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**The Child and Authority in Contemporary Literature and Critical Culture**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and does not contain work either published elsewhere or submitted for a degree at another university.

Dominic Dean, May 2016 (and September 2016)

## Thesis Abstract

This thesis explores representations of the child in contemporary literature, culture, and criticism. The authors and texts considered are primarily British and post-1979, but the thesis situates them within the context of post-war cultural history, and particularly in relation to changes to perceptions of the 'post-war' itself in the 1980s. From these texts, representations of the child that dramatise the child's entrance into authority as a problem for the adult, one characterised by symbolic or actual violence, ground a case that the child is required to correlate with a recognisable image of himself, one that actually limits his political potential, as the condition for his political or aesthetic representation. Violence against the child is the all-pervasive threat for failure to meet this condition.

Reading these depictions of violence towards the child, notably by Alan Hollinghurst, Ian McEwan, Peter Ackroyd, and Kazuo Ishiguro, this thesis builds upon existing critical work on the child as a current and continuing problem for authority. The theoretical framework derives from cultural history, from the political theory of Hannah Arendt, and from psychoanalysis, particularly as mediated through contemporary Queer Studies. This range positions literary authors as sometimes mediating between psychoanalytic understandings of the child and the political use of the child as representation of the future, a connection already central to the work of seminal contemporary theorists such as Lee Edelman.

The thesis argues that we face a historically specific and psychoanalytically resonant problem of the child and authority: a problem demanding attention to the way we read the child, and with broader implications for reading as the practice of literary analysis and interpretation (one with, as we shall find, a complicated relation to how political authorities require particular 'readings' of the child). Several texts discussed here constitute not only uncanny versions of cultural history, but also interventions against their own reading. These dramatise and resist a pronounced tendency to demand that the child becomes available for recognition, as the condition for its political and aesthetic representation, with violence ensuing for the child who refuses to meet this condition.

## Chapter 1: The Problem of the Child and Authority

The contemporary problem of the child and authority is one of representation – in literature and in politics. Recent political culture has grappled with the issue of how to give due representation to the child, whose rights are derived from a special claim to the future (see Edelman, *No Future*, 3).

This demands that those currently in authority imagine the future on behalf of the child - a future necessarily, precisely because it is identified with the child who one day will be an adult, not wholly under the authorities' control. Literary authors, similarly, write texts that may well be read beyond their own lives; they presume a future reader, a literal or metaphorical child. One of the most recent novels to play upon this trope, as of this writing, is Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* (2011), which dramatises the afterlife of a poem as itself a quasi-child read and reproduced through the lives of real children. In this situation, to write something for the child to read (the act which initiates events in Hollinghurst's novel) or tell the child how to read (a basic function of literary criticism that Hollinghurst often targets for parody) is simultaneously also to read the child, and through the child, the future – an imperative simultaneously rehearsed and complicated by many of the texts discussed here.

In this thesis I will give an account of some representations of the child, particularly those exploring a traumatic and even violent form of reading the child, one they suggest plays a central (if often repressed) role in contemporary culture – even in the critical culture that makes a special claim for the authority to read. This shared arena of politics and critical reading, with the child as their common object, was summarised by Frank Kermode's remark that "problems of interpretation" are "problems of importance, for, broadly conceived, the power to make interpretations is an indispensable instrument of survival in the world, and it works there as it works on literary texts" (*The Genesis of Secrecy*, xi). There is no greater problem of interpretation than the child defined as embodiment of the future that has not yet arrived.

Kermode's comment resonates with the broader sense in which I use "authority" here. The OED treats "authority" as encompassing both power and right; accordingly, I use it here to mean the capacity to give an order or demand for the future, located in the subject who is speaking from a position of knowledge about the world, the subject imagined as 'adult'. The child is evidently the object of such authority, but also – in his very association with a future that will likely exclude the adult, if the adult will die first – challenges its basis in knowledge of the world. Hence the problem of interpretation becomes the problem of reading the child.

I will go on to describe how this imperative works against the child's interest in becoming an adult, and in ultimately assuming the authority the adult currently, but temporarily, holds; how it works, in fact, against representing the child's interests in the future, even, paradoxically, as it attempts to visualise the future. The future, of course (in a fact Arendt viewed as central to all political activity) is defined by the (adult) subject's mortality. The adult essentially has two operations available to him to address the child's potentially traumatising embodiment of a future that will not include him, two options to project his authority beyond his mortal body.

The first of these is education. The adult can teach the child to read the world in the terms he sets, as a means of representing himself beyond his own death. This is the process of integration into what Lacan called the symbolic order, which underpins both language and culture (Lacan, *Écrits*, 67), though this order exists before the child's birth and continues after the adult's death. 'Education' is an attempt to rationalise this order for the child, and the child for it. It requires not only the adult teaching the child to read the world, but his own simultaneous reading of the child, to assure himself that the process is working. In this sense, education is based on making the child recognisably reproduce a set of values or body of knowledge as the condition for his ultimate representation in adult society, his entrance into authority. This includes his political representation, by which I mean the ability to access a space where some form of negotiation for control over the future takes place, and the right to speak within that dialogue. For Hannah Arendt, "politics" implicitly acknowledges the need to negotiate, and thus potentially revise, the arrangements for the future (*The Human Condition*, 44-45).



The second option for the adult facing the child is subject to one of our greatest taboos: the use of violence upon the child. If the future the adult desires for the child is perceived as at risk, the imperative to both teach the child correctly and to read the child correctly – to ensure he is absorbing the ‘proper’ authority and not some other influence – is greatly intensified. The difficulty of truly knowing what the child is thinking, then, is prone to raise this possibility of violence.

Nor are the exercises of violence and education always neatly separated; I shall go on to argue that the demand for recognition inherent in (at least certain versions of) education itself provokes violence towards the child who fails to conform to the demand. One of the most famous literary accounts of this scenario and of the shocking mutual contamination of education and violence is found in Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), a novella with, as I shall discuss later, a profound influence on both popular and critical ideas of the child as a problem for authority in the later twentieth century.

In *The Turn of the Screw* an educator, the Governess, is driven to paranoia by the suspicion that the children in her care are not disclosing what they know. A later re-working of the novella on film, Jack Clayton’s *The Innocents*, explicitly suggests that the only way for her to eliminate the traumatically private space of the child’s thoughts (themselves apparently contaminated, though to what degree she cannot know, with adult influence), is to kill the child. *The Turn of the Screw* thus offers a potential ur-text for the modern entanglement of education and violence towards the child, or at least for how that entanglement emerges in literary criticism. It is this particular entanglement, arising from the authoritative adult’s knowledge of his own death and his necessarily incomplete knowledge of the child, that in significant part forms the problem of the child and authority I am setting out to study here.

In a political culture that claims to prioritise the rights of the child (a claim marked in British law by the Children Act 1989, which emphasises the paramount value of the child’s interests), any tendency to imagine violence towards the child (the tendency we shall find variously rehearsed, parodied and critiqued in the texts discussed here) surely compels attention. Such an aberration signals the

contradictions in the way our culture seeks to represent the child and, through the child, the future.

I will pursue this aberration, this violence between the child and authority, in several works of literary fiction that situate it in the political and cultural history of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century Britain. I aim to update the body of critical analysis on the child in contemporary literature by demonstrating the significance of these texts, including those by Alan Hollinghurst, Ian McEwan, Peter Ackroyd, and particularly Kazuo Ishiguro, as well as by other earlier authors (such as James, and Rose Macaulay in Chapter Two) whose work provides important contextualisation. This builds upon existing critical work on the child as a problem for authority, including psychoanalytic and historical studies of the child and representation by Lee Edelman, Jacqueline Rose, Kathryn Bond Stockton, Vicky Lebeau, Steven Bruhm, and several others.

From this, I will argue that we indeed face a historically specific problem of the child and authority, one where problems of literary or visual interpretation are problems of political significance (and one with a complicated relation to how political authorities demand particular 'readings' of the child).

This first chapter is in two parts. Part One offers a thematic introduction, substantiating the claims, and developing the argument, initiated above. Within this I will refer to a wide range of sources - from film and television, and political history, as well as literature, which all demand to be read in order to historicise and contextualise how the appearances of the child and authority appear in the later chapters.

Part Two places this argument in its scholarly context, describing the framework and structure of the thesis; it explains the selection of material, showing how my argument builds on continuing debates around the child in literature and at the intersections of psychoanalysis and literary and cultural history.

The thematic introduction begins below with an exploration of how the child's representation depends on her being available for recognition – on her conforming with an image of the child.

## Part One

### 1. Have you seen this little girl? The demand to recognise the child

If there is widespread sexual abuse of children, then it is not so much the innocence of childhood as the boundary between adult and child, their status as stable and knowable entities, which starts to shake.  
(Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, xi)

Edward III: I offer up this wicked traitor's head; [...]

Be witness of my grief and innocence!

(Marlowe, *Edward II* 5.6.93-102)

The rights of the child are now more fully enshrined in law than ever before. This testifies to an unprecedented legislative agenda in the child's name, developing in the 'West' since the 1960s, and in international law since the late 1980s (Arnott, *Family Law*, 814-815).<sup>1</sup> The United Kingdom's own extensive recent child protection legislation includes the Children Act (1989 - and the titular subject of a 2014 Ian McEwan novel), the Adoption and Children Act (2002), the Children Act (2004), the Children and Adoption Act (2006), the Children and Young Peoples Act (2008), and the Children and Families Act (2014). As Lebeau notes with irony, "formally, at least, the rights of the child appear to be uncontentious" (*Childhood and Cinema*, 135).

This legislation indicates that the child has achieved a measure of political representation, though in a form restricted by her status as child – she is less a subject entitled to democratic participation than the *object* of law and policy, though of laws that at least attempt to protect her spaces and provide for her education.

The legislation in the name of the child is complemented by other laws named after individual children: The so-called 'Sarah's Law' (2011, in the United

Kingdom) and ‘Megan’s Law’ (1994), the Jacob Wetterling Act (1994), and the Adam Walsh Act (2006) (all in the United States), exemplify this. (Mowlabocus notes the dark irony of how “these child victims [...] live on in the cultural imagination as signifiers of [...] sex offending” (2)). These laws promote a necessary *recognition* (they often seek to ensure that child abusers can be identified before they can harm), and make this recognition the basis of the child’s political *representation*. Ostensibly, this imperative for recognition is directed towards the abuser, but as the use of individual children’s names for the legislation betrays, recognition of the child is also demanded: The child must be recognised as presenting a value worthy of, and available for, protection. The child is typically defined as always, by definition, constituting this value, as a famous piece of education legislation in the United States, the “No Child Left Behind” Act (2001) indicated.

Such value might conventionally be expected to be taken for granted; yet several assumptions here have historically proved questionable: that we can recognise (and define) the child; that we can recognise what constitutes harm to her; and that we can similarly recognise, and therefore potentially predict, the likely source of that harm. The deep need in contemporary culture to recognise the overwhelming value of the child is clearly evident if we consider the abducted child, a figure widely acknowledged as providing a site for working through anxieties over the status of the child, even over who counts as a child and on what terms (Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, xvii; Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema*, 115-119; Rutter, *Shakespeare and Child’s Play*, 172-173; Cousin, *Playing for Time*, 74-86).

The image of Madeleine McCann, abducted in 2007, was the principal tool of a massive (as of this writing, continuing) campaign to seek her recovery. In this campaign, scrutiny of the child’s face for the purposes of recognition was an unequivocal and moral imperative. Posters, distributed on an unprecedented scale, reproduced close-ups of Madeleine’s face and of her distinctive right eye. “Have You Seen This Little Girl?” demanded one poster; “Look Into My Eyes!” said another.

These posters demand not just that we recognise Madeleine, but that we recognise the significance of Madeleine, precisely as a child and nothing other than a

child (I'll return to this point in Chapter 4, in discussing the use of images of refugee children). To recognise Madeleine (as, horrifically, no one has yet done) would be to save her; but before that wished-for future recognition we have to recognise her in the present, as image and imperative: the particular child has to conform with a general and overdetermined image of the child. In fact, the precise nature of the image's meaning is more flexible than the imperative to conformity in order to enable recognition: a compulsion to scrutinise in order to save.

Yet this imperative has repeatedly failed, and not only (so far) in the McCann case. One of the most obvious of these failures has become apparent in the repeated exposure of child abuse by powerful individuals and within powerful institutions; as Jacqueline Rose comments:

The crisis of child sexual abuse in the 1980s has made it harder and harder to know, when we describe a child and even more our relationship to it, what we are talking about. (*The Case of Peter Pan*, xvii)

Yet as the 'find Madeleine' posters show, we must assume that we know what we are talking about in order to save the child. We have to undertake that first, interior recognition in order to have the capacity to recognise the real Madeleine later. We have to look at Madeleine, and see the child. But what if that initial recognition for some reason goes wrong? What if, as Jacqueline Rose speculates, we are always at risk of being frustrated or threatened in our attempt to recognise the child?

For Rose, this is not only a fundamental but a historically specific issue, one resonating across at least two decades of prominent child abuse and disappearance scares with a powerful hold on British media, and public, attention. If, as Rose writes, the "discovery" of child sexual abuse "can fairly be called one of the traumas of the 1980s" (xi), it certainly also still remains a constant feature of contemporary news reporting (Meyer, *The Child at Risk*, 164).

The fear of children as being at particular risk from ‘predators’ intensified alongside the period of reaction against the supposed sexual (and other) revolutions of the 1960s that became, effectively, official in the 1980s (Pilcher and Wagg, *Thatcher’s Children*, 13; we’ll explore this chronology further in Chapter 3). When this crisis emerges within a visual and political culture that has its own reasons for persistently looking at the child, it appears primarily through an excessive re-assertion of the imperative for recognition.

By now, the attempts to protect the child in the 1980s have themselves been recognised as, at least in certain cases and certain respects, spectacular and traumatic failures. This has been made evident by a number of high-profile revelations of child abuse, with one recent and particularly notable case in the 2012-13 exposure of Jimmy Savile as one of the most prolific known abusers of children.<sup>2</sup> I shall dwell briefly on the Savile exposures because they present us with an uncannily, gruesomely literal account of a crisis of recognition. The ostensible failure of recognition is, of course, of Savile himself as a source of harm to the child; yet, I shall argue, this also involves a failure to recognise the child, even in the very attempt to look at the child.

## **2. I should so love to see his face, if you could make his dreams come true.**

The Savile revelations exposed a contamination of political, cultural and medical institutions by a failure of recognition; as Carole Cadwalladr wondered in the *Guardian*, “have we actually processed the fact that a serial sex offender was at the heart of our culture, our national institutions, for 50 years?” (1). One of the most prominent individuals in post-war British popular culture, whose career peaked in the 1970s and 1980s with ‘making children’s dreams come true’ on *Jim’ll Fix It*, was exposed as a relentless and calculating abuser of a vast number of children.<sup>3</sup> The most detailed account of Savile’s crimes published to date (Davies, *In Plain Sight*) tellingly resorts to imagery borrowed from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to frame his biography and posthumous exposure.<sup>4</sup>

The British media presented the Savile revelations as a kind of double-take, the shocking realisation of a failure of basic recognition. Articulating this sense of a

visual failure, as the exposures accelerated the phrase “hiding in plain sight” began to be used in the coverage with increasing frequency, eventually even as the title of the official Metropolitan Police/NSPCC report on the allegations (6). Despite Savile’s media prominence, and his visually arresting appearance (of a type, it was now noted, stereotypically associated with the paedophile)<sup>5</sup> and how he even often made verbal reference to the sexual attractiveness of underage women, he was never publically ‘recognised’ during his lifetime. For at least some people, the post-mortem realisation of what Savile was really getting out of his career of “fix-its” prompted a re-evaluation of what they, the audience, were themselves getting out of them, and out of him – and perhaps, by implication but left unspoken, what they were getting out of the children he ‘presented’.

Taken seriously, this need to re-evaluate the past should be understood as simultaneously reiterating the imperative to look at the child and compromising that imperative - because Savile’s career, which so successfully obscured his recognition as an abuser, was in significant respects based upon *promoting* looking at the child.

The failure of recognition of real childhood experience, as exposed by the Savile revelations, showed the terrible inadequacy of the protection of the child’s rights during Savile’s lifetime, despite the legislative, political and social efforts made. ChildLine founder Esther Rantzen was one of Savile’s prominent associates. Another was the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher – according to whom Savile was "a stunning example of opportunity Britain, a dynamic example of enterprise Britain, and [...] of responsible Britain" (qtd. in Davies 49). An example, specifically, of the forces (enterprise, opportunity, responsibility) celebrated and promoted by Thatcherism and identified by it as imperatives for children’s upbringing, as we shall explore further in Chapter 3.

The Thatcher-Savile friendship is grimly ironic, in the context of the Thatcher government’s vocal concerns over the dangers of predatory individuals sexually corrupting children. The notorious Clause 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act arose from an equation of the (in reality very tentative) education on non-heterosexual relationships with the actual corruption - and by association, sexual



abuse - of children. Yet Mrs. Thatcher dismissed arguments that an unmarried man, who by his own account preferred promiscuity to sustained relationships (whilst presenting the most significant TV show centred on children at the time) might be inappropriate for a state honour.

Clause 28 is the formalisation of a thread in political and cultural thought linking Savile, and his popular show *Jim'll Fix It*, to the suspected abuse and abduction of the child – not retrospectively, but at the time, in the show's celebration of 'innocence'. This innocence is in fact the positive identification of child's value, of the child *as child* and as embodying the future, that still motivates the demand to save the child by recognising her, a demand evidently still with us today, even if Savile has been exposed and the official homophobia represented by Clause 28 has ostensibly passed into history. This innocence, and its demand, is at the core of the specifically visual crisis of the child and authority, the crisis of seeing-as-reading. Savile's retrospective identification as embodying this crisis, on a scale and in a literal form previously unanticipated, is a darkly ironic opportunity to do precisely the cultural re-evaluation the crisis demands.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to also understand Clause 28 as demanding wilful non-recognition: the strategic refusal of recognition, a refusal to see what was visibly there in order to visualise something else that perhaps was not – the innocence of the child. The clause refused local authorities permission to -

- (a) Intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
- (b) Promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. (Local Government Act 1988, Clause 28).

The unspoken logic behind Clause 28's response to an imagined homosexual infiltration of education, the assumption that *to know is to be corrupted*, is reflected in this deliberate refusal of recognition on the child's behalf. Thatcher here takes on the character of *The Turn of the Screw's* Governess, unable to separate the

possibility of sexual knowledge from abuse (indeed, Thatcher's persona was often compared to that of a governess or schoolmistress; see, for example, Aitken 295). Savile, curiously, reversed this refusal of recognition. He constantly made innuendo references to his sexuality and in other ways foregrounded its appearance, whilst denying its reality; he offered an alternative sex education where even visible actions demanded no knowledge, his behaviour supposedly innocent of all its obvious implications.

This odd, but politically charged, situation associates the immediate questions about Savile to a broader dynamic between seeing and reading – and between authority and the child. How did 'we' miss that Savile was doing what he did even though there was, with hindsight, so much visible suggestion of exactly that? Could it be that the desire for recognition of the child did not so much fail with Savile as it was actually fulfilled through what he provided to popular and political culture? Could the imperative to recognise itself be dependent, somehow, on a compulsion not to recognise, as in Clause 28?

It's an audacious suggestion, but one we are compelled to take seriously if approached through *Jim'll Fix It*, the TV show presented by Savile from 1975 to 1994. The programme's conceit saw children writing in to ask "Jim" to "fix it" for them to achieve their desires. The resulting "fix its" were then performed, either as pre-taped video segments or sometimes in the studio, with Savile presiding as the symbolic figure with the supposed mysterious ability to fulfil children's desires, whether bizarre or merely ambitious. In the Christmas 1986 episode, for example, a girl being posted to her friend inside a parcel was followed by another who wished to run a clinic for a day, acting as a doctor. The language used by one adult who wrote into the same episode asking that her nephew be taken to "a real life Aladdin's cave" was telling: "I should so love to see his face, if you could make his dreams come true, and fix it for him". The anticipation of looking at the child's face is the desire driving the whole show, as viewing any episode now makes clear.

Vicky Lebeau, in *Childhood and Cinema*, has described the history of an interest, present since the earliest films, in capturing children's faces on camera –

delighted, blowing bubbles, smiling and giggling (sometimes also crying and wailing). Analysing this in a tradition of studying the violent gaze of the camera deriving from Laura Mulvey, Lebeau records how the child codes both apolitical redemption and anxiety about the future throughout twentieth-century cinema, a code grounded in close scrutiny of the child's face.

This same overwhelming visual interest in this face is still underway in *Jim'll Fix It* (perhaps intensified by the contemporary discourses of loss of innocence, in which Savile himself engaged), where the camera fixates obsessively on the faces of children reacting with confusion and then with delight (identifying, through the expectation it generates, with the ability to manipulate the child's emotions, the manipulation carried out figuratively by Savile himself). Suggestively, the camera also focussed on Savile's own facial expressions, which tended to mimic those of the children, with huge grins and cod-shock.

At first glance this gaze on the child is not the imperative to see the child at risk but rather to celebrate the desiring, ambitious, even entrepreneurial child. Yet just as we can't watch the show 'innocently' today, knowing what we know about Savile, so too the very innocence the show performs requires a different, and more sceptical, attention. After all, if the show is about the child as ambitious, how can it also be about the innocent child? Is ambition – the desire to be other than one's current function and position – compatible with innocence? In the show it is indeed presented as compatible; and it is precisely in this respect, in fact, that we find both a subtle violence towards the child and the realisation that there *is* a repressed risk to (and, more dangerously, from) the child present here.

Watching the programme today, it clearly aims to confirm adult knowledge of (and therefore power over) the child, whose desires were typically trivialised on the show: Many of the "fix-its" selected to be staged concerned young children's ambitions for their own futures - to enter exciting careers, make new discoveries, and perform unusual and extreme feats - though these were played out alongside such requests as eating lunch on a rollercoaster or getting a biscuit box stuffed with only the child's particular favourite biscuit. Irrespective of the nature of the request,

it received a lack of the serious intent that, as Adam Phillips argues (*The Beast in the Nursery*, 21), characterises childhood play: children rarely consider their play trivial, but *Jim'll Fix It* relies on an adult knowingness that reduces all the child's ambitions and creativity to the trivial. By staging the more profound ambitions as satisfied by a brief set-up 'experience' rather than actually advanced in any way, the "fix-its" obscured the fact that the most frequent and urgent wish of all, the ambition of the child to be other than 'just' a child, was being rebuffed, and implicitly mocked (not least by the babyish voice and vocal mannerisms adopted by Savile's narration).

There is a cruelty present in this, in that not only are the children's ambitions actually repelled in the performance of being fulfilled, but the whole action takes place (of course) on camera, making the audience participants in the cruelty through their own gaze on the child's face and the anticipation of that child's reactions, which is the motivation for the whole show, as the letter quoted above indicates. This reading of the show fits with the history of the violence of the gaze described by Lebeau; here, importantly, the gaze functions specifically as an anticipation, facilitating control of the future. This is in fact the key mechanism and motive of the show: to know what is to come is both to know the child and to know *better* than the child. The mechanism shadows the show's underlying interest in the future and its determination to prevent the child's creativity and ambition making the future different to the past.

As Adam Phillips astutely argues following Freud (and against Lacanians) in *The Beast in the Nursery*, the child's desire to be other than *just* a child is distinctive from a desire to be *not* a child (Phillips 20); in a combination of curiosity and ambition, the child seeks to live as child and adult simultaneously: and it is this combination, this entanglement that, I argue, adult culture of the type at work behind *Jim'll Fix It* seeks to eradicate. What is actually being 'fixed' here is the child's wish to be other than the child whilst visibly remaining as a child, and the potential of this combination to disturb the social and political order. As with Clause 28, the possibility that children might represent a potential difference demanding revised political representation is eradicated here through a process of recognition – both its extension and its denial.

This potentially disturbing difference arises from how childhood desire to grow up and intervene in the world was not an ordinary fact of life in the 1980s, but rather a heavily politicised basic element of Thatcherism's emphasis on social mobility, entrepreneurship, and individual ambition (Pilcher and Wagg 2). The child's supposed natural and essential embodiment of these qualities reflected a revised future, based on a retrieved 'Victorian' past, that would end the post-war period as a misconceived response to twentieth-century horrors (the same horrors Lebeau finds determining the gaze upon the child).

This Thatcherite politics contained a paradox, though (one that did not go unnoticed either at the time or subsequently), where moral and social conservatism sat alongside celebration of a 'free market' reliant on innovation and disregard for the constraints of tradition. In other words, ambition was to be celebrated, but only if it aimed to fulfil some pre-existing identity or set of essential values: this was disruption paradoxically valued only as the source of security.

Sinfield notes that Thatcher dealt with this by evoking "Victorian values" from "a time when aggressive competition co-existed with tradition, family, religion, respectability and deference" (296), which consequently tied her in knots over whether the despised 1960s were or were not "individualist" in character (297). The rhetoric used by supportive politicians around Clause 28 identified gays with a selfish individualism, and the law itself, in denying the recognition of gay families, implicitly cast gays as victims of their own individualist desires. Thatcher's will to resolve this schizophrenic attitude towards individual ambition and creativity is evident in her promotion of none other than Jimmy Savile himself.

Certainly socially mobile, Savile had accumulated power, fame and money through enacting a form of childishness; his lack of interest in marriage or even serious personal relationships, together with his career focus on, first, the 'youth culture' of the 1960s and 1970s and later on even younger children in *Jim'll Fix It*, made him figuratively a kind of permanent child, as the comparisons of him to Peter Pan and the Pied Piper recognised (John Hall, 1; Davies, 292). Yet this individualist simultaneously proved his loyalty to the establishment aspects of the Thatcherite

project. He always insisted on the totally apolitical nature of his charitable work; yet he was depoliticising in a deeper sense, acting (in his pre-*Jim'll Fix It* roles as a DJ and influential figure in the pop music industry) as a mediator between some of the counter-cultural elements of the 1960s and 1970s and the mainstream institutions of post-war Britain, particularly BBC Television and the NHS. In all this, a childish innocence was supposedly at work, subtly asserting that there is nothing that need evade recognition, least of all in the child, even the child whose apparent openness to the sexual, societal and artistic creativity of the 1960s might otherwise trouble social conservatives. *Jim'll Fix It* was so successful because it, via Savile himself, provided a solution to a problem, a problem both derived from and now resolved by looking at – and reading – the child. In the exposure of the link between the show's aims and Savile's abuse, the protection of the child abuser is ironically revealed as dependent upon public appetite for a kind of *reading* of the child, directed towards containment of the child's future.

Looking at the child's delighted face and reading his words, as the *Jim'll Fix It* camera makes us do, we are encouraged to feel a satisfying innocence in the whole thing: the innocence of the child's wishes, and our innocence in granting them. Somehow, despite the vast ambitions accessed by the show, and Thatcherism's ostensible affirmation of this capacity for ambition as the basis for its vision of the future, the world is exactly the same at the end of the show as it was at the start. In a curious reversal of the paranoid homophobic belief that knowledge will inevitably produce action, we have seen actions happen in front of us – some quite spectacular – and yet these have no effect upon us - nor on the child, who is no further towards being an explorer, a pop star, a pilot, than before he wrote in to the show. In recognising the innocent child here, we simultaneously refuse recognition to the political significance, the potential future difference, introduced by the child's desires. In fact, desire has been reduced to mere pleasure; with Lacan in mind, we might observe that it's a pleasure with no possible of *jouissance*, no capacity for disturbing excess.

This has been achieved through specifically visual means. Confronted with an underlying set of conflicting meanings associated with the child – the child as

ambitious individual, deserving of freedom from the post-war social democratic state but also compelled to loyalty to the renewed 'Victorian' nation, the child as fantasist and the child as good worker – the show works to set up, to literally fix a scenario where the child demonstrates the compatibility of these impulses for the viewers.

She does so by enacting the innocence of her ambitions, and thus her own status as child, which confirms her availability for moulding by the adult authorities; in becoming recognisable herself, she demonstrates her own susceptibility to recognise what the adult gives her, and not to recognise anything outside of it. As well as working visually, this also operates temporally; the immediate anticipation of the child's reactions allegorises a broader recognition of a knowable, consoling future: a future defined by ambition for pleasure but also, paradoxically, by innocence.

This resonates powerfully with the long and conflicted history of childhood innocence in visual culture, as described by Lebeau from the origins of film and by Anne Higonnet, in *Pictures of Innocence*, from eighteenth-century "Romantic" painting. In *Jim'll Fix It*, the innocent child who (like the earliest subjects of film, as Lebeau records) is known through his facial reactions – giggling, grinning, staring – is revived to serve a specifically Thatcherite function: the reassurance that the child 'entrepreneurial' ambition and frank greed (is it suggestive, in this period, that the show draws no distinction between the two?) need not trouble a conservative social vision, one founded on, amongst other things, the enforced non-recognition of sexual difference, as Clause 28 made clear. (We'll return to this tension in Chapter 3). Both child and adult are thus protected here from such 'politicisations' of ambition as the demands for recognition of gay relationships that Clause 28 sought to shut down. (Famously, another part of the BBC was invaded by anti-Clause 28 protestors, who interrupted the 6pm news on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1988 (Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain*, 174). They did not disrupt *Jim'll Fix It*.)

Reading *Jim'll Fix It* in these terms echoes a critical passage about education, knowledge and childhood ambition in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel and uncanny

alternative history of post-war Britain, *Never Let Me Go*, which I'll explore further in Chapter 4. This passage appears when a teacher breaks away from the authorised account of the future to tell her group of peculiar students what they can really expect:

The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not told [...] and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I'm not. If you're going to have decent lives, then you've got to know and know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. [...] Your lives are set out for you. (Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, 80)

Your lives are set out for you: a blunt rejection of the conventional value placed on opportunity, self-fulfilment and social mobility in 'western' societies from, broadly, the second half of the twentieth century, and accelerated in 1980s Britain under Thatcherism. In Ishiguro's novel, the children have, in this sense, no future. This resonates with Lee Edelman's argument in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2-3, and throughout) that contemporary society is organised around an apolitical promise of the future transmitted through the image of the child, but which actually acts to contain, trivialise, and deny the possibility of any politics at all.<sup>6</sup> This is enacted through a kind of violent (and, as in the production of *Jim'll Fix It*, heavily rigged) reading of the child, one in which the teacher in *Never Let Me Go* briefly refuses to participate.

Suggestively, reading Ishiguro's uncanny retrospective of 1970s and 80s Britain alongside the unintentionally uncanny effect of viewing *Jim'll Fix It* today, we find that Edelman's influential perception of the image of the child as enacting a powerfully reactionary politics plays out in direct and visual form, in ways best understood through drawing not only on his queer theory but on the (similarly psychoanalytically-based) fields of film theory and history. We also find that the child's ambition is a sticking-point here, simultaneously confirming and threatening that child's reassuringly accessible embodiment of the future as under the control of essential realities ('Victorian' or otherwise). Hence the gaze upon the child is never



satisfied, because the child's imaginative ambitions for the future disturb such satisfaction even when they promise it. *Jim'll Fix It* made a thorough attempt at providing such satisfaction: today, such satisfaction from the child's reactions has been irreversibly and inevitably contaminated.

As Ishiguro passage suggests, this tension over the child's ambition is also located in the processes of education of which *Jim'll Fix It* forms a bizarre parody: education as the formal preparation of the child for the future; the teaching of the child to 'read' (in both the narrow and the broad sense) that is itself determined, as in Thatcher's Clause 28, by how adults read the child. In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy's teacher is moved to speak by the visual horror of watching the children misread their situation, even though she is supposed to be facilitating precisely that misreading. Instead, she enables the children's ambition (albeit necessarily in an ironically compromised way) by telling them the truth. She cannot look at the children and *see* what authority tells her to see – that they deserve a false education because of what adult society believes it knows about their nature, about the set of values read into the child's image. The adult's anticipation, a figurative looking ahead that translates into a physical looking *at* the child, aims for control of the future; this is what Adorno and Horkheimer identified as fascist, in that it elicits and monitors for a prescribed reaction (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 124-125). 'Recognition' is thus both a literal and a signifying act.

The child's growing up - at one and the same time as still being a child - his creativity and ambition, is what Thatcherism claims to value as the source of social mobility and entrepreneurial achievement, but which British culture under its reign refuses to actually imagine, refuses to recognise. The texts we'll consider throughout the thesis depict this refusal but also complicate it, implicate it, parody it; and they relentlessly dramatise its consequences as the abuse or disappearance of the child. For reasons which are now becoming clearer, they repeatedly do so through an ambivalent relationship between seeing and reading.

In this thesis I explore a number of texts, almost all British and published from the early 1980s to the present, which demand our attention because of their

shared interest in violent failures in this relationship – failures which manifest a persistent anxiety in the child's embodiment of the future and a willingness to imagine violence against the child to force her to conform with a reading of herself.

At this point I want to consider more fundamentally how the child embodies the future in both politics and literature.

### **3. End on the Child, See the Future**

Utopianism follows the child around like a family pet. The child exists as a site of almost limitless potential [...] But because the utopian fantasy is the property of adults, not necessarily of children, it is accompanied by its Doppelgänger, nostalgia. (Bruhm and Hurley, *Curioser: On the Queerness of Children*, xiii)

*Jim'll Fix It* could be dismissed as a piece of dated popular culture, one sometimes viewed as both trivial and exploitative even in its own time (Davies 312), and which will never again perform the innocence it once presented. However, the possibility of a violent reading behind the gaze on the child, and the need for recognition as anticipation, resonates with many cultural representations of the child, from both 'high' and 'low' culture, and politically from both Right and Left. As *Jim'll Fix It* unavoidably now represents a crisis of recognition in at least one sense, it prompts us to consider whether the more fundamental and inherent crisis of recognition I've found within it is supported by a broader analysis of the child's visual relation to the future in cultural history. I particularly want to pursue Bruhm and Hurley's contention, quoted above, that even ostensibly radical cultural and political projects, even whilst they lay claim to a future significantly different to the present, are susceptible to the attraction of making the future recognisable through the child.

As we've observed, for the adult, the child represents a future in which, all other things being equal, he will not participate; he anticipates that the child will outlive him. Bersani proposes that "the perversion of adults" is "the sickness of uncompleted narratives" (32), and that the child risks embodying this threat – and as

we shall see, this risk attracts severe adult violence, real and imagined.

Nevertheless, the child can all too easily enable a perfectly *completed* narrative. The (fictional) child is readily available to act as the closing image of a text, teleologically incorporating the potentially infinite future into a narrative that must, at some point, stop. This is particularly marked in the use of a messianic or prophetic child to conclude an apocalyptic narrative: a widespread trope, where the child appears across texts that conclude with the child in the centre of screen, stage or page: figure for a future (whether apocalyptic or utopian) beyond the text but nevertheless, through the child, included within it.

In later twentieth-century film alone, versions of this trope have appeared in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (play 1947; film 1951);<sup>7</sup> Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); Disney's *Bambi* (1942) and *The Lion King* (1994); Woody Allen's *Match Point* (2006); Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006). (This is, of course, far from an exhaustive list.) The child here functions in line with the consolation of endings famously identified by Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending* (1967) but it perhaps resonates even more deeply with the function of critical reading he developed in *The Genesis of Secrecy* (1979). As Kermode argued there, the crucial thing is not only the narrative offered for interpretation itself, but the authority the critic gains by way of this interpretation – an authority generating the imperative to read what one sees, to find an invisible yet necessary meaning – necessary, indeed, even for salvation.

In *The Lion King*, the apparent utopianism of the child as ending affirms a perfect future, but (as Bruhm and Hurley suggested) one also totally identified with the past, through the final scene's direct visual repetition of the film's opening sequence, concluding with the presentation of an infant on Pride Rock accompanied by the soundtrack of Elton John's *The Circle of Life* (see Edelman's critique of the movie as an example of reproductive futurism, 170). *The Lion King* is based, of course, on *Hamlet*; and this is a signal of the longevity of the trope of the child-as-future, which Shakespeare actually uses widely. For example, the young Elizabeth at the end of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* resolves (ahistorically) the conflicts of her father's reign, as a prophetic Archbishop Cranmer declares-

This royal infant--heaven still move about her!--  
 Though in her cradle, yet now promises  
 Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings

(*Henry VIII*, 5.4.21-23)

The sight of this child provides a vision of a utopian future created by a perpetual cycle of reproduction:

[...] but as when  
 The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,  
 Her ashes new create another heir, [...]  
 And so stand fix'd: peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,  
 That were the servants to this chosen infant,  
 Shall then be his [...]  
 [...] our children's children  
 Shall see this, and bless heaven.

(*Henry VIII*, 5.4.43-59)

To visualise an infinitely expanding future, one well beyond our mortal sight, all one need do is look at the child. Re-affirming how the utopian is accompanied by nostalgia, Jonathan Bate notes that the scene actually reflects “a time of nostalgia for the age of Queen Elizabeth” (1382); the apparent vision of the future is actually a recognition of a version of the past.

Elsewhere, Shakespeare takes the trope of the child as visual embodiment of the future in the context of monarchical succession and ironically perverts it - in *Macbeth* it is even the source of the title character's downfall. Shakespeare's willingness not only to use but to problematise the child-as-ending indicates a potential for playing off the trope that became useful in the later twentieth century, in a time when the future had become the object of acute anxiety, in the post-Holocaust era of Cold War and Mutually Assured Destruction. Here the child as survivor of a disaster gained renewed importance as an embodiment of the future in the present. Jan Kott accordingly thought that Hamlet should be closer to the child than the adult, symbol of a future both hopeful and endangered: “the youth, deeply

involved in politics [...] a young rebel [...] his passion sometimes seems childish” (Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 62). Yet, of course, not this child but another would finally provide the ambiguously threatening trope for the future at the end of the play, as Kott points out:

People fought, plotted, killed one another, committed crimes for love [...] Even their crimes had a certain greatness. And then a vigorous young lad comes, and says with a charming smile: “Take away these corpses. Now I shall be your king.” (Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 73)

This potential irony available from the trope was discerned by others who followed Kott. Julie Taymor’s film based on *Titus Andronicus*, *Titus* (1999), ends when Young Lucius, himself a child but also carrying an even younger child, Aaron’s baby, leaves the arena of violence and exits into sunrise, perhaps returning hopefully to the American ‘post-war’ future from whence he came at the movie’s opening. (See Rutter 74-86; as she points out, the film begins with scrutiny of a child’s face, which, because it is masked, cannot be read).

Such moments evoke, whether hopefully or ironically, the child embodying a value or values that may or may not offer some salvation from a disaster, and thus provide the potential for a different future. Of course, this appears far beyond adaptations of Shakespeare. In Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road* (2006), and its film version (2009), the survival of a child in an apocalyptic landscape repeats the trope; hence Lydia Cooper reads *The Road* as a Grail narrative where “ultimately [...] the grail is pictured as a small child walking down a road. The novel thus [...] proffers an affirmation of the individual’s ability to experience a transcendent, and perhaps ultimately redemptive, empathic connection with others” (234). Cooper casually indicates the ready availability of this powerful trope – she assumes our understanding, from its cultural prevalence, of what it means.

The compulsion, the potential moral absolutism, behind this demand to recognise the child as the future, is criticised by Edelman in *No Future*, where he draws attention to its role in underpinning an authoritarian social and political order

based on deferral of pleasure and the abjection of the queer (2-3). One of the texts he criticises as perfectly exhibiting this use of the child is P.D. James' 1992 novel *Children of Men*, which "perfectly brings out the function of the child as the secular theology on which our social reality rests" (*No Future*, 12).

Two years after Edelman published *No Future*, *Children of Men* was adapted as a movie, one which applied exactly the moral structure he identified on to the political concerns of its own time. *Children of Men* ends on the trope of the child as future in a direct rehearsal of its origins in the narratives of the infant Christ. The figure of the child is present long before his actual appearance here, though; we have to read him behind what we see – as the plot will certainly force us to do unless, as Edelman remarks with deliberate irony, we were born yesterday (12).

The film depicts an outbreak of total human infertility. In the absence of any children being born, and with associated economic and environmental catastrophes underway, an apocalyptic sequence of violence and authoritarian oppression has begun. However, a single new baby has been born in secret, and a small group of initiates (echoing both the Holy Family and the disciples of Christ) must keep the child safely concealed amidst the violence and persecutions. After evading various perils, the child is eventually spirited to safety on a boat called Tomorrow, and the final sequence shows the child being carried through an awed crowd towards this boat. Cuarón uses the plot from James' novel to dramatise left-wing concerns dominating the time of the film's production in 2006, especially the oppression of migrants, the Iraq War, state complicity in torture and other abuses, and environmental damage. Set in 2027 following a period of global infertility beginning in 2009, the film was a full-volume, unsubtle warning to the 2006 audience of what the future might bring if western politics failed to change course.

The child's function in the film is accordingly unsubtle: he embodies an alternative, utopian future, and the ending heavily implies that the recognition of this function is the first step towards realising that future. Drawing heavily upon the Christian tradition's celebration of gazing upon a divine infant who embodies eternity and salvation, the film participates in the hermeneutics Kermode discerned

at the root of institutionalised literary criticism, the imperative to read what one sees in order to save and be saved.

Across all these examples, then, the imperative to read a value or set of qualities behind the sight of the child is sufficiently powerful to create a shared moral and cultural vocabulary, one that emphasises both the value of the child and clearly distinguishes between the child and the source of risks to the future the child represents. Even *Children of Men* maintains this distinction; the child is certainly at risk, but only because the absence of children has proved their value, and that value is universally recognised by the crowd when the child finally appears at the ending.

However, we might take this as a sign that the politics of *Children of Men* are not really as radical as the film suggests at face value; an appeal to a universal sensibility (as Edelman cues us to point out) clearly does not encompass the sort of disruption to the political order that the Thatcher government was concerned with in Clause 28, for example.

Ultimately, the child who embodies the future at the ending of a text must be recognised because time is short; because the adults – including we, the viewers and readers - will die, and in order for some form of moral reproduction to allow us to transcend this fact, we must recognise that reproduction in the child. Mario Feit has described, in *Democratic Anxieties*, how apparently secular moralities adopt quasi-religious notions of immortality as their basis, and tend to figure this (as in *Children of Men*) as heterosexual reproduction, which becomes the central value determining political representation. Combining this with Edelman's Lacanian and queer analysis of the phenomenon and Lebeau's history of the child on screen, we can see the child-as-ending as invoking urgency in the demand to recognise the child.

Edelman, Bersani and Feit all theorise the child's apparent embodiment of immortality as a conservative, even reactionary phenomenon. Edelman advocates that against such teleology one should embrace the association of the queer with death, with a refusal of any future, an imperative he theorises through the Lacanian Death Drive. Here, I want to propose a different reading of the child's embodiment

of the future: that this embodiment is in important respects real, but that it is as much a problem for the adults in authority as it is their salvation. Indeed, as with the function of the child's ambition in *Jim'll Fix It*, the quality on which a moral order apparently rests may be the very one it secretly fears. As Bruhm says, the child is often inscribed "as both the thing we wish the child to be and the thing that actively resists [it,] as both the quality of a child and that quality's undoing" ("The Counterfeit Child", 28).

I want to test this idea through the resonant figure of the queer child, both as apparent mortal opponent of the conservative futurism represented by Savile's pop-culture Thatcherism and as a central figure for modes of reading the child in general within contemporary literary criticism.

#### **4. Dusty Pasts and Dangerous Futures: Jarman's *Edward II***

One text produced to oppose Clause 28 pursues its politics by demanding that we recognise the queer child. This is Derek Jarman's queer re-writing of Christopher Marlowe's play *Edward II* in his 1991 film of the same title. Jarman's *Edward II*, produced shortly after Margaret Thatcher's departure from office, and whilst Clause 28 legislation was still a recent introduction, combines popular and literary culture to dramatise the queer child, for whom Jarman demands recognition. In this demand, he subverts the normal conservative use of the visual trope of the child who embodies the future, and specifically its mobilisation for the introduction of Clause 28 and broader political homophobia.

Jarman's film concludes with an idealistic vision of a queer future, one that (ironically undermining Thatcherite nationalism) locates the future in a version of the national past, re-imagined as queer to its core; here, the queer man even sits on the throne (and occasionally shares it with the child). This film's consistent visual and thematic interest in the child's gaze and reactions hints that such a future might be achieved through the child's education, in the broadest sense; it's a reading of the future through reading the child, reading the world.



In this, Jarman appears to embrace precisely the potential for political disruption that Thatcherism tries to remove from the child's ambitions. His attitude to his source material was, indeed, explicitly disruptive:

How to make a film of a gay love affair and get it commissioned? Find a dusty old play and violate it [. . .] Marlowe outs the past—why don't we out the present? (Jarman, *Queer Edward II*, epigraph)

This has something in common with contemporary modes of queer reading (for which Jarman's *Edward II* is a seminal text (Guy-Bray, *Edward II Revised*, xii)) where one basic aim is often to identify queerness in literary and cultural history, to 'out' it. To 'out' is to recognise, and this film is concerned with recognising that to which Thatcherism aggressively refused recognition: the queer child. As Jarman's metaphorical desire to "violate" Marlowe suggests, the film reclaims the feared act of anal penetration from the homophobic imagination, and portrays knowledge of such sexuality as, counter to Clause 28, unharmed to the child, whose future is instead compromised by the violence of homophobia itself. "Outing" is the exposure of this reality; it is the act of education that the film pursues through the child.

Accordingly, in the final sequence, which like Marlowe's play depicts the usurpation and murder by anal stabbing of Edward II of England, here his son (the young Edward III), appears as a triumphantly queer child, made up and wearing beautiful jewellery, playing above the now caged and humiliated homophobic persecutors of his father: his mother, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Mortimer. The whole film, then, and its aim to "out the past", hinges on this act of recognition, in which we are all encouraged to participate – to out past and present. This is why, in fact, the film – and the reading of Marlowe it effectively undertakes – has become such a central text for queer studies in literature. The film encourages us to recognise the child in order to recognise the reality he represents – the reality that queerness exists, that it can bring joy, and that the future need not necessarily be constrained by a homophobic loyalty to the national past - particularly because, Jarman hints, that conservative fantasy of the past is thoroughly contaminated by the realities of queerness anyway.

As Alexandra Parsons points out, in the child Edward III's final appearance, "he wears a smart, black suit but with Isabella's earrings and high heels" (420). This denotes both the child's agency in overcoming heterosexist categories and a future where those categories will prove, as Martin Quinn-Meyler observes, "ultimately futile" (126). In this respect the child overcomes categories in a way even his queer father and his lover cannot (as Aebischer says, they remain "masculine even as their desires are same-sex" (*Screening Early Modern Drama*, 54)), resolving the misogynistic conflict over Isabella by symbolically moderating the condemnation of her betrayal of her unloving husband. (Jarman adds a scene where Edward and Isabella uncomfortably and unsuccessfully attempt to have sex). To access this future beyond the pain of these events, we need to recognise the child, and his significance.

On its free-ranging re-writing of Marlowe's play, the film is in fact a 'play' on recognition throughout: the audience is compelled to recognise (and "out") the presence of the queer in Edward II the king, Edward III the child, *Edward II* the play, and in Marlowe, the playwright. To not recognise the queer, to seek to exile it or destroy it, risks our becoming like Mortimer and Isabella, fools humiliated by history. Jarman explicitly presents this as the consequence of the wilful refusal of recognition underpinning Thatcherite homophobia, including, in particular, the failure to recognise the association (or even, in his film, the alliance) between the child and the queer, the potential alliance that Clause 28 implicitly acknowledges even in attempting to destroy it.

The child conjured by Clause 28, and later theorised by Edelman, is present in the film, in Edward III's initial incomprehension at his father's relationship with Gaveston, but also in some children who appear even before he does. When Gaveston confronts the Bishop (a confrontation taken from the Marlowe play, but, as Parsons suggests (422), in Jarman's version hinting at more recent Church of England homophobia), Jarman's bishop is accompanied by two choirboys, dressed in white and bearing candles. They act as visual signifiers of the bishop's authority as he immediately begins condemning Gaveston – the innocent, even angelic child a literal prop for the angry old man.

Shortly after this, the young Prince Edward, played by Jody Graber, appears for the first time in his pyjamas with his uncle Kent; he goes to Gaveston, on the throne, to play with a sword. This is a much earlier entrance for the Prince than in the Marlowe source-text, where the Prince does not appear until halfway through Scene 11 (11.57). This early entrance signifies Jarman's determination to give this child a central place throughout, foregrounding questions of education and the future, acting as a framing witness to the homophobic violence that suggests both judgement (children are watching your actions; will you be on the right side of history?) and hope (the child's constant questioning suggests that he, at least, is already thinking differently).

Prince Edward is constantly watching and often questioning events in this film, from his early entrance onwards. He is also often playing, with toys (like the sword, and like a robot soldier with which he plays shortly afterwards) that alternate between coding aggressive masculinity and colourful femininity. Yet even the choirboys attendant on the Bishop are also notably watching events in their scene; they turn between him and Gaveston, they look up inquisitively. Under Jarman's direction and editing, the children in his film are never just props even when – especially when – various adult characters attempt to use them as such; their looking and playing constantly suggests a process of education, of fascination with the events around them, followed by re-playing and re-making them. We, the audience, are compelled to follow the child's facial reactions, and to guess at their significance, by the scrutiny they receive from the camera.

The child's ability to watch and to re-make the world, the spirit of play that Jarman has Prince Edward share with Gaveston on his first appearance, is central to the film's political promise. The textual companion to the film, *Queer Edward II*, indicates that Jarman originally intended to make the film actually open on this point, having Prince Edward "look[ing] on holding a torch that casts eerie shadows" (2) whilst his grandfather, Edward I, dies (the event with which both Marlowe's play and Jarman's film begins but which is ultimately only reported in both). Jarman's text, with an accompanying photograph of the scene being staged though it did not make the final cut of the film, suggests that Edward I would appear as a walking suit

of armour that “crashes around a room” as he has a heart attack, before “blood oozes through the King’s visor” (2). As well as this animatronic vision conveying the monstrosity of a “straight [...] and very cruel” (2) patriarch, it also identifies sovereign authority – the authority of the state and of the past – as a suit that can be put on, discarded or transgressively re-arranged by the child, as indeed Prince Edward goes on to do with other items of clothing and regalia.

With this scene cut, the film’s opening nevertheless emphasises the potential for change presented by Edward I’s death. “My father is deceased” (the opening line of Marlowe’s play, but spoken only once there) is repeated twice, and then a third time after the titles, by Gaveston whilst two nude men frolic on a bed behind him; thus the possibility of change (potentially to the benefit of queers) is emphasised from the start.

The child Prince Edward is the main locus of this possibility, but it is also identified with a certain child-ness (a kind of innocence, in fact, in that it constitutes an explicit rejection of political participation in favour of private play) present in the relationship between his father and Gaveston, who himself plays with the young Prince. When Gaveston confronts Mortimer, he does so swinging, nude, on the throne in just such an act of childlike play; and this confrontation cuts to a shot of Prince Edward playing with his own toys. The Prince is not only playful, but also prone to exploration: in one scene he comes across a strange circle of nude figures in the darkness, pushing against each other in something resembling a choreographed rugby scrum, ambiguously suggestive of both sexuality and violence. In another scene, this child peers out from behind a beef carcass hanging in the centre of the room in a visual echo of the throne; later he watches his mother drink blood from the neck of the tortured Kent.

Although the Prince curiously questions his father’s relationship with Gaveston (“Why do you love him whom the world despises so?”, a line Jarman takes from Mortimer in Marlowe’s playtext (4.76) and gives to the Prince),<sup>8</sup> his actions at the ending show that he has thoroughly identified with queer love - and so the violence towards queers becomes implicitly associated with abuse of the child,

collapsing the most acceptable and the most taboo forms of violence into one another. The Prince, though, seems able to transfigure the perpetual violence and antagonism of the adults; given militaristic toys to play with and brutal scenes to witness, his own 'violence' towards Isabella and Mortimer is playfully and harmlessly enacted with flour.

Prince Edward's identification with the queer becomes complete in his decisive choice not to go along with his mother and Mortimer (despite their coaxing and coercion), but rather to identify with his father and celebrate the murderous heterosexual lovers' downfall. The final scene introduces his father's final words, "If I live, let me forget myself", spoken as the camera pans over a crowd of OutRage-style gay rights protestors. As implied by both the staging of the King's murder and its reversal as a dream, life and death are as one here in this vision of a future (which is also the dream of an "outed" past). The child's role in bringing this about hints that education and a willingness to play, to puncture the pompous hypocrisies of heterosexual morality (identified here with Thatcherite authority), will be the practical tools for achievement of this utopian vision.

The utopianism is enacted through a reading of the child, then, but hints that in practice, progress will be achieved through the child's reading; his curiosity will eventually defeat the imperative to non-recognition of the queer presented by the authorities attempting (and failing) to direct his education. As Parsons points out (418), the photographic images in *Queer Edward II* re-arrange Marlowe's scenes to bring in Prince Edward at moments when he is not present in Marlowe, and even make the focus "the on-looker, the young Edward" (418) and this is as true of the film itself as of the companion-piece.

This codes, of course, the defeat of the control over the child's reading in Clause 28, and of its homophobic will to ban queers from recognition as families, from capacity for the kind of parenting both Edward II and Gaveston visibly demonstrate here upon the Prince.

Whilst this indicates a renewed possibility of political progress, something altogether more utopian, rather than merely progressive, is at work in Jarman's

ending, in which Edward II wakes up from (what now turns out to have been) only the dream of his murder. Curiously, this stops historical time in the act of recognition: The would-be murderer, realising the repressed desire behind the violent penetration he was about to make, throws away his poker and kisses Edward instead. Not only homophobia but history is joyously abandoned as a utopian time emerges from recognition of (queer) reality.

This is confirmed by the young Edward III, dancing to Tchaikovsky's Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy in feminine make-up and jewellery on top of the cage in which Mortimer and Isabella are held (having taken from them, as Parsons noted, elements of both their masculine and feminine performativity). This time after history has stopped is a time of play and freedom; of individual creativity and the social united not through conservative loyalty to the state but the child's capacity to re-make social arrangements – a capacity produced by his looking at, and reading of, the events around him.

This ending of time is not only a dream of the end of the period of Thatcherite homophobia in which the film was made. It also implicitly reads that period as a response to earlier and disastrous authoritarianisms, as evoked by the fascistic appearance of the uniforms worn by Mortimer's followers. Here, then, the ambitious and creative child, who reads the world around him in order to become something other than himself, is the source of salvation not only from Clause 28 (with its fear of precisely this child) but also from earlier political projects that did great violence to the future in the name of securing it. This salvation extends not only to us, the viewers, but to Edward II himself, who is saved through the recognition of the queer that his would-be executioner achieves and which is symbolically and literally performed by his son's dance. This results in a reversal of the film's (and Marlowe's) opening line: the father is not dead, but the queer can nevertheless return, triumphant, in the son.

Jarman achieves this ending through a strategically selective use (or, according to the film's opening titles, "improvement") of Marlowe's playtext. If we explore what Jarman's film omits from his source, we find that not only the child

who emerges from this but the child who is left behind has implications for the politics of his film, and how those politics are achieved. We also find, in Marlowe's play, a very different child, with different implications for politics and time. This provokes questions about the use of visual recognition as the basis for a utopian change to political representation.

Prince Edward's role differs significantly between Marlowe's playtext and Jarman's film (though he is crucial to the endings, in particular, of both). Of course, these endings are deliberately different, with Jarman's serving a distinct activist purpose through its utopian vision, with the consequence that, unlike in Marlowe, his Prince Edward never exactly accedes to the throne. Despite the heavily politicised nature of Jarman's film, real politics are as a result, I shall argue, actually obscured by the foreclosing of time with which the film ends (and which the child codes).

Time is violent in Marlowe's *Edward II*. As the play opens, Edward I has ordered the exile of his son's lover Piers Gaveston, but that son, having just become King Edward II, has immediately recalled Gaveston. The time is out of joint, the will of an individual king conflicting with the monarchy's function in managing time through the production of heirs: even whilst Edward II's "my father is deceased" (1.1.) appears to consign Edward I to the past, Mortimer affirms that he was "sworn to your father at his death" (1.82). Given this rupture in political time, it is not surprising that the next heir is himself the object of competing attempts to control him and his education.

Jarman's particular positionings of the Prince as a witness in several scenes, where he gradually develops his identification with his queer father (as evidenced by his clothing choices) are Jarman's own work: they reflect the significance, but not the content, of the Prince's role in the Marlowe playtext.

The Prince's appearances differ significantly in number, timing and content between Marlowe's playtext and Jarman's film. Whereas in the latter the Prince appears within the first twenty minutes, and is invited up to the throne to play with Gaveston in the background of the adults' conversation, in Marlowe he does not

appear until Scene 11 – not only relatively late in the action, but after Gaveston has already been executed. The kind of education this child receives from his father is also very different from that given to Jarman’s Prince. Whereas the latter gets both play and conversation from King Edward, Marlowe’s Prince appears for the first time only to be sent away by his father to go with Isabella to mollify the King of France, who has seized Normandy (11.64). The King appears preoccupied with Gaveston (11.67) and refers to the Prince as “your [Isabella’s] little son” (11.70).

Marlowe scholars like Marie Rutkoski have increasingly recognised the centrality of the Prince in the play, whilst Lisa Hopkins remarks: “If we judge him by the devotion to him evinced by his son, Edward II is the best parent in [Marlowe’s] plays” (*Christopher Marlowe*, 32). Historically, Marlowe’s portrayal of this filial devotion complicates any homophobic reading of Edward II’s failures; for the son who loves him grew up to be the celebrated Plantagenet warrior-king, Edward III. (The knowledge that Prince Edward would grow up to be this king is, of course, an example of the inclusion of the future in the present through the figure of the child). However, Hopkins’ formulation is puzzling: Why *would* we judge the father by his son’s devotion, since it appears not to be reciprocated?

The order that Isabella goes to France, taking the Prince, to negotiate has disastrous effects. It ends any even partly convincing appearance of Isabella’s loyalty to the King and gives her (and thus eventually Mortimer) a valuable tool in physical possession of the heir. Jarman’s Edward II, though certainly passionately in love with Gaveston, incapable of loving Isabella, and capable of visceral hatred of his enemies (in one scene he even murders a member of the homophobic police force), is never unequivocally a bad king. The brutally homophobic Mortimer and the bitter, vicious Isabella are the irrational actors in Jarman’s events, not the King.

Yet in Marlowe, even if Edward is in many respects sympathetic (Guy-Bray makes a vigorous case against uncritical acceptance of the idea that he is bad ruler in *Edward II Revised*), he makes poor choices, at least in the context in which he lives, even if that context is a violent and often absurd world (particularly so in the play’s core irony, that the barons claim to want a strong and legitimate ruler, yet



constantly oppose the legitimately-titled Edward's attempts to exercise his strength). King Edward's sending Isabella and the Prince abroad is foolish, and directly caused by his distraction by Gaveston (who, in another grim irony, is, unknown to King Edward, already dead at this point). It also demonstrates the King's apparent disregard for his son (the chances of the Prince actually helping his father in France are low). Marlowe's Prince Edward thus cannot access a humane and truthful version of events in the way that Jarman's Prince does. Whereas the latter talks openly with his sensitive father and plays with Gaveston, the former is sent away by his father as soon as we see them together. Yet as Hopkins says, the Prince himself does display devotion to his father; however, this looks foolish (or poignant) when he states his belief that his father "loves me better than a thousand Spencers" (15.7), against the evidence the audience has seen. The Prince repeatedly indicates a love and honour for his father that Marlowe shows to be not only unrequited, but evidently based on a purely imaginary version of his relationship to his father (though Jarman, tellingly, makes it real in his film).

This indicates how, in Marlowe's *Edward II*, there is no healing of the temporal rupture with which the play begins. *Edward II*'s interest in difference, in the illegitimate, and what we now call the queer, as destabilising factors in the political order, emerges with particular force in the child and remains ironically present even in his final restoration of order. Edward III's spectacular and sudden assertion of authority through violence concludes the play, giving it the ending Jarman erased from his movie.

In deposing Edward II and ruling in the name of his son, Mortimer claims to be restoring the natural order guaranteed by the monarchy, but this claim depends on deferring the child's right to rule in his own right – on ignoring, in fact, that this child is already growing up - an ignorance that costs Mortimer his power and his life:

Queen:           Ah, Mortimer, the king my son hath news

                          His father's dead, and we have murdered him.

Mortimer:       What if he have? The king is yet a child.

(26.15-17)

Time is the critical issue for the exercise of authority here, as is apparent when the play's fundamentally disjointed time is physically staged through the proclamation of Edward III as king in one scene (in a charade stage-managed by Mortimer), only for the still-living Edward II to reappear in the next. This reflects a temporal crisis that cannot be eradicated with the death of Gaveston, of Edward II, or of Mortimer, and which has been at work from the play's opening. Edward I's order for Gaveston's exile is voided (or is it?) by his death and his son's succession; Edward II is the legitimate king, but rules with a tyrannical disregard for the future; Mortimer deposes the rightful king in the name of the legitimacy of the monarchy itself, but in reality can only rule as a tyrant. There is also something excessive about Mortimer and Isabella's passion for one another (and perverted at its source, in that Isabella ultimately welcomes the murder of her husband by her lover) that ironically echoes the passion between Edward II and Gaveston. Their rule is ultimately just as much a disruption of the imagined natural and legitimate temporal order as is caused by the relationship of Edward and Gaveston.

It is not unreasonable today to read this temporal disruption, as Jarman does, as queerness. It is directly associated with the crisis of legitimacy represented in Edward's obsessive passion for Gaveston - which is also, ironically, reflected in Mortimer and Isabella's relationship and even in Prince Edward's devotion to his father. The Prince perceives himself as a rival to his father's new favourite, Spencer, and has a love for his father that appears just as irrational (and ultimately as disruptive in its effects) as the adults' affairs. Where Marlowe differs from Jarman, though - and therefore becomes subject to the latter's re-writing - is that this temporal disruption does not presage any entrance into utopian time, any return to natural and legitimate time, or any progress. In important respects, the child who assumes the throne at the play's end has learned nothing.

The trope of the child who resolves the future in the present, as discussed earlier, might lead us to anticipate that Prince Edward's accession will finally reconcile the crisis in time that has afflicted England. Instead, the young Edward III

turns the act of usurpation and the violence of execution (but now also combined with the retrieved authority of kingship) back upon Mortimer, carrying out his own coup against Mortimer in the final scene.

Prior to this, in preparing a written note through which to order Edward II's murder, Mortimer anticipates the child's reading and plans to control it, and through this to control time. Correctly foreseeing the risk of Prince Edward seeking revenge for his father's death, Mortimer uses some ambiguous Latin to instruct the murder whilst simultaneously disguising the order, in a form of plausible deniability:

Mortimer:     This letter, written by a friend of ours,  
  
                  Contains his death, yet bids them save his life.  
  
                  'Edwardum occidere nolite timere, bonum est',  
  
                  'Fear not to kill the king, 'tis good he die.'  
  
                  But read it thus, and that's another sense:  
  
                  'Edwardum occidere nolite, timere bonum est',  
  
                  'Kill not the king, 'tis good to fear the worst.'

(*Edward II*, 24.6-12)

Thus through a linguistic trick based on the placing of a comma, Mortimer attempts to control the child's reading and through that control the future. However, he has simultaneously failed to 'read' the child, and the result is a very different future to the one he anticipated:

First Lord:     My lord, here is the head of Mortimer.

Edward III:    Go fetch my father's hearse, where it shall lie,  
  
                  And bring my funeral robes. Accursed head,  
  
                  Could I have ruled thee then as I do now,  
  
                  Thou hadst not hatched this monstrous treachery!

*(Enter some with Edward II's hearse)*

Here comes the hearse. Help me to mourn, my lords.

Sweet father, here unto thy murdered ghost

I offer up this wicked traitor's head;

And let these tears distilling from mine eyes

Be witness of my grief and innocence!

*(Exeunt, bearing in the hearse)*

*(Edward II, 26.93-102)*

The failure of Mortimer's note to have any effect ironically suggests the naivety of any assumption that the child's reading can be easily controlled; this child has been reading what he was seeing in ways not penetrable to the adult. The final scene makes ironic reference to this simultaneous power and recalcitrance in the gaze, as it works from the dead eyes of Mortimer, to the witnessing eyes of the Prince, to the display of those eyes for the imagined gaze of his dead father and for the audience.

In fact, the suspicion of a clandestine education through sight has been present throughout the playtext. This child, for whom the events of *Edward II* have been a perverse *Bildungsroman*, seems to have absorbed a fetish for destruction of the heads of others from his surroundings. Violence to the head has proliferated throughout the play: Lancaster demands that Edward II "look to see the throne where you should sit/ To float in blood, and at thy wanton head/The glozing head of thy base minion thrown" (1.130-132). The method of Gaveston's execution, promised early in 1.131-2, is beheading (not a natural fit with the desire to expose him as a commoner). Mortimer's own beheading finally fulfils Kent's demand for revenge on the rebels from amongst whom he emerged: "let these their heads/Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues" (1.116-117). Although the Prince is not present on stage for all these moments, they are so persistent that he

seems to have merely absorbed the surrounding culture when, whilst in France, he announces that he will not leave his mother “Till I be strong enough to break a staff,/ And then have at the proudest Spencer’s head” (15.24-5).

The play’s concluding lines suggest a prolonged ceremony between the head and the child. Contemplating Mortimer’s head, Edward determines that the nature of his own “rule” should be best figured as an act of visual recognition, and of a containment of the subject within an animated yet essentially dead skull. All this self-reflexive violence towards the head suggests a desire to use the gaze to dissolve the boundary between subject and object as a means of anticipating the future.

As Marie Rutkoski demonstrates (284), Marlowe appears to have deliberately intensified the contrast between Edward’s age and the violence of his accession, making him appear much younger than the historical Edward III and thus emphasising the sense that Mortimer’s critical error was to misread Edward - precisely because of his childhood: “What if he have [learned of his father’s murder]?” Mortimer asks rhetorically: “The king is yet a child” (26.17)

This is not just any accession, nor is this just any royal child. The ironic accompaniment of Edward III’s accession with an appeal to “witness of my [...] innocency” – that is, the invitation to the audience to read this new king as a child precisely at the moment of his violence, as he ‘offers up’ the detached head - underlines the perversity of his supposed restoration of the legitimate (monarchical) temporal and political order. This could not have happened as it does were it not for the very child-ness of the new ruler, whose action against Mortimer provides startling evidence of childhood ambition and creativity, emerging from his imagination to form the final act of a ‘play’ in a double sense. Yet it’s also evidence of a certain terrifyingly successful naivety, in that this restoration of the ‘legitimate’ order ignores the plentiful evidence of that order’s failures, whilst nevertheless realising that anticipation of others will be essential to the appearance of legitimacy and thus the maintenance of Edward III’s own rule.

Edward III, following the example called for by his beloved (now, ironically, also beheaded) uncle Kent, situates his rule on the limit between body and mind, the

point of decapitation. He aims to rule men's heads as securely during their lifetimes as if they were severed in death. His accession-by-execution thus demands a form of violent reading – but of us, not of him. We, like Mortimer, probably did not read this child in time.

Edward III's announcement of his intentions on gaining the throne shows that perfect recognition can only be achieved when the object of that recognition is denied all privacy and all agency; and he has absorbed this belief through living in a culture that seeks to deny the potential difference inherent in the inability to ever fully recognise the living, thinking subject. Ironically, this inability was most evident in Mortimer's inability to recognise him as a subject, because he was a child.

This is suggestive, then, for the question of why Jarman – working to an imperative to recognise the child that arose from a different political intention but ultimately functions in the same way – turned away from these elements of the Marlowe text to construct another ending – one with the young Edward III still centre-stage/screen, but serving a different purpose, and embodying a very different future. In the film, in order to create a utopian and atemporal moment through the King's resurrection, the succession of his son and the violence associated with it in Marlowe have to be abandoned. Jarman eliminates Marlowe's interest in the paranoid reading of the child, the constant scrutiny of his face for signs of growing up (for the seeds of usurpation) and replaces it with an 'innocent' reading of the child as the recognisable embodiment of salvation (who saves, indeed, through his own capacity to recognise). Ironically, Jarman's protest against the withdrawal of recognition to the queer child represented by Clause 28 finds itself compulsively withdrawing recognition from another child: the Prince Edward of the Marlowe playtext, who is in some respects just as queer as Jarman's Prince, but who refuses to embody the future in a recognisably positive way. In fact, as we've found, not only does he refuse this, his own actions ironically point to the role of recognition in political power. This child is too difficult for Jarman's politicised re-working, precisely because he demonstrates the fallacy, and latent violence, of making political representation conditional on being available for recognition.

Accordingly, he must himself be disappeared, dismissed as part of the dusty past, incompatible with Jarman's "improvement".

Jarman's film finally ends on a tracking shot over the assembled protesters while Edward II delivers these words in voiceover:

But what are Kings, when regiment is gone,

But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?

I know not, but of this I am assured,

That death ends all, and I can die but once.

Come death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,

Or if I live let me forget myself.

Interestingly, Jarman appears to have revised his intentions for this ending, having considered having the above lines spoken by Edward III whilst reading them from a book, presumably after his father's death, locating the act of recognition more clearly in the child's education (see Aebischer, *Screening Early Modern Drama*, 443). Ultimately, Jarman chose to emphasise instead the utopian, indeed almost eschatological, aesthetic with which the film now concludes. He also made use of the intensity attached to the trope of the child who embodies the future at the ending of a text.

As the final vision of an eternal and atemporal moment is, paradoxically, achieved only as the culmination of a plot that (despite Jarman's innovations) develops sequentially, in time, in practice the imperative with which the film leaves us somehow combines this vision of the eternal with a demand to act in time. This reconciliation is achieved through how the imperative for recognition of the child functions as an anticipation, as a constant presence of the utopian moment in the here and now – someone to be seen, but always simultaneously to be read. This availability for reading becomes, in fact, the prerequisite for both aesthetic and

political representation here. The child's value for Jarman is his function in bringing in a utopian future.

If Jarman's child really is the queer child, then he seems to be one who curiously loses his dangerous edge (after all, the worst that happens even to Mortimer and Isabella in his version is that they are left caged and covered in flour), demanding only that we recognise him in order to access a better future, even in the present. His capacity for political disruption (clearly associated by Marlowe with his recalcitrance to knowledge, his capacity for secret and invisible thoughts behind his face) is lost here. There is something in this that reflects an ambivalence towards recognition and identification in queer readings. For example, in Guy-Bray's reading of Jarman's 'outing' of the play, he declares:

Jarman demonstrates that it is misleading to speak [...] of a private life, and this connection of the public (politics) and the private (sexuality) is indeed one of the distinguishing features of Marlowe's *Edward II*. (*Edward II Revised*, xii)

It is certainly true, as this claims, that the play asserts the inevitability of political and public consequences for private life; but the seriousness of those consequences are produced precisely through the very privacy of life – especially as located in the child. It is his (self-)awareness of this fact that leads Edward III to announce his own abolition of such life even in the moment of asking the audience to witness his "innocency". It is therefore not misleading, but rather necessary, to speak of private life, for this life, in frustrating recognition, goes on to produce a whole (promised) public order based on the violence of recognition.

As Edward III puts it, all violence could be avoided "could I have ruled thee then as I do now"; that is, if the violence already conditioned our existence *before* the act, or if recognition was the prerequisite for any political representation. There are, of course, no politics and therefore no future possible in this situation. It is telling that Jarman misses this implication from the Marlowe text in his desire to imagine a future beyond politics, beyond time and death; could there be something,



we might wonder, about the conditions of the 1980s and 1990s that explain why in this respect he unconsciously mirrors the strategies of his right-wing opponents?

In a novel by another Thatcher-era re-writer of older texts, Peter Ackroyd (to whom we shall return later) there is another case of a rule beyond politics and with no need for a future - and curiously, as with Jarman, this vision takes the form of a collapse between Elizabethan and contemporary texts. (Ackroyd has a much more ambiguous (and less activist) attitude to his own queerness than did Jarman.)

Ackroyd's 1992 novel *The House of Dr Dee* reflects on the relationships between knowledge, violence, power, and time, through the child. In the novel, a fictionalised Dr John Dee is pursuing a project to allow human reproduction through artificial means, for the creation of a macabre quasi-child, the "homunculus", at the same time as his marriage is collapsing (*Dr Dee* is obsessed throughout with a horror of the female and particularly the maternal as abject and grotesque). The creation of the homunculus is in fact aiming to destroy the relation between reproduction and *loss* that the maternal function introduces.

One chapter, called 'The City' (evoking both Ackroyd's interest in London as a site of competing forms of knowledge, and the metonym specifically for the financial interests located in the City of London, the economic centre of the Thatcherite project) is entirely taken up with the narrator's dream. He visits this city, the "world without love" (205), and there encounters a strange queen in the act of physically deconstructing a body:

There before her lay a naked corpse with a white cloth over its head; the breast had been cut open and I could see within the flesh and the fat, the sinews and muscles, the membranes and fibres, all revealed. The queen stood with her hands sunk into the body up to her wrists. 'I am in great anxiety for the well-doing of things [...] I will set wide open the closet door of nature's secrets. For what is my realm but that of nature? See the power which I possess over all the parts and notable devices in the body of man. This is my true kingdom.' (*The House of Dr Dee*, 215)

This Queen is in fact a monstrous dissolution of Margaret Thatcher into Elizabeth I as a single fantasised ruler of “the City” in the 1990s and 1590s simultaneously,<sup>9</sup> and the dead body she is dissecting in the cause of knowledge and of her rule (which are one and the same) turns out to be the narrator’s own. Her aims are recognition and identification, but hers is also a realm that operates by the refusal of recognition, and the narrator fails to recognise his own body when first presented to him.

The rule produced by this, curiously, cannot recognise its own violence; the body must be dissected so that the all-knowing queen can take possession of its secrets – and that it must become a *dead* body for this to take place is immaterial. When the narrator finds himself in the position of observing his dead body, the transition to a politics of the living dead is complete, Edward III’s vision realised.

This realm is fundamentally atemporal and anti-political; as Ackroyd’s Queen says, it makes authoritarian rule the “realm of nature” (we might say, it’s a rule based on what Agamben influentially theorises, in *Homo Sacer* and elsewhere, as “bare life”). It is accordingly opposed to the child growing up, and yet also opposed to the child remaining as the uncanny Other within the adult self – it must, instead, be located at the core of that self, but only within an aggressively restrictive and essentialist definition. There is to be no splitting, no difference, no division of public and private or meaningful distinction between adult and child in the subject of the Queen Ackroyd names as ruling over the City, which from the early modern to the Thatcherite remains in an unchanging, essential, loveless realm of the present. In attempting the promotion of recognition as the basis for political rule, even though recognition in psychoanalytic terms is the source of affective consolation, here all affect is banished; it is the “world without love”.

Curiously, death is also banished from this world, in that death (the narrator’s, for instance) is never recognised; it does not function as significant in the political order. There is a sense here of how a different understanding of death might be necessary for a politics not based on the violence of recognition. This particular form of violence is aligned, in the novel as a whole, with Dee’s attempts to

gain masterful knowledge of the whole world and effectively defeat death itself, through eliminating the association of the child with loss, and producing an alternative child as perfect and permanent reproduction.

It is highly suggestive that both Jarman and Ackroyd address the relation between politics, time and the child within the space of a single year in the early post-Thatcher 1990s; this adds to the sense that there is something about the 1980s and 1990s in Britain that emphasises the importance of this relation. It is also significant that Ackroyd portrays this in terms of an intolerance towards privacy that translates into a certain vision of the the child and a refusal of politics as distinct from 'nature' – that is, politics as a negotiation between subjects rather than the mere assertion and recognition of essential truths.

Suggestively, in his 1986 novel *The Remains of the Day*, set around the Second World War but often read as, amongst other things, a coded reflection on Thatcherite Britain (see Sim, *Globalisation and Dislocation in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*, chapter on *Remains*), Kazuo Ishiguro introduces a distinction between 'real' politics and a politics based on recognition and identity. This emerges clearly when he introduces a character who challenges the nature of the politics engaged in by the conference of European establishment operatives held at Darlington Hall, who proposes that they are a kind of fake politics, and inadequate to the future. This Mr Lewis, the American politician, declares at the conference's final dinner –

But his lordship here is an amateur. [...] He is an amateur and international affairs today are no longer for gentleman amateurs. The sooner you here in Europe realise that the better. All you decent, well-meaning gentlemen, have you any idea what sort of place the world is becoming all around you? The days when you could just act out of your noble instincts, are over. (Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 106)

In the 1993 film made based on Ishiguro's novel, this speech is re-scripted to make the implications even clearer:

Congressman Lewis: Do you have any idea of what sort of place the world is becoming? The days when you could act out of noble instincts are over. Europe has become the arena of Realpolitik, the politics of reality. If you like, real politics. What you need is not gentlemen politicians, but real ones.

This provokes a question: what is 'real' politics (and what is the false politics to which it is opposed), and why is Ishiguro concerned with this? For Ishiguro real politics appear to be the opposite of a politics of identity (the politics, in this particular example, of the "well-meaning gentleman") or more precisely of identification, or in our terms, recognition. Such a politics aims for the rehearsal of values and truths imagined as pre-existing; nature, not real politics.

As the politics of (gentlemanly) identity result here in the dismissal of two Jewish girls (*Remains*, 155-158) and the deaths of several other children, there is a strong sense that the demand to positively identify the child has done great violence to real children. In Chapter 4, I will go on to discuss further how Ishiguro extends the critique of recognition as the prerequisite for political representation through parody and the uncanny.

If the texts discussed above suggest that there is a particularly pronounced version of this issue in 1980s and 1990s Britain, they simultaneously suggest that it extends into history both before and after this period, just as the visual echoes of fascism in Jarman's *Edward II* align Thatcherism with earlier twentieth-century authoritarianisms.

I shall conclude this thematic introduction by turning to a slightly more recent text, but one that ties together the issues of the child, representation, recognition, ambition, violence, and time we have attended to thus far. In doing so, it locates the problem of the child and authority in the history of modernity, both its achievements and its disasters. It also echoes Marlowe in that it imagines a rule simultaneously ruled by the creative child and by violence, a rule which – like Edward III's – actually produces death even in the act of making it synonymous with

life. The violence turns out to depend above all, though, on the desire to recognise (the child), and the determination to not recognise (the child who is contaminated by adulthood). Something similar to this scenario appears in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), as we'll find in Chapter 4, but the text with which this introduction concludes is another film concerned with seeing and reading the child.

## 5. Original Violence: *The Prestige*

Christopher Nolan's 2006 movie *The Prestige* is based on the 1995 novel of the same name by Christopher Priest, but is as much concerned with themes Nolan has developed throughout his directorial career: representation, ambition, creativity, and violence. In doing so, it joins a number of recent cultural texts to depict situations where the conditions of *how* an individual came into existence (in a fundamental rather than temporal sense, his status as a child) produces a fate for him that would not otherwise be morally acceptable. In such scenarios, the conditions of an individual's birth and existence underpin his imagined embodiment of an essential reality.

*The Prestige* (like *Never Let Me Go*, as we'll see later) shows a culture of *originality* gone horribly wrong; originality here particularly denoting the unique identification of a product (often an aesthetic product or a text) with its creator - the authority that comes from authorship. Rather than originality being a source of aesthetic merit, here it is repeatedly a function of narcissism, a driver of competition, and a source of violence. However, the idea of originality functions at a still deeper level; it signifies the proximity between the author and the source, the absolute identification that eradicates the possibility of loss. In this way – and in explicit forms within Nolan's film – it replicates the gaze upon the child who promises such identification, but also frustrates it, for the adult. As with Jarman, the child contains a promise for the future that functions both in a historically specific context and in this fundamental and psychoanalytically suggestive way. For all this, in a paradox we'll find throughout the thesis, the child is nevertheless the object of violent destruction in *The Prestige*, even though the film begins with an attempt to use the child for salvation and survival.

Like most of Nolan's films, *The Prestige* hinges on an image – here the opening shot – that only makes sense at the point of its repetition much later. It opens on a panning shot across a hillside covered with - it gradually emerges - black Victorian-style top hats, apparently abandoned over a wide area. The image, whilst *literally* clear, is immediately resistant to interpretation; it has no obvious meaning, and as though teasing us a voiceover says, "Are you watching closely?" The combination of visual clarity and obscurity of meaning hints that the relationship between recognition and interpretation (interpretation appearing, as Kermode suspected, as a key mode for authority to assert itself) will come under scrutiny in the movie to follow.

The scene also, though, evokes a site of devastation and mourning; the black hats are funereal, and their placement gives them the appearance of symbolic markers for absent people, in the same way abandoned personal objects are sometimes either preserved at the site at which they first fell (as at Chernobyl, for example) or assembled as memorials to the victims of atrocities (as at some Holocaust memorials), and they sit on the ground much like gravestones. Yet if they are memorialising lost individuals, it's troubling to note just how many the dead must number; their anonymity is disturbing too, with each hat identical to every other. The anonymity of the apparently mass-produced hats, and the suspicion that they code some human loss, some mysterious knowledge of death indicated even in the apparently endless reproduction of the hats, uneasily hints at the representations given, or refused, to the human individual in modern disasters like genocide and nuclear warfare.

The film's interest is in fact in a particular function of the magic trick, announced in the title. Immediately after the opening sequence, a different voice (later named as belonging to Mr Cutter, played by Michael Caine) begins explaining the nature of a successful magic trick, his monologue cut with a sequence of scenes showing one such trick going somehow wrong, but in a mysterious and uncanny way, again resistant to immediate interpretation. Cutter explains that every magic trick is a manipulation of absence and presence, consisting of three parts: the "pledge", consisting of the demonstration of an object as real and normal (for

example, by getting the audience to inspect it); the “turn”, consisting of the disappearance of the object or of something within it; and finally the third act, the “prestige”: the recovery of the lost object in another place or a transformed state. As Cutter explains the prestige, the film cuts to an image of its apparent failure: the magician Angier, drowning in a water tank from which he is supposed to have escaped, under the stage. The scene then changes to Cutter making his explanations in a courtroom where Angier’s rival, Borden, is on trial for his rival’s murder.

The explanation of the prestige is replete with ambiguity and irony: Cutter explains that it is about the reconstitution of a lost object, but its more common sense of ‘esteem’, of someone ‘prestigious’, is also behind the specific act being played out, and behind the plot as a whole. In Lacanian terms, it’s ambivalently situated between the child’s original sense of loss (initially, maternal loss) and the phallus as signifying both creative capacity and recognition within the symbolic order, within the authoritative order that stabilises the chaotic forces of desire and aggressive ambition by a process of making words and actions available for anticipation. Here the magic trick, of course, creates ‘prestige’ in all senses; it gives reconstitution for a loss, it makes an exhibitionist spectacle of the magician’s phallic creativity, and it relies upon an anticipation available to the magician but not to the viewer. This control over time as fundamental to the trick is established in the film’s opening sequence, where a child watches the trick described by Cutter. Suggestively, this anticipation allows the adult to hold the gaze of the child, to produce his facial expressions, and so make him available to be read.

The film is interested in the child’s face throughout. The visual nature of the prestige emphasises that this is all about looking; in one scene, a boy is shown a trick involving the apparent destruction of a small bird, only for the bird to reappear. The camera lingers on his face as he reacts to the trick and to the prestige, a reaction determined precisely by his lack of the anticipation the adult possesses. Even after the prestige, this child still doubts that the loss has really been reconstituted, that the bird who has reappeared is the same as the one who disappeared. The child’s intuition in this respect turns out to be of both symbolic and practical significance later on; it also hints that he is looking more closely than the adult expects, and is

perhaps less susceptible to replacing the visual thing before him with the delightful *vision* than is the adult.

Borden's trial, what he now stands to lose is in fact the child – his young daughter. (That he stands to lose both his own life and his daughter in one go acknowledges how the child is classically imagined as projecting the subject beyond his own mortality (as Edelman, following Foucault, argues in "Against Survival")).

The film centres on two rival magicians, Borden (played by Christian Bale) and Angier (played by Hugh Jackman). Both brilliant, their deadly rivalry begins when, whilst they're working together as junior shills for another magician, Angier's wife, Julia, is accidentally killed during a performance of a trick that involves her being trapped in a tank of water. Angier believes Borden to be responsible for Julia's death, suspecting him of having tied an inescapable knot around her hands, though Borden professes inability to remember which knot he actually tied. The key events of the film thus begin from a death, and are driven by Angier's attempt to make that death meaningful through ascribing blame. Angier and Borden embark on a series of revenge attacks on one another, each consisting of violent sabotage of the other's trick (and career).

Borden appears to gain a decisive advantage when he performs the trick known as the Transported Man with particular brilliance; Angier attempts to replicate this trick, but can only do so by using a double, which he suspects is not Borden's method. Angier is persuaded, following an interrogation of a mysterious man who works for Borden designing his tricks, known only as Fallon, that the method is in fact some kind of genuine transportation carried out by a mysterious use of electricity, based on secret knowledge shared with Borden by the scientist Nikola Tesla. Having gained possession of Borden's diary, Angier travels to Tesla to attempt to gain the secret for his own use, and ultimately succeeds in getting hold of a transportation machine that will enable him to achieve this.

Simultaneously, the success of which Angier is so jealous is shown to present its own costs. Borden's wife Sarah, frustrated by his inconsistency in his love for her and his overwhelming dedication to his own prestige, kills herself, leaving him with



their daughter (the same one he later, at the point of the film's opening and to which it eventually returns, stands to lose following his execution). This narrative is interspersed with returns to the contemporary moment following Angier's death, when Borden is in prison awaiting the death sentence. His greatest concern is for his daughter, and her continuing life after his death is associated with the 'bringing back' Cutter spoke of as the prestige itself (it turns out that his opening explanation, delivered in voiceover, was in fact directed towards her). It is also evident that Borden also views his child as a reconstitution of the lost love object that is his dead wife; yet in a cruel trick, following his execution she is to become a ward of 'Lord Callow', who turns out to be a disguised Angier himself: despite the latter's apparent death, he has somehow survived, and Borden rightly suspects that his survival owes itself to the same transportation device he used in his magic.

Here the child, and the battle over her, emphasises the film's interest in identity, originality and recognition as both inexorably producing violence and generating some of the central developments in modernity. Identity appears here as the destructively possessive impulse that accompanies the sense of wonder and ambition, which the film repeatedly locates in the child, that drives the creation of magic as spectacle.

During the final scenes of the film, Angier's methodology for performing his trick – the same one, it turns out, that is now about to allow him to take possession of his rival's child – is revealed. Angier did indeed gain a transportation machine from Tesla, and every time he performs his trick 'he' really is drowned, whilst simultaneously being reproduced, in perfect replica, in another part of the theatre (and thus coming out again to re-appear to the audience, in the ultimate prestige). The drowning man seen in the opening shots of the film really did die; and not once, but many times (and in agony, according to Cutter). There is therefore a perverse and ironic mirroring between the reproductions that allow 'Angier' to live, and the child he is seeking to possess.

Total control through knowledge, producing an equivalence between life and death that promises him the control of the future even as it eliminates the first

death (the one actually producing affect and trauma), that of Borden's wife, is the object of desire in *The Prestige*. It is a perfect form of 'violent reading' (reading having featured in the film through Borden's diary). This reading changes reality to allow the self total mastery, but as the cost of a violence that is, paradoxically, ultimately targeted towards the self too (all the reproductions or clones are, necessarily, completely identical to Angier). Ironically, it turns out that Borden did not use the transportation device at all – his trick succeeded by the help of his identical twin brother.

Identity and originality are the consequences of an attempt to overcome death, in the interests of creating an aesthetic representation (the perfect magic trick) based on the extension and the withdrawal of recognition. There is also a subtle political implication here, one arising from Nolan's exploration of how the psychological conditions that create the prestige, with their contradictory and mutually contaminated displays of chaotic, creative desire and of authoritarian and violent order, also function in the history of modernity. Situated in the 1890s fin-de-siècle, the film's interest in electrification and its consequences (visualised beautifully through shots of a field of electric light bulbs that unexpectedly lights up out of the night, and then through a whole town (Colorado Springs) that does the same, conveys this interest in both the fascination and the hidden violence of modernity. The electric lights – all absolutely identical yet beautiful, their spread across the field evoking traditional imagery of radiant (and equally identical) haloes representing individual souls – uncannily mirror the field of abandoned hats in the opening sequence and the systematised row of drowned corpses through which the camera travels in the final sequence. In fact, of course, all these phenomena finally turn out to be the creations of the same technology, technology of which its creator, Tesla, ultimately urges the destruction. Yet the technology merely enables, Nolan suggests, drives that are fundamental to the subject and to the ambivalent relation between the creative, ambitious, observant child and the need for authority through anticipation, and indeed replication. To produce some object is after all the basis of creativity; to predict and control its reproduction is the business of authoritarianism

and totalitarianism; but as these characters find, the practical ability to disentangle the two is not easily available.

The film shows this through visual references to real history of genocidal totalitarianisms (which had, of course, their own real ambivalences towards technologies of replication, reproduction, and destruction). One such visual reference appears in the ending with the appearance of neatly organised rows of drowned bodies, twisted in contorted agony, the Doppelgängers of the lost hats in the opening.

These bodies exist simultaneously to produce something for recognition – the reborn Angier who appears in the theatre – and to refuse recognition to something else, the drowned bodies themselves lying (like hell in the Renaissance theatre) underneath the stage, ‘watched’ only (in Nolan’s perfect image) by a blind man.

This ultimately remains a question of reading the child, as confirmed by the ironic juxtaposition between the camera’s interest in the face of Borden’s daughter and its final shot, which dwells on the agonised, distorted face of the drowning man; the image of the child can only be saved by violence towards the uncanny yet real child – the child who may not look like a child any more, and whose status as a reproduction enables the most systemic violence towards him. This is the ultimate form of the problem of the child and authority, and it’s one we’ll see again, particularly in *Never Let Me Go*. In both Nolan’s film and Ishiguro’s novel we see the conventional face of the child presented for a supposedly moral act of scrutiny, one supposed to save both the child and oneself, the viewer, from the consequences of death.

Both Nolan and Ishiguro demand that we consider what we’re *not* seeing – what we’re being distracted from or ourselves refusing to see – which turns out to be a normalised violence, everywhere and nowhere at once, taking place in the name of the child only at the cost of killing the child as he really is – which is to say, always both the child and not the child simultaneously. What is being symbolically killed off here is the child’s contamination by the adult, her ambition to be other

than the child – which is, ironically, the very ambition that creates the prestige (and, perhaps, the spectacle of directorial virtuosity that is *The Prestige*) in the first place. Whereas in the image of the abducted child we are required to see both the child and the threat to the child through that same image, now we find that they cannot be so easily disentangled. Like Marlowe's Edward III, this demonstrates viscerally that recognition of the child as a source of both salvation for the future and of political representation operates only through a culture of violence and an apparent eradication of death that actually makes death present throughout life.

Having seen this, the scrutinising gaze of the child we were invited to enjoy at first becomes exposed as a kind of *violent reading*. Throughout this thesis I will describe this violent reading and how many texts manage, despite its cultural and political dominance, to work back against it, to dislodge the alignment between representation and recognition and force us to contemplate the possibility of a future that may be created not through replication of an essential identity, but through politics. This is politics in Arendt's formulation, depending explicitly on the refusal of recognition as the basis of representation, a refusal of precisely the demand we'll persistently find here.

In the later chapters, I will go on to explore how this demand works historically, politically, and psychoanalytically – and how others, like Nolan, have intervened against this through the uncanny, through parody, and through reassertion of the difference, the privacy, of the child. This difference is not protected, I shall argue, through its celebratory recognition (as some versions of queer studies, for example, attempt), but through the extension of representation *without* recognition, for the child.

## **Part Two**

### **1. Selection of Texts and Chapter Structure**

Having introduced the thesis thematically and conceptually, I shall briefly describe how this has shaped my selection of texts for further analysis.

I make reference to texts from a variety of periods, as will be already evident. Nevertheless, a relatively tight chronological frame applies in the following chapters. This frame centres on the 1980s as an imagined 'end of the post-war', with effects on the (imagined) future and thus on the child, and as a point when an essentialist idea of the ambitious child becomes culturally significant, and accompanied by significant tensions. This has already begun to emerge in this chapter and is a key focus of Chapter 3, in particular. In the next chapter (2), I discuss 'post-war' texts – but approached as the hinterland to *A Pale View of Hills*, published in 1982 – whilst the final chapters concentrate on post-1979 material. Hollinghurst, McEwan, Ackroyd, and Ishiguro (the principal authors discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) each create an uncanny and often radically unsettling version of Britain in the 'end of the post-war' moment; and they not only dramatise these uncanny narratives through the child: they parody, critique and expose how the child is used, and abused, in authoritarian attempts to control time itself.

Many of these texts depict a scenario where the child is in the process of entering authority, but where this process somehow becomes perverted and contaminated with violence, even the killing of the child. Given that the latter image is both highly taboo and central to my notion of a violent reading directed towards the child, I have therefore taken the appearance of this trope as a compelling reason for detailed attention to a particular text. This includes my explorations of Ishiguro's novels *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005); Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and its re-working as the horror movie *The Innocents* (1961); and Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985). In several of these (James, Ishiguro, and Ackroyd) the adult who is killing the child is, remarkably, also the narrator. Images of child killing and child disappearance also appear in McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1985) and (as I argue in Chapter 3) in Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004). The apparently opposite scenario, that of the child killing the adult, also appears in several of the texts included, notably in Rose Macaulay's *The World My Wilderness* (1950); *Don't Look Now* (1973), and *Halloween* (1980), and (more symbolically), again, *Hawksmoor*.

In the next chapter, I situate *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) in relation to images of children associated with twentieth-century disasters (through the visuals of Cold War-era politics, through Macaulay's *The World my Wilderness*, and the later twentieth-century horror film) and against the rise of psychoanalysis as a framework for both popular and critical readings of the child. Throughout this, I develop an analysis of the scene of child killing as a key site for the problem of the child and authority.

In the third chapter, I examine a variant on this scene, the repeated prominence of child disappearance in literary representations of the child under Thatcherism (particularly McEwan's *The Child in Time* and Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*), I argue that the authors use the child disappearance motif to embody Thatcherism's authoritarian abolition of the political future – that is, of the future as significantly different to the present. Reading *Hawksmoor* in the context of Ackroyd's engagements with both Thatcherism and Theory, I argue that Ackroyd identifies a form of violent reading of the child in which, he audaciously proposes, both Thatcherism and Theory participate.

The themes of violent reading and the killing of the child lead the final chapter, which focusses on Ishiguro. Throughout his literary career Ishiguro develops a persistent and unsettling critique, often through parody, of the use of the child (including the 'child within' the adult) to justify a violence towards the future and towards the possibility of political difference. Beyond this, Ishiguro exposes the still more unsettling concern behind this – the fear of death and the retreat to essentialist and supposedly permanent identities as a way of not only eradicating the future, but of eradicating death. With reference to Ishiguro's critical reception, I argue that his interventions against violent, authoritarian and exploitative readings of the child often parody critical attitudes towards Ishiguro's own work. On these grounds, I propose, we must see the problem of the child and authority as a problem for our own modes of reading.

## **2. Theoretical and Critical Frameworks**

I shall read the primary texts noted above through a number of interconnected contexts to give an account of the problem of the child and authority. These frameworks include psychoanalysis, studies of recent political history and its representation in literature, and over-arching studies of, or particular arguments about, the representation of the child in literature and culture.

A number of existing monographs within literary and related studies ambitiously attempt an overall cultural history of the representation of the child – or, at least, of his representation in ‘western’ culture. Reinhard Kuhn’s *Corruption in Paradise: The Child in Western Literature* (1982) is a remarkable example of the latter, with a very wide frame of reference. As one might expect given its publication date, this study is particularly concerned with the child’s enigmatic and ambiguous qualities, and his resistance to adult interpretation. My interest in the child as resistant to reading, and the consequent potential for reading to align with violence, has been influenced by Kuhn.

An earlier, but still useful, monograph about the child in culture is found in Peter Coveney’s *The Image of Childhood* (1957). Both Kuhn and Coveney explore the ambiguities and hypocrisies in the conventional imagery and discourse around the child, especially notions of ‘innocence’, with particularly extensive reference to nineteenth-century fiction. A more recent study on the latter subject is provided by Anne Higonnet, in *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (1998), who provides a history of the prevalence of the child in modern and contemporary culture, situating this in its economic and technological context. These studies either preclude or do not centre upon psychoanalytic or queer account of the child’s image and of childhood, which dominate the field today. They therefore help to show both the indebtedness of such queer readings to a broader history of analysis of the child’s function and to suggest queries and challenges to those readings.

From the 1980s to the present, broad analyses of the child’s role in literature and culture have often been pursued under the framework of a politicised psychoanalysis. Jacqueline Rose’s *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of*

*Children's Fiction* (1984; republished 1993) sets out important ground for later critics by establishing, through the persuasive frame of the Peter Pan texts, the representation of the child as a function of adult desire, specifically situating some of this in the later twentieth-century.

Lee Edelman is perhaps the most prominent critic of the child through such a politicised psychoanalysis; as noted, his influential 2004 work *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* draws on Lacan to advance a queer argument against the pervasive trope of the child as a moral absolute in contemporary culture, one that endlessly defers the interests of living subjects in favour of the image of the child, a process Edelman terms “reproductive futurism”. Edelman’s idea of the image of the Child being used in violence against the real child (who is always growing up, always becoming not the child) is important here, underpinning much of the basis of my own readings. Yet I also seek to qualify and critique Edelman, especially in my conclusion. This follows others who have expanded on Edelman’s work in the context of visual culture and have critiqued him in the process, such as Steven Bruhm, who I also cite here. Leo Bersani’s work, particularly *The Freudian Body* (1986) and *Is the Rectum a Grave?* (2010) is also referenced here as a key part of the nexus of psychoanalytic and queer work on the child.

Other psychoanalytic literary critics prove important for this study even when their own primary focus is not on the child. Josh Cohen’s *The Private Life: Why we Remain in the Dark* (2013) makes a psychoanalytic argument specifically about the political conditions of early twenty-first century western (and particularly British) culture, which both drew in Arendt to this work – and suggested specific resonances of her theory with contemporary and recent politics – and led to an important connection I draw between the representation of the child and privacy, or its denial.

Vicky Lebeau’s *Childhood and Cinema* (2008) explores the image of the child as cultural hypocrisy, ideals of ‘innocence’ providing cover for paedophilic desire and for the mediation of violence against the future. This includes an incisive reading of *Don’t Look Now*, discussed in my next chapter. From a number of specific visual dynamics surrounding the child, Lebeau draws a sense of paranoid and violent



reading, manifested in an obsessive attention to the child's inscrutable face: this has informed my reading of *A Pale View of Hills* in particular, but also informs the thesis as a whole. Lebeau's own frame of reference is primarily Freudian.

I have myself gone back to Freud (particularly the case studies, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, and *Civilisation and its Discontents*), and to Lacan, making particular reference to Book Two of Lacan's *Seminar, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-55* (English translation by Jacques-Alain Miller, 1988). Work by other theorists engaging with Lacan has been important here, including Serge Leclair's *A Child is Being Killed: On Primary Narcissism and the Death Drive* (1975) and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's *Lacan: The Absolute Master* (1991).

The psychoanalytic writer and child psychologist Adam Phillips, and particularly his *The Beast in the Nursery* (1998), is important here for its iconoclastic argument about the relation of certain psychoanalytic authorities to the child's ambition and creativity. Its implication of a complicity between political and critical authorities in this respect, even when they claim to celebrate children's ambitions, is crucial to my argument.

Bruhm and Hurley's edited collection *Curioser: On the Queerness of Children* (2004), alongside Bruhm's other works cited here, and Kathryn Bond Stockton's *The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), explores the child from what is perhaps currently his most productive home in contemporary literary and cultural analysis, in queer studies. They argue that culture has to go to cruel (if not unusual) efforts to repress, excuse and explain away the queerness of the child - a queerness they identify with the child's basic differences from the adult. For Bruhm and Hurley, these differences are all the queerer because they do not make a child who is recognisably distinct from the adult; rather the child transgresses the boundaries laid down by her own definition. The political and cultural response to this, which perpetually seeks to rebuild those boundaries, does fundamental damage to the rights of both adult and child. This has been highly influential for my own study, but I also develop an argument about recognition of

the child as the basis for representation that seeks to question the practical effects of queer readings and advocates a more expansive approach.

Alongside such psychoanalytically-informed accounts of the child, I also draw upon more historicist narratives of children in late-twentieth and early twenty-first century British culture, such as those by Geraldine Cousin and Carol Chillington Rutter. Whilst Rutter's focus is Shakespeare, her interest in contemporary performance and its engagement with politics and with (as a related issue) violence towards the child, make this an important reference point for me.

Alongside British political history from the 1980s to the present, I also refer to some works of political theory that have influenced literary and cultural studies. This principally concerns Hannah Arendt and her arguments on politics as the consequence of a certain relation between public and private life, particularly as described in *The Human Condition* (1958), which Cohen makes the basis for some of his arguments about privacy in contemporary life in *The Private Life*. Mario Feit argues for Arendt as an important figure for the politics of queerness in *Democratic Anxieties: Same-Sex Marriage, Death, and Citizenship* (2011), where his focus on the roles of reproduction and death transcendence for Arendt and her relevance to contemporary politics, and his engagements with Edelman, have informed my own approach, though I reach different conclusions on their implications.

In using particular literary texts I have naturally often referred to existing criticism on those texts, whether explicitly concerned with my themes or not. This is especially the case for Ackroyd, who has attracted considerably detailed critical attention but from a relatively limited number of people (notably Susannah Onega, Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys), and Ishiguro, who is now established as a significant object of critical attention in contemporary literature. I discuss his critical reception in detail in Chapter Four, making an argument that Ishiguro's work sometimes parodies his own reception. Critics on Ishiguro and who are particularly important for this argument include Alexander Bain, Rebecca Walkowitz, and Wai-Chew Sim.

This study is not, of course, anything approaching a comprehensive study of the child in fiction, even in British fiction since the 1980s. Equally, the psychoanalytic framework is primarily present in order to discuss current modes of critical reading and their political implications; this work does not aim for any comprehensive psychoanalytic reading of the child in contemporary literature, even for any particular theorist or school. I am rarely concerned with 'children's literature', but rather on the child's representation in (adult) fiction.

This study aims to add to existing scholarship on the representation of the child in literature and culture, by demonstrating a link between adult motivation for violence towards the child and the political treatment of the future, especially as specifically formulated in British culture from the 1980s to the present. The key consequence of this link, I argue, is that the child is required to be endlessly available for recognition as the condition of his political or aesthetic representation, but as these texts and their readings – mine and others - indicate, this is a condition the child can never wholly meet.

## Chapter 2 The Horror Child and History

The horror of that image has never diminished, but [...] it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things. (Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills*, 54)

### 1. Scenes of Child Murder

In the previous chapter, I explored a particular visual imperative that demands the child's embodiment of the future. The child's failure to do this, his recalcitrance towards the adult gaze, requires his proper education but also opens the possibility of violence. In the case of *Edward II*, we found that Jarman's attempt to eradicate this violence from Marlowe's play curiously reproduced the violence towards another child, albeit a violent one himself: Marlowe's Edward III. In this chapter, we will find other children where the threat of violence both *from* the child and *to* the child is curiously ambivalent.

Here I shall further historicise the issue of the child and authority by showing how the ultimate taboo of violence against the child repeatedly becomes imaginable, even justifiable, within the literary and popular culture of the later twentieth century. In these scenes of child murder – often ambiguously poised between murders by the child and of the child – the securing of the future demands violence, and the need to represent the future, both politically and aesthetically, depends on correct recognition of the child.

This chapter begins with the first novel of a key author for this thesis, Kazuo Ishiguro, and works back from this to examine its inheritance from specific versions of, and concerns over, the child from the Second World War to the present. Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) plays upon the understanding that the wars and genocide of the twentieth century pose an unprecedented crisis in the imagination of the future, one that emerges as a violence towards the future's embodiment, the child. Once again, this violence is often entangled in the process of the child's education. *A Pale View of Hills* dramatises exactly this in exploring the

function of the child for adult authority in both the 'post-war' and the 'end of the post-war' moments. Curiously, this novel also makes a late twentieth-century belief in the value of the child's entrepreneurial and creative personal ambitions – the child evoked in the previous chapter by *Jim'll Fix It* – a (conflicted) response to the earlier global traumas of the mid-century, which not only thus contaminate a later period, but spread geographically too, from immediate post-war Japan to Surrey in the 1980s.

*Pale View* perceives the British 1980s as psychologically marked by remembrance of the global horrors from a period of war whose significance was fundamentally re-interpreted in Thatcherism's renunciation of the politics of the long post-war period. It presents the turn to the child as both the psychological and the political imperative this anxious moment produces. At the same time, the child's awkward hovering between reality and text – and between being the killer and the killed – betrays the fundamental problems in using the child to secure the future. This child also crosses the border between literary and popular culture (and particularly cinema), giving Ishiguro to set up a scenario where the desire to base political and aesthetic representation on the correct recognition of the child descends into a crisis where seeing and reading are not, despite the promises of the novel's cinematic frame, reconcilable.

I shall argue that this is best understood by tracing the figure of the 'horror child' who played a dominant part in cinema (particularly but not only within the 'horror' genre itself) of the second half of the twentieth century. This horror child ties together two central frameworks for how the child is viewed, and viewed specifically as embodying the future, in the twentieth century after the Second World War. These are psychoanalysis, and the possibility of totalitarian violence – realised under Nazism, constantly anticipated, and occasionally realised again, throughout the Cold War.

In this chapter we'll find the trope of the horror child visualising a link between Freud's introduction of perversity into infancy (here always imagined as a potentially violent perversity) with the actual, historical violence of particular

political orders. Lebeau notes that Freud described childhood as fundamentally concerned with the formation of images (104); the charge has frequently been made that totalitarian regimes are likewise essentially based on the formation and repetition of images (an argument made, for example, by Virilio in *The Vision Machine* (1994), and the association between the two repeatedly appears here. In the horror child, the supposed effect of images on the child (an effect 'authorised', accurately or not, by reference to Freud) is blurred into the effect of the child's image on, and for, post-war society. This ambivalence between the demand made of the image and the image's demand on oneself resonates with the schizophrenic treatment of the child who provides this image of the future, a treatment realised as both violence and education.

It is in the same ambivalent sense that I refer to 'scenes of child murder', where the child being killed and the child doing the killing is often one and the same. The question, clearly, is about time: who will kill or be killed first, and what does it mean to go on living under such circumstances?

## **2. Time and the Horror Child**

Time in the horror movie, one of the principal interests in this chapter, is a matter of anticipation. Violence towards characters in horror movies almost always occurs because of a failure of anticipation, which is itself a failure of sight: they don't see what's coming (though the audience often does, of course, or is at least ahead of the characters in doing so, thus increasing the value placed on anticipation still further). This is also (once again) a failure to make seeing the same thing as reading; signs of some supernatural or quasi-supernatural threat are often visible to the characters in sufficient time for them to escape, but they fail to read them correctly, and so either fail to escape, or only narrowly do so. (Consider Marion Crane's failure to read the multiple signs of danger in what Norman Bates does and says between her arrival at the motel and her murder in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960)). This is, in a trope these movies repeatedly exploit, a particular problem when one is confronted with a threat concealed behind the innocent face of the child.

The need to read what one sees correctly and, crucially, to do so in time to avoid death, works both politically and psychoanalytically. In Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), for example, the characters' initial failure to read their situation correctly has been understood as both a failure to comprehend Jack Torrance's repressed rage and jealousy, and as an ignorance of the history of genocidal violence (with references to the Holocaust and to violence against the Native Americans). Historical and psychoanalytic knowledge is simultaneously essential for the correct reading that the horror film demands that we undertake at risk of our lives, as the influential Kubrick scholar Geoffrey Cocks argues of *The Shining* (172). An apparent opportunity to break this cycle of repeated violence emerges in the child, particularly the child who is attuned to the aspects of psychological and historical reality that the adults shut out. The telepathic ability to 'shine' secretly possessed by Danny Torrance is in this respect merely a stronger version of the child's general openness to silent and private observation of the adult world.

The imperative to read the child, and read the world through the child, in time to prevent violence, appears in the real politics of the post-war twentieth century, in ways that converge suggestively with its appearances in 'fiction'. A powerful example appeared in the 1964 US Presidential Election, where the child repeatedly featured in television campaign advertising for the incumbent, President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In one of the most notorious political adverts of that campaign, the infamous "Daisy Girl" (screened just once, on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1964), a little girl in a field, surrounded by birdsong, is shown picking the petals from a daisