claimed scars the past. In the works discussed in this thesis, both writers exhibit an anxiety over using a medium predisposed to violence; moreover, this anxiety is so pervasive that they also appear to be warning of the eventual destruction of language itself. By way of conclusion, I want to address the apocalyptic dimension that permeates both Janet Frame's and W. G. Sebald's prose.

The apocalyptic image that perhaps best reflects both writers' position with regard to the future is Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* (1920). Discussed in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, the painting, according to Sebald's quotation of Walter Benjamin, depicts the angel of history whose face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (67–68)41

With its back to the future, the angel's steadfast gaze takes in the wreckage of the past and thus acts as a pessimistic foreshadowing of the downfall of humanity which appears unable to move forward. Unlike humans, who identify with a model of homogeneous time which establishes causal connections between successive moments, the angel invokes a different experience of time. "Bypass[ing] history's successive, causal, temporal structure," the angel, as Robert S. Lehman argues, "sees history […] without reading it" (247). The angel sees a single catastrophe whereas humans, by contrast, use a linear model of temporality to read the past, to forge a pattern of meaning and thus to tame the uncertainty of time. The angel stands with its

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back to the future because humans' translation of time into the knowable also means that the defining aspect of the future, its unexpectedness, has been removed. For the angel, this means that there is no future to face just a continuous moment of destruction. Humanity is left thus facing the wreckage of its self-conceit that time was a continuous unfolding of human advancement—the guarantee of self-certainty. Modernity's progress-inflected narrative of time is reduced in the painting to another example of humans' propensity to identify with saviours but, in this case, it is time that is identified with this divine role and, moreover, somewhat poetically, it is the unfolding of time—or the wreckage piling before the angel's eyes—that reveals people's error. While the painting is typically used in support of Marxist ideologies, it also illustrates Levinas's contention that the ego's synchronised model of time enacts violence. The angel's inability to face a future which has been destroyed by humans assumes ethical significance. The future as that which "is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us," according to Levinas, determines "the very relationship with the other [which] is the relationship with the future" (Time 77); thus, to have nullified the future is also to have overlooked the ego's relationship with the Other. In turning to the past through their works, Frame and Sebald seek an ethical response to trauma. Their response, which rethinks the confinement of the past within a homogeneous model of time, however, may also be able to alleviate the angel's terror through resurrecting the future not as the moment which leads to further destruction, but as the time which heralds ethical relationships.

An Apocalyptic Future
Frame's and Sebald's works foreshadow that the close of the twentieth century will produce an apocalyptic moment where it must face the destruction that it has wrought at the expense of the Other. In this thesis I have argued that both writers have attempted to resurrect an other model of time from the wreckage of a metaphysics of presence. In the place of an ontological model of time that prioritises presence, both writers propose an ethical model of time that begins with the Other and one that contests the self-certainty of their own representational practices. Both writers demonstrate through their works that a deconstruction of the present moment can allow an ethical response to the past to emerge. However, their depiction of the violence and melancholy that ensues from such a deconstruction of time superficially appears to produce a vision of a future that is progressing to a final moment of violent
apocalypse. Apocalypse, a term that originally resonates with the Christian belief that humans are doomed to face God's vengeance for failing to abide by his commandments, denotes the end of humanity. The depiction of an apocalyptic-styled-end in literature thus fits within a metaphysics of presence because it implicitly proposes a binary construction where a beginning is to replaced by its opposite, an end. By contrast, secular accounts of the apocalypse emphasise that a temporal framework which divides time into distinct phases of beginnings and ends reinstates order and thus may in fact provide humans with a form of consolation. In his literature-based examination of apocalypse theory, Kermode's argument that crisis is a "central element in making sense of our world" (94) suggests that fiction which represents apocalyptic scenes, far from breaking with thought as we know it, restructures it through an apocalyptic framework that reinstates order. Anton Kaes provides such an example of apocalyptic imagery's role in reaffirming order when he proposes that "the longing for the apocalypse and the end of the history may be provoked by the utopian hope to begin once more, to create a pure moment of origin that is not contaminated by history" (222). The havoc and destruction that ensues from the apocalypse is always thus tempered by a utopian vision of new beginnings.

In these concluding remarks I want to examine the pivotal role that both writers' evocation of apocalyptic images play in advancing a form of time that precipitates neither a return to the self-certainty of a temporal narrative of progress, nor a descent into chaos, the angel's vision of humans' fate. Frame's and Sebald's representation of the past as diachrony "does not gather into re-presentation" and, thus their writing can be said to be "at the bottom of the concreteness of the time that is the time of my responsibility for the Other" ("Diachrony" 112). Through their apocalyptic images, Frame and Sebald promote the ongoing temporal uncertainty of a diachronic past which, although an example of a destructive and violent time, performs its violence in the name of ethics. Their works' identification of a form of ethics which emerges from such a time, far from heralding the end of literature and history, catalyses their ethical resurrection in the twenty-first century, gesturing toward a future that is neither more of the Same nor one that brings the end of humanity.

In Frame's The Adaptable Man Little Burgestatham's predilection for apocalyptic-styled gossip, such as, for example, the threat of the London overspill, is the source of Frame's ridicule but she warns that this threat must also be taken seriously as that which leads to exclusionary communal practices. However, twenty-
three years later, in *The Carpathians*, Frame's tone towards beliefs in an ensuing apocalypse change. She no longer pokes fun at her characters' paranoia but, instead, offers apocalyptic images as the source of her novel's central literary conceit: the Gravity Star. An astrological phenomenon that heralds the end of time (or at least a model of time with which humans are familiar), the Gravity Star triggers a calamity of apocalyptic proportions. Under the influence of the Gravity Star, the residents of Kowhai Street "experienced the disaster of unbeing, unknowing, that accompanies death" (129). Frame's writing thus radically shifts from a critical evaluation of her characters' exaggerated fears of an ensuing apocalypse, which she suggests supports their sovereignty at the expense of others, to a paradoxical affirmation of representations of the apocalypse. Frame thus appears to concur with the angel's vision of humans' fate. With the primordial screams of the Kowhai Street residents echoing from *The Carpathians* pages, Frame's grim images of human "hopelessness" share with *The Adaptable Man* a presentiment that no further evolution of thought is possible (127). Her last novel thus could be said to depict the Adaptable Man at the last stage of his evolution which, catalysed by the loss of language, is a descent into meaningless darkness.

Like Frame's novels, both of Sebald's works discussed here present the dawning of the apocalypse and its frightening aftermath. In *The Rings of Saturn* the 1987 hurricane which wreaked havoc on the East coast of England leaves behind a "ghastly emptiness" (266). Recounting the harrowing scene from his window the next morning, the narrator explains how "it seemed as if someone had pulled a curtain to one side to reveal a formless scene that bordered upon the underworld. And at that very moment that I registered the unaccustomed brightness of the night over the park, I knew that everything down there had been destroyed" (266). However, unlike Mattina in *The Carpathians*, the narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* does not recount the frightening screams which accompany such extensive apocalyptic destruction but, instead, the deathly silence: the absence of "a living sound" (268). Similarly, in *Austerlitz*, silence ensues from Sebald's apocalyptic image of a dark mine chasm which represents one man's inability to access his lost past. Depicting this viewpoint, the narrator describes how it was "truly terrifying to see such emptiness open up a foot away from firm ground, to realize that there was no transition, only this dividing line, with ordinary life on one side and its unimaginable opposite on the other" (414). Through the link of this apocalyptic image to a "vanished past" (414), Sebald suggests
that the apocalypse is not a singular event but, rather, is a recurring element of the present moment which is unable to curtail the past's strangeness. Like Frame, Sebald's depictions of apocalyptic-like scenes suggest that no further evolution of human thought is possible. Moreover, like the angel, he reveals that progress is not the unfolding of human time toward a future but a single moment of destruction. Critical of the human time of progress, Sebald foreshadows the endpoint of history where the past can no longer be thematised from the viewpoint of the present.

What is the reader to make of both writers' gesture towards the apocalypse in their works? Are their apocalyptic images merely symptomatic of their own era, which has been itself characterised by its numerous ends? According to Derrida's 1984 essay "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," this is the era which, if we are to believe the apocalyptic declarations of multiple disciplines, has witnessed "the end of history, the end of the class struggle, the end of philosophy, the death of God, the end of religions, the end of Christianity and morals […], the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West" (20–21). While Frame's and Sebald's adoption of apocalyptic images resonates with their era's predilection to declare various ends, I argue that they neither simply concur with these declarations nor seek to reinstate order. Instead, their writing reflects Kermode's description of apocalyptic themes in literature as denoting a "painful transitional situation" (122). Unlike Kermode, however, Frame's and Sebald's writing presents this situation as an ongoing moment of transition. Their works can thus be seen to fully embrace the end of the twentieth century's unique apocalyptic imagination: the denial of a new beginning. They evoke the destructive properties of a diachronic model of time which does not conform to the temporal logic of a metaphysics of presence. This means that Frame and Sebald never present diachrony as a replacement for the continuous time of history: their works thus do not signal a definitive end or a new beginning. Instead, for Frame and Sebald, the destructive properties of the time of diachrony provide a means to interrupt the ego's stronghold on presence.

The apocalyptic conceit of a painful transitional situation can be used as a paradigm to explore the shift in style which characterises Frame's and Sebald's novels. The two writers, as this thesis has shown, move in opposite literary directions. In the case of Frame, the shift is towards a more experimental prose in her last novel *The Carpathians* compared to that used in *The Adaptable Man*. Significantly, Frame's experimentation with more radical narrative techniques in *The Carpathians* is
accompanied by a revision of her treatment of apocalyptic themes. No longer a source of ridicule, the apocalypse becomes, in *The Carpathians*, a key means through which Frame attempts to challenge ontological thought structures. One possible way of explaining Frame's willingness to adopt more experimental literary techniques is to view *The Carpathians* as a literary response to the complacency and violence that her earlier novel depicted as characterising the Little Burgelstatham community. In order to shake this complacency and the foundations of a metaphysics of presence upon which it rests, Frame proposes the need for a radical interruption of ontological premises which, in turn, requires an event of apocalyptic proportions: the coming of the Gravity Star. However, Frame's subsequent embrace of apocalyptic imagery is perhaps a risky venture. It requires her reader to think of the apocalypse as neither producing a definitive end, since the Kowhai Street residents do not die but are in fact carted away by mysterious officials, nor announcing a new beginning, as the next day language, despite its apparent destruction in the falling of the midnight rain, continues to be at Mattina's disposal. Frame challenges her reader to accede to a time that does not conform to their expectations. She introduces a model of diachronic time that on the one hand mimics the violence of the apocalypse but, on the other hand, does not propose that the only possible alternative to reason is a primordial guttural scream.

By contrast, Sebald adopts a more conventional novel format in his last work *Austerlitz* compared to his earlier work *The Rings of Saturn*. Like Frame, Sebald's shift in narrative style is accompanied by a change in his treatment of apocalyptic themes. In *The Rings of Saturn* Sebald's post-apocalyptic vision of a barren world that is eerily silent resonates with his narrative's overwhelming melancholic sentiment. Despite earlier rejecting Peter Morgan's suggestion that *The Rings*' melancholy is at risk of becoming a narcissistic meditation of the ego's loss at the expense of real victims, I nonetheless agree with his overall assessment that the novel's melancholic tone is perhaps too pervasive. So predominant is the narrator's melancholic suffering in *The Rings* that, as I argued in Chapter Six, it is at risk of invoking the reader's empathy for the traumatised ego at the expense of the Other's plight. As if addressing this dilemma in *Austerlitz*, Sebald frames his characters' experience of melancholy through their personal relationships with the past. Sebald's apocalyptic tone in his last novel retreats from *The Rings*' vision of humanity's descent into nothingness and silence and paradoxically uses an image of a dark impenetrable chasm in order to redirect the reader's focus to people's ethical relationship to the Other of the past.
While this relationship is characterised by its inaccessibility, Sebald still validates the role of those who choose to cross over the divide and enter the realm of this unimaginable chasm.

Like Frame's and Sebald's writing, various academic disciplines at the end of the twentieth century have entered a painful transitional phase which is marked by its uncertainty. The readiness with which these disciplines have attempted to overcome this phase of constitutional uncertainty is reflected by their adoption of an apocalyptic tone which is used to declare the end of a number of their fundamental theoretical premises. For example, Michel Foucault's emphatic assertion: "I do indeed believe that there is not a sovereign founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere" (*Politics* 50), is used to conclude that the postmodern era has led to the death of man. Similarly, Derrida's oeuvre is readily used to support a view of language as irreverent, superficial and empty play. Even history, as Francis Fukuyama somewhat nostalgically declares, has come to an end. This propensity to declare ends and deaths resembles Levinas's account of the ego for whom death is to "have gone to the end of thought and meaningfulness" (*Diachrony* 116). But, as Levinas warns, this account of new beginnings and definite ends only applies to a model of time that treats the subject as its primary concern. Similarly, it is not difficult to overturn such emphatic declarations of finality through paying closer attention to the arguments of the key critics whose work purportedly supports such conclusions. Thus Foucault does not proclaim the death of the subject but rather the death of a specific Cartesian model of the subject; Derrida does not declare the end of language's ability to convey meaning but rather of the proposition that language enjoys a mimetic relationship with the real; and finally, Fukuyama does not announce the end of history but instead that of a particular ideological model of progress.

While the above responses to this particular era's apocalyptic penchant for declaring ends are relatively widely accepted now, there still hovers a lingering doubt about postmodern literature and ethics. The return of ethics in 1987 as a viable, and indeed pressing, concern for a range of disciplines, including literature, was a response, as Geoffrey Harpham suggests, to the Paul de Man controversy. The discovery that de Man, a deconstructionist of the Yale School, had published anti-Semitic articles during World War II provided an opportunity for some to dismiss theories which challenge a metaphysics of presence as an inherently unethical model of thought. The initial stage of reintroducing ethical inquiry into academic debate thus
precipitated a backlash against literature and theories which undermine an ontological model of thought, since they had purportedly also removed the position from which responsibility could be assumed, the self. In turn, theorists, such as Robert Eaglestone and Zygmunt Bauman, have responded to this backlash by signalling the way in which a model of ethics can emerge from a deconstruction of a metaphysics of presence. However, the critical readings of Frame's and Sebald's postmodern stylistic techniques reveal an ongoing reluctance to attribute to such techniques an ethical impetus. My reading of Frame's and Sebald's writing through the conceptual framework of Levinas's philosophy provides a method of both responding to these criticisms of a model of ethics which destabilises the subject and of signalling the ethical significance of time in the postmodern novel. Moreover, both writers' presentations of the apocalypse as an ongoing painful transitional moment demonstrates a way of re-thinking this era's various declarations of multiple ends. Instead of reinstating order or acceding to irrationalism, both writers' apocalyptic themes epitomise our current era's need to reclaim the subject, language and the past. However, such an act of reclaiming will not be performed on behalf of the ego and thus requires a radical break with a metaphysics of presence. It consists, as Levinas argues, "in understanding, in the finite being of the mortal being starting from the Other's face, the meaning of a future beyond what happens to me" ("Diachrony" 116).

Levinas's philosophy can thus be used to respond to Krishnan Kumar's diagnosis of the end of the twentieth century's apocalyptic imagination as "without a sense of the future" (205). Following the demise of faith in rationality and progress, the twentieth-century is unable to claim a future for the sovereign ego. However, if the twenty-first century chooses to follow the route of ethics we can re-discover a future that begins for the sake of the Other. Paradoxically, this alternative account of the future must be characterised as a rediscovery and not a new beginning because it emerges from the ego's pre-originary sense of responsibility for the Other. Moreover, this form of the future does not constitute a new beginning but, instead, requires that the ego undergoes a ceaseless process of interrogation and unravelling of the present moment. Such a future necessitates, I suggest, an evaluation of a number of the fundamental theoretical premises that have been pronounced to be at an end.

In Frame's and Sebald's writing the end of the twentieth century will not lead to a pre-Enlightenment apocalypse, a descent into irrationalism, but rather to a form of apocalypse that concords with this era's ethical responsibility to respond to the
traumatic legacy of the twentieth century, that is to say, one that reinstates ethics as first philosophy. This is the significance of Levinas's philosophy: it does not herald the end of ontology and the Said but instead proposes a form of ethics that "is [...] the persistent deconstruction of the limits of ontology and its claim to conceptual mastery, while also recognizing the unavoidability of the Said" (Critchley, Introduction 18). This is the modern apocalypse: not a catastrophic moment of ends, but a continuous moment of transition. This means that ours will not be an era where the Said is destroyed once and for all but, rather, one that continues to search for ways of signalling the Saying within the Said. This, ultimately, is the reason why I suggest that literature's treatment of time can convey its ethical impetus. Through deconstructing the present, Frame and Sebald both enact an ethical response to the past and ensure a more just future which does not end our responsibility but continually reinstates it.

An Ethics for Tomorrow

The conjunction that this thesis has presented between Levinas's ethics and Frame's and Sebald's writing responds to a reductive view of postmodernity as an era which "dwells obsessively on the end, without any expectation of a new beginning" (Kumar 207). Kumar's description of "postmodernists" as those who "take refuge in irony and a sort of juvenile frivolity, when they do not simply express boredom with the world" implies an inherent superficiality to postmodern writing (215). Jean-François Lyotard's characterisation of the postmodern condition in terms of the demise of all forms of master narratives supports Kumar's argument that a "compensating utopian vision" cannot emerge from postmodernity's fatalistic rhetoric of ends (212). However, despite postmodern writing's inability, and indeed refusal, to provide a compensatory utopian vision, its undermining of a metaphysics of presence invalidates Kumar's accusation that it is a frivolous enterprise. Like postmodern fiction, deconstruction undermines a metaphysics of presence. In The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas Critchley argues that deconstructive readings of philosophical texts employ an ethical impetus. In many respects, his argument, which is presented as a response to the critical view of deconstruction as an immoral and irreverent enterprise, has served as an important model from which I have structured my own argument against the critical view of postmodern literature as irreverent play.

In the field of literature, Linda Hutcheon contests Fredric Jameson's argument, in "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," that postmodern fiction
cannibalises the past and produces impersonal images which cannot envision a collective future. By contrast, Hutcheon argues that postmodern literature which highlights that the past is always a construction provides political awareness of the role that representation of the past plays in promoting hegemonic interests at the expense of the Other. My contribution to this debate is to argue that texts which demonstrate an ethical impetus through their deconstruction of time suggest that our 'collective future' will depend on the position we take with regard to the Other of the past. To adopt an ethically responsible position, as Levinas's unique account of ethics demonstrates, requires accepting ongoing instability. As such, it finds a ready ally in postmodern literature's disruptive stylistic techniques. Postmodern literary techniques produce a diachronic model of time that respects both the strangeness of the past and the unexpectedness of the future. From the point of view of ethics, postmodernity's "denial of an alternative" is not a weakness but its utmost strength (Kumar 210).

The assumption that postmodernity is an era that is antithetical to ethics continues to presuppose a particular way of understanding or defining what is meant by ethics. Summarising the view that the twentieth century's abandonment of a humanist model of ethics has meant the demise of all ethical thought, Bauman writes that "what has come to be associated with the notion of the postmodern approach to morality is all too often the celebration of the 'demise of the ethical'" (2). By contrast, in his own work *Postmodern Ethics*, Bauman, as the title suggests, argues that there is indeed a form of ethics that has emerged in our era and that it is distinguishable from previous or 'modern' forms of ethics. He writes:

The novelty of the postmodern approach to ethics consists first and foremost not in the abandoning of characteristically modern moral concerns, but in the rejection of the typically modern ways of going about its moral problems (that is, responding to moral challenges with coercive normative regulation in political practice, and the philosophical search for absolutes, universals and foundations in theory). (3–4)

Bauman's account of the differences between the modern and the current era's account of ethics indirectly presumes that one of the reasons why theorists have been so slow to recognise that theories which undermine a metaphysics of presence are examples of ethical thought is that they do not produce a set of rules or a template that outlines what is appropriate ethical behaviour. In apocalyptic terms, such a model of ethics does not propose a new beginning. Instead, it performs a persistent critique and revaluation of the frameworks and guidelines which purport to produce ethical
maxims or certainties. This distinction between a humanist model of ethics and Levinasian ethics is captured by his assertion that his project is an ethics of ethics; he is not presenting ethical guidelines (ethics) but attempting to suggest, without the use of ontology, why ethics are required in the first place (an ethics of ethics). Critchley's explanation that, for Levinas, "ethics is not the simple overcoming or abandonment of ontology, but rather the deconstruction of the latter's limits and its comprehensive claims to mastery" (*Ethics of Deconstruction* 8), emphasises that Levinas's ethics originates from the self's unique asymmetrical relationship with the Other and not from a position of ontological certainty or presence. For this reason, I argue that postmodern disruptive stylistic techniques, which produce ontological instability, lend themselves to the production of an ethics of ethics. By contrast, didactic forms of literature, which instruct the reader of the necessity of ethical regard for the Other, undermine the refusal of Levinasian ethics to provide ethical guidelines.

Performatively foregrounding the role that language plays in producing identification, postmodern language techniques persistently require the reader to interrogate how meaning is conveyed. As such, postmodern fiction uses a form of expression which signals beyond language's thematising function. Frame's and Sebald's thematic representations of the ethical relationship that emerges in a time beyond the self requires such a form of expression which does not reinstate the primacy of the subject's time. Thus, postmodern texts which use disruptive literary techniques do not reproduce an account of ethics as a form of master narrative or master code of prescribed ethical conduct but, instead, potentially perform an ethics of ethics which requires the ongoing interruption of any attempt to re-establish ontological certainty.

Ethically vigilant writers, Janet Frame and W. G. Sebald use literature to interrupt a metaphysics of presence. Both writers' innovative literary techniques have spawned a wide range of adjectives: a Framean writing style creates a Chinese-box structure of imploding narrative frames, while Sebaldian prose constructs a spiralling series of associations which defer meaning. Critics who attempt to locate Frame's and Sebald's respective writing within established literary classifications, such as modernism and postmodernism, encounter difficulties. These difficulties, I contend, reflect the ongoing reluctance to view postmodern literature as a suitable genre to convey ethics. Thus Sutherland, for example, in her literary classification of Janet Frame's works, identifies a "pivotal conflict […] between a modernist sensibility and post-modern experimentation with narrative structures" (106). Similarly, while
McCulloh argues that "Sebald's work clearly belongs to postmodernism" (Understanding Sebald 19), he nevertheless qualifies this argument by stating that "it is free of the irreverence characteristic of many postmodern writings" (19–20). What underlies the difficulties that Sutherland and McCulloh experience in classifying each of the respective writers' work is the ongoing hesitancy that critics display of attributing an ethical impetus to postmodern literary techniques. In this thesis I have suggested that reading both writers' works as enactments of a Levinasian ethics shows that their interruption of the Said—which is carried out through disruptive literary techniques—is not irreverent but, rather, signals an ethical commitment to the Other through unsettling ontological certainty.

Disturbing genre conventions and destabilising her narrative frames, Janet Frame's writing uses several postmodern disruptive stylistic techniques. Within her novels, shifting narrative frames prevent the reader from establishing a centre point from which they can authoritatively evaluate the truth of each character's point of view. Indeed, Janet Frame's writing implodes the idea of a stable and universal notion of truth and repeatedly frustrates the reader's attempt to construct an overall and comprehensive reading of her texts. "Undermin[ing] the reader's sense of interpretative self-assurance" (204), a Frame novel, according to Platz, "questions our culturally conditioned and therefore convenient models of interpretation" (211). Frame's writing thus contests the idea that literature is always an example of the production of the Same. This is not to claim that Frame's novels are incomprehensible. Frame's medium, language, requires that she abides by the conventions of the Said; however, her fiction always retains or gestures towards something that is inaccessible, unrepresentable and beyond the articulations of the Said. Thus Frame's postmodern literary techniques enact two simultaneous functions: they confer meaning through the Said but, simultaneously, undercut the authority and scope of this tenuous meaning by interrupting its pronouncement and gesturing to something else.

In an attempt to identify this second dimension to Frame's writing, critics have all-too-frequently used Frame's own difficult life as the signified outside the text which confers meaning to the signifier within the text. Such interpretations focus on Frame's life-long struggle with the cruelties of conformist societies and celebrate the artist-figure's perceptive vision of "something more." In many respects I do not contest this reading of Frame's works, since I have also argued that Frame's novels
express criticism of conformist societies or what I call communities of the Same. Nevertheless, I suggest that pursuing a biographical interpretation of Frame's texts is an example of critics using the philosophy of the Same to translate and contain the elusive dimension of her writing into the knowable. Critics who do not pursue a biographical meaning outside the text encounter difficulties in describing this elusive dimension to Frame's work because their tool of critique, language, is inadequate. These terminological difficulties are evident in Ash's description of The Carpathians as a novel that "subverts notions of 'truth'" but "remains firmly underpinned by a dependence on some inaccessible, but nevertheless existing 'hinterland' of essential truth" ("Narrative" 14). While Ash's point is valid, her attempts to describe Frame's hinterland resemble a Framean plot-line where truth is no longer truth; where "the homely words of [the] language of space and time appears useless, heaps of rubble" (Carpathians 14). Perhaps the impulse that these approaches to interpreting Frame's oeuvre share is both the recognition of a possible ethical impetus in her work and the desire to make this elusive dimension of Frame's writing penetrable. This impulse is demonstrated by Delrez's observation that "humanist readings of Frame usually assume the existence of a transcendental dimension which underlies her universe and which stands in inverse relations to her formal strategies" ("Conquest" 143). Such humanist readings of Frame's work translate its elusive quality into a conceit of the Same so that the 'beyond' in Frame's work is identified with the artist's privileged point of view of rising above worldly concerns and occupying an omnipresent position above others. Moreover, such humanist readings, as Delrez notes, assume that the fragmentary effects of Frame's formal strategies are in opposition to her novels' preoccupation with transcendence.

By contrast, I have proposed that reading Frame's works as enactments of a Levinasian ethics reveals how her disruptive stylistic experiments perform the undermining of ontological certainty which her thematic concerns are committed to re-presenting in the form of the Said. In The Adaptable Man these stylistic interruptions of the text take the form of an interjecting narrator and Frame's act of asking a question in her final pages which denies the reader the sense of closure that would restore temporal order to the novel's structure. In The Carpathians Frame pushes to the limit the integrity of the text's presence through supplanting each narrative frame with a larger and more fantastical alternative. In agreement with Delrez, I have argued that Frame has indeed offered a form of transcendence, but this
transcendence is one that is not pursued on an ontological plane through language's reinstatement of presence. Instead, both novels advocate a form of ethical transcendence that works in tandem with her disruptive literary techniques, that is to say, Frame opens her fictions to a Levinasian infinite which requires an ongoing unsettlement of their narrative structures. Frame's literary oeuvre can thus be characterised by its repeated encounters with the Gravity Star. Her novels seek in equal measures to be both close and far: close, in the sense that they attempt to annihilate language's retreat into the conformity of supermarket recognitions; and distant, in the sense that in order not to enact conceptual violence her literary techniques deny her reader the stability of familiar literary conventions. Far from invoking the destruction of language, Frame demonstrates a continued act of perseverance to wield an instrument that is both angel and monster.

Like Janet Frame's works, W. G. Sebald's writing challenges the notions of truth and unity. His prose is engaged in a continuous process of undermining its own pronouncements through acknowledging the unreliability of sources—whether that of the past, photographs, texts or the narrator's perspective. Through its various layers of hybridity, Sebald's prose occupies a position of in-betweness. Sebald's direct techniques of undercutting the Said are juxtaposed with his implicit undermining of narrative continuity through a circling, rambling prose which creates an echoing pattern of associations that threatens to evaporate under a thematising gaze. His texts are subject to a "Sebaldian logic" which, according to Arthur Lubow—a contributor to *The Threepenny Review* 's symposium on W. G. Sebald—undercuts binary oppositions, rendering the boundaries "between the dead and the living [...] arbitrary" (10). These oppositions which structure a metaphysics of presence are undone by a style of writing that upsets ontological premises. Described as a writer who "wrote like a ghost" ("Symposium" 2), Sebald uses his eerie prose to disturb the imperialism of the Same. The hesitancy which critics such as McCulloh exhibit in authoritatively designating Sebald's works as postmodern reveals an ongoing theoretical uncertainty over how postmodern literary techniques which undermine authoritative statements can convey ethics.

Like Frame's novels, Sebald's works are attributed with an elusive dimension which Scott Denham describes as "this going-beyond, this something more" (6). In his attempt to define this dimension, McCulloh identifies transcendence as an overarching conceit of Sebald's works. McCulloh's argument that Sebald's works' metaphysical
impulse to transcend "the finite moment through the perception and experience of beauty" ("Destruction" 398) harks back to a modernist literary tradition of highlighting characters' moments of being or epiphanies. However, McCulloh simultaneously signals the unsuitability of a modernist rhetoric to describe Sebald's works and emphasises that "Sebald's aesthetic of transcendence remains a skeptical, undogmatic one" ("Destruction" 404). McCulloh is in good company. Repeatedly critics acknowledge that the content of Sebald's works neither produces concrete and definite judgments, nor fits ready categories but, rather, acts as a form of expression or insistent reminder that thematisation is impossible. According to Gray Kochhar-Lindgren, the "paradoxical essence" of Sebald's works "is to pose the question of the truth of events in the act of writing without claiming the capacity to adequately respond to the question" (376). Thus, while I agree with McCulloh that Sebaldian prose gestures towards transcendence, I suggest that the reason he must insist on the novels' scepticism is that this is a form of transcendence which does not reaffirm the ego's coherent vision. Sebald's use of a form of language that "exceed[s] the limits of what is thought, by suggesting, letting be understood without ever making understandable, an implication of a meaning" seeks to transcend the assumption that the ego determines the meaning of the external world (Otherwise 169). Like Frame's novels, Sebald's postmodern writing style suits an ethical message that if we are to accept our responsibility to the past Other and the future Other, we must resist the temptation to translate their plight into the known. Through producing ontological instability at various textual levels, Sebald demonstrates his own cautious approach to wielding an instrument that is associated with the ego's "presumptuous" behaviour which can perform a "wrongful trespass" (Emigrants 29). His willingness to interrogate his own forms of re-presentation, whether linguistic or visual, suggests Sebald's ethical commitment to producing a form of utterance which acknowledges the ongoing need to inhabit a transitional moment where no declaration is final.

Revealing that ethics did not end in postmodernity and that postmodern literary techniques can be read as ethical responses to the Other, Frame's and Sebald's texts contribute to an overturning of the reductive view of postmodern literature as irresponsible and irreverent play. Moreover, their texts serve as examples of postmodern literature's ability to appropriate an apocalyptic tone in a way that does not support a descent into the irrational or into superficiality. Instead, through interrogating the way in which language conveys meaning, Frame's and Sebald's
writing dwells in an ongoing transitional moment which induces ontological instability, thus revealing the poorly acknowledged ethical impetus that may reside in postmodern literary techniques.

Reclaiming the Subject and History
Both writers' disruptive literary techniques are a stylistic means of responding to the ethical violence that their writing depicts as characteristic of modern societies that adhere to the principles of a metaphysics of presence. Frame and Sebald produce different, yet complementary, diagnoses of the conceptual violence that is enacted within contemporary societies, which institutionalise and legitimise a model of time that allows the ego to achieve stasis within the flow of time. For Frame, communal ideologies, which affirm the ego's stronghold on presence through interpellating the ego as a unique individual, legitimise the ego's preoccupation with its own time. Such communities, as is evident from Frame's depiction of two small-towns' exclusionary practices in *The Adaptable Man* and *The Carpathians*, cannot offer hospitality to those with whom they have nothing in common. For Sebald, modernity's present time-consciousness enacts a temporality that assures the ego of its sovereignty and all-encompassing gaze but also obscures its relationship with others. Traversing the twentieth-century, Sebald piles before the reader's eyes the wreckage that has ensued from an era's blind acceptance of clock-time's regulation of humans' interrelationships in time. Through undermining the ontological stability of their works' presence, both Frame and Sebald emphasise the need for a form of time that does not act in accordance with a metaphysics of presence: a model of time, that is to say, that will not support communities of the Same or condone their failure to address the past ethically. The full ethical import of postmodern disruptive literary techniques' undermining of ontological certainty, as argued in the final chapter on each writer, is linked to both writers' treatment of the two key concepts that have been most vociferously declared to be at an end: the subject and history. Through returning to these two themes now, I want to illustrate how an ethics which turns to a time beyond the self does not produce declarations of ends but, rather, signals the ongoing and future-directed ethical significance of the subject and the past.

The limitations of Descartes' model of the sovereign ego and its principal instrument, reason, have been exposed by the traumas of the twentieth century. Once heralded as both the upholder and foundation of humanism, the sovereign ego is no
longer cited as evidence of humanity's triumphs but as an instigator of a model of ethics which is unable to extend ethical regard to those who do not fit its egotistical vision. Writing in agreement with the dethroning of the ego from its sovereign position, Levinas accedes that "modern anti-humanism is no doubt right when it does not find in man understood as the individual of a genus or of an ontological region, an individual persevering in being like all substances, a privilege that would make of him the goal of reality" ("Humanism" 138). Nevertheless, Levinas affords the subject an important role in his philosophy; as he explains in an interview, "ethics redefines subjectivity as this heteronymous responsibility in contrast to autonomous freedom" ("Interview" 63). For Levinas, ethics requires that the ego's freedom no longer be placed above the Other's—a requirement which leads to his redefining the subject as a vulnerable site of passivity that is traumatised by its insurmountable responsibility for the Other. Levinas's model of the traumatised ego emphasises that ethics still needs the subject; moreover, it provides an alternative understanding of human relationships. It can provide possible relief to Fukuyama's ambivalence about the success of liberalism at the end of history, which has supplanted communal relationships with an excessive form of individualism. In this thesis I have used Levinas's model of the subject as the one who is obligated to the Other to propose an alternative vision of human relationships to that which is present in Frame's depiction of small-town communities of the Same and in Sebald's account of our history of untold violence.

Despite highlighting the ethical significance of the subject, Levinas's philosophy invites the accusation that it proposes a strange form of stasis and inactivity on the ego's behalf or what Critchley describes as an "ethical extremism," whereby "Levinas seems to be describing ethical responsibility as the maintenance of a permanent state of trauma" (E-P-S 205). In particular, my own decision to represent the ego's subjection to the Other through Frame's and Sebald's literary depictions of melancholy can be accused of supporting an obsessive dwelling on trauma which is unproductive. To be stuck in melancholy, as Kristeva's and LaCapra's works attest, generates lethargy in the subject for whom "no revolution is possible, there is no future" (Kristeva 60). Notwithstanding these possible criticisms, I contend that interpreting Frame's and Sebald's experimental literary techniques through a Levinasian framework can illustrate the way in which the ego's melancholic condition in fact requires a restless activity. Their works demonstrate the need for incessant
vigilance. Like the insomniac, their writing paces back and fourth over each utterance, emphasising its ontological instability. They enact a melancholic-styled examination of their representational practices for the sake of the Other which does not permit an egotistical dwelling on one's own pain. Instead, their vigilance ensures that the ego's needs are never privileged at the expense of the Other. Their writing results in an example of 'working through' trauma in an unexpected way, that is to say, their writing is never redemptive; instead, their questioning narratives are examples of a form of 'working through' which, as LaCapra suggests, "may itself require the recognition of loss that cannot be made good: scars that will not disappear and even wounds that will not heal" ("Representing the Holocaust 126). Far from joining those who celebrate the death of man, Levinas's philosophy acknowledges the need to reclaim the subject for the sake of an ethics that begins with the Other. Moreover, his emphasis on the ego's passivity requires that the ego continue to occupy a painful transitional moment where the future remains beyond its grasp and where a primordial past continues to beckon. Levinasian ethics does not lead to the unproductive outcome of a form of melancholy that focuses on the ego's trauma but, rather, to a form of language and self that restlessly paces the night, examining the violence of its own affirmation of being.

The other fundamental premise of a metaphysics of presence which has been declared to have reached its end is history. My reading of Frame's and Sebald's writing through a Levinasian framework directly responds to the purported demise of history. Each of the three separate grounds—ideological, conceptual and historical—that are used in order to support the declaration that history has come to an end reveals a failure to consider the way in which Levinasian ethics can reinstate the subject's ethical responsibility to the past. Fukuyama's ideologically framed argument proposes that we are witnessing "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (4). For Frame, to accede to the view that the evolution of Western liberal democracy is the endpoint of human relationships is to allow the exclusionary communal practices of towns such as Little Burgelstatham and Puamahara to flourish unimpeded. Her writing thus insists on the need to investigate social models that can provide a place for those with whom we have nothing in common. For Sebald, the excessive individualism of Western liberal democracy will precipitate the end of history, or rather of ethical relationships with
the past, and for this reason individualism represents mankind's devolution. Derrida's response to Fukuyama's argument that "it obliges one to wonder if the end of history is but the end of a certain concept of history" emphasises the necessity of limiting the scope of Fukuyama's assertion to its political context (Specters 15). Thus, while a Western outlook on politics may be ready to concede the end of history, Frame's and Sebald's writing demonstrates that an ethics which requires a turning to a past beyond the self is not.

The primary conceptual ground for declaring the end of history, or at least of authoritative narrative accounts of the past, rests on Levinas's argument that language as the Said always results in a betrayal. In turn, his emphasis that the Said is an example of the ego's reaffirmation of sovereignty reveals that language does not provide a transparent relationship to the real. Historians thus can no longer claim to present the past as it was but rather must acknowledge their own process and techniques of constructing the past for the present's benefit. In the context of historical accounts of the Holocaust, historians attribute our era's undermining of language's transparent relationship to the past with introducing a dangerous relativism into their discipline which can legitimate the accounts of Holocaust denialists. If historians cannot distinguish between accounts of the past in terms of an objective standard of truth because all written accounts are subject to the viewer's potential bias, then how is it possible to discredit Holocaust deniers' accounts? History, in accordance with this objection, may as well be dead because it can be appropriated and used to serve the interests of any party: everything is permitted.

Frame and Sebald advocate an ethical model of time which places the present generation in a position of subjection to the past. Both writers' preoccupation with the past produces in their works sustained meditations on the ways in which people access and re-present history. In accordance with Levinas's account of the ego, both writers reveal that people's relationship with the past, which is conducted through a variety of media and social practices, is always at risk of containing and thematising the past in order to satisfy the present generation's need for stability. In this thesis I have argued that despite Levinas's objection that remembrance is always carried out from a position of presence, his philosophy indirectly offers a model for an ethical form of re-membrance or 'memory-work.' Through his account of the subject's relationship to the Other, Levinas provides an ethical template for re-thinking the present's relationship with the past. Thus his emphasis on the ego's obligation towards the
Other and its position of passivity requires that the present generation occupies a position of ontological instability with regard to the past. Frame uses the image of a form of bodily memory that passes between generations in *The Adaptable Man* and of the witness's obligation in *The Carpathians* in order to depict the present's subjection to the past. Conversely, Sebald's use of ephemeral objects as metaphors for people's relationship to the past emphasises their lack of control over how the past will emerge in their present moment. Moreover, Austerlitz's postmemory, his attempt to reconstitute his parents' past through secondary accounts, suggests that Levinas's model of the present's relationship with the past is needed more than ever at the end of the twentieth century in order to ensure that our reconstructions of the past do not appropriate a previous generation's trauma.

Frame's and Sebald's depiction of the present's subjection to the past reverberates with Levinas's description of time as "passivity, deference beyond all that is assumed, irreversible de-ference" ("Old" 135). However, as in the case of their literary representations of melancholy, a question emerges as to whether or not Frame's and Sebald's Levinasian emphasis on the present's passivity with regard to the past can be charged with favouring inactivity, or more pointedly, are historians condemned to silence? In response to both writers' apparent abstract and impractical representation of the present generation's ethical responsibility toward the past Other, I contend that Frame's and Sebald's writing demonstrates the necessity of an ongoing process of scrutinising accounts of the past. Far from supporting inactivity, both writers' final novel proposes a model of ceaseless activity in order to meet our ethical responsibilities towards the past. In the case of Frame, this is evident in *The Carpathians* as Mattina incessantly retells her family of her time in Puamahara and pleads with them not to forget. She thus ensures that the burden of re-presenting the past will not die with her but will also obligate the next generation. Mattina's message of ethical vigilance with regard to the past is similarly depicted in *Austerlitz* through Sebald's description of the game of patience which his eponymous character must undergo. Shuffling through the many photographs that he has collected and inherited, Austerlitz embodies the commitment of one who knows he can never claim to know the past as it once was but who nevertheless must persevere. Like Mattina's insistence on remembering the past, Austerlitz's act of giving his collection of photographs to the narrator seeks to ensure that the present generation will continue to abide by their ethical responsibility to the past. Both writers' characterisation of the subject's ethical
relationship to the past—as vigilance in the case of Frame and as patience for Sebald—suggests that ethical accounts of the past must remain open to ongoing scrutiny which requires a ceaseless evaluation of our resources and techniques of expression. In acceding to their debt to the past Other, both writers also simultaneously demonstrate their dedication to the future Other through practising a form of time which produces interruption instead of foreclosing the future's strangeness. The future Other obliges them not to treat the future "as if it were only an unknown to know" (Levinas, "Old" 129), but to remain open to the yet to come: the unknown time of the future Other's approach.

The historical ground frequently used in support of the proposition that history is at an end is the Holocaust. However, in this thesis I have argued that it is the Holocaust's traumatic legacy that requires us both not to forget and to examine our relationship with the past. Adorno's dictum that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" thus does not support the erroneous view that history has come to an end due to historians' difficulties in representing an event such as the Holocaust but, rather, exposes the need to examine art's complicity in barbarity. This does not involve the end of history but rather of the past's subservience to the present culture's needs. Moreover, it is perhaps the Holocaust above all that reveals the necessity of Levinasian ethics. Recognising the significance of the Holocaust for his own model of ethics, Levinas writes:

> the unburied dead in wars and extermination camps make one believe the idea of a death without a morning after and render tragic-comic the concern for oneself and illusory the pretension of the rational animal to have a privileged place in the cosmos and the power to dominate and integrate the totality of being in a self-consciousness. ("Humanism" 127)

The traumatic legacy of the Holocaust requires that we face the idea of a death without a morning after. The adoption of an apocalyptic tone in various disciplines that declare the death of the fundamental premises of a metaphysics of presence still abides by its logic, thus supporting a vision of a morning after, whether this means a descent into irrationalism or the construction of a definite end to an era. By contrast, Frame's and Sebald's Levinasian account of a time which begins with the Other stays true to the idea of a death without a morning after. They suggest the necessity of abiding by the Holocaust's legacy, which requires that the ego must relinquish its concern with its own future, a morning after, for the sake of the Other, who can elevate human concerns from the realm of the tragic-comic to the ethical.
A Return to Old Beginnings

This thesis began by positioning Janet Frame's and W. G. Sebald's writing as a literary response to the legacy of the twentieth century's trauma—in particular colonialism and World War II. Both writers' works thus pursue political agendas. This is evident in the concern that Frame presents about the plight of specific marginalised groups in communities that adopt exclusionary practices. In the case of Sebald, both novels are driven by a political impetus to address the responsibility that the present generation owes to the memory of the past. Both writers' responses, as I have argued, promote a model of ethics that privileges the freedom of an unknown Other over and above that of the ego. Political identification of the Other, whether by race, class, gender or ethnicity, is thus placed in an asymmetrical relationship to an ethics that prohibits the ego from reducing the Other to a known entity. Both writers are therefore able to bring to the fore the relationship between politics and ethics that Levinas's philosophy has been accused of overlooking.

Levinas's assertion that "ethical philosophy must remain the first philosophy" does not seek to overturn the political order ("Interview" 66), but instead emphasises the priority that he argues must be afforded to ethics above political considerations. He thus explains:

If the moral-political order totally relinquishes its ethical foundation, it must accept all forms of society including the fascist or totalitarian, for it can no longer evaluate or discriminate between them. In some instances, fascism or totalitarianism, for example, the political order of the state may have to be challenged in the name of our ethical responsibility to the other. ("Interview" 66)

This challenge to existing political orders in the name of an ethics that begins with the Other is the function that Frame's and Sebald's works perform. Their writing demonstrates that their respective political agendas are best served by an ethical framework. For Frame, this involves criticising communities of the Same, the political order, and questioning the socially institutionalised impulse of brushing away clinging hands. While Annabel Herzog wonders whether "an ethical philosophy that is 'uninterested' in the particularity of individuals [is not] ultimately a purely formal philosophy" (341), Frame's writing suggests otherwise. In her approach to the question of how best to respond to the conceptual violence enacted against particular groups in society, Frame's writing paradoxically presents Levinas's emphasis on the undefinability of the Other as a strength. Frame's works thus demonstrate the
importance of approaching each person as a singular person who commands our ethical regard prior to the ego's identification of them with a specific group's interests. In *The Adaptable Man* she reminds her reader that the reason why Julio is never welcomed by Little Burgelstatham is because of his migrant status. We are left to wonder whether had Julio been first received as a person and not as a representative of a collective group, his fate may have been different. Conversely, in *The Carpathians*, Frame's appropriation of the indigenous myth of the Memory Flower although an act of violence also signals an ethical openness through the emphasis that this cultural emblem places on fostering new attempts to speak of the past. Frame's novels thus suggest that postcolonialism, which seeks to respond to colonial ideologies that implement the reduction of people to identifiable others, requires an ethical approach. Such an approach reveals the conceptual violence performed by colonial ideologies and requires the present generation to accept a position of subjection to a past that permits no forgetting for the sake of the future Other.

Like Frame, Sebald's writing proposes a form of ethical justice in order to respond to a political issue: how to redress the crimes of World War II. As Langer argues, the memories of the survivors of the concentration camps and of the Apartheid Regime in South Africa are poorly handled by political constructions of justice which prioritise retribution and resolution. Langer's emphasis that such memories "refuse to die" suggests the need for an ethical form of justice (96), which would not impose a healing paradigm in order to restore the present's equanimity. Sebald's writing demonstrates a form of enduring memory which traumatises his narrators. His metaphorical comparison of people's relationship with the past with ephemeral objects, such as a scrap of silk and a moth's flight, emphasises the past's resistance to the narrator's and reader's powers of comprehension. Both the narrator and the reader of Sebald's eerie prose encounter traces of the past which are disturbing, haunting, but which also ultimately encourage them to continue pursuing its enigmatic trails. Sebald's emphasis on perseverance and the ongoing quality of people's relationship with the past models a form of ethics that insists on the ego's ongoing subjection to the Other. Like the Other, the past commands the ego's ethical responsibility and disturbs the present's equanimity. For Sebald, the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust is best served by a form of ethically charged memory-work which maintains the need for re-membrance, while simultaneously continuing to examine how societies and individuals alike re-present these memories.
In an interview with Levinas, Richard Kearney poses a series of questions of Levinas's philosophy with which I want to bring this thesis to a close. Kearney asks Levinas: "is not the ethical obligation to the other a purely negative ideal, impossible to realize in our everyday being-in-the-world? [...] Is ethics practicable in human society as we know it? Or is it merely an invitation to apolitical acquiescence?" ("Interview" 64). Acknowledging that Kearney raises a "fundamental point," Levinas responds: "this is the great paradox of human existence: we must use the ontological for the sake of the Other [...] This same paradox is also present in our use of language [...] We have no option but to employ the language and concepts of Greek philosophy even in our attempts to go beyond them" (64). My own response to the concerns that Kearney raises about Levinas's ethics has paradoxically proposed that literature, the art form which most heavily depends on language for its expression, can highlight the contribution that Levinas's model of diachronic time can play in encouraging human relationships of ethical regard in societies. It is through the Other that the subject finds its better self. Moreover, it is through the Other's disturbance of the ego's time that Frame's and Sebald's writing has shown that an era's self-centred apocalyptic vision, its concerns with its own beginnings and ends, and its clinging to a metaphysics of presence, can be surpassed. Through their works these writers remind us of a greater trauma than that of the ego's fear of its own demise. This is a form of trauma which subjects the ego to the Other and in doing so defines the ego's ethical obligation to past and future generations. Frame's and Sebald's writing suggests that the traumatic legacy of the twentieth century renders the ego's ethical obligation mandatory. Their subversive treatment of apocalyptic themes demonstrates that a Levinasian model of ethical time is also required by the twenty-first century if it is not to succumb to its own apocalyptic fervour. In The Carpathians the literary conceit of the imploding Gravity Star is Frame's image for our future. This is a future that heralds the implosion of ontological thought but that provides no replacement model. In Austerlitz Sebald renders time as an infinitely deep mine chasm which stands beneath humans, requiring them to look in but deferring any possibility of reaching the bottom.

While both Frame and Sebald died shortly after the second millennium began, the novels they left behind provide a Levinasian-inflected messianic message of the future. On the one hand, like the angel, they act as messengers who reveal the violent future, a mirror of the past that precedes it, which awaits humanity if it continues to
experience time as solely an egocentric concern. On the other hand, they gesture
toward a future which is yet to come: one that will undoubtedly disturb the ego's
equanimitiy but that, in doing so, generates ethical human relationships. Responding to
one of humanity's oldest intrigues—the meaning of time—both writers have provided
ethically informed answers which do not seek to understand time from the perspective
of the self but, instead, for the sake of the Other. Their novels concur with Levinas's
argument that "the deconstruction of the Western metaphysics of presence [is] a
golden opportunity for Western philosophy to open itself to the dimension of
otherness and transcendence beyond Being" ("Interview" 64). Seizing this
opportunity, Frame and Sebald demonstrate that ethical literature "is not a matter of
our idea of time but of time itself" (Time 39).
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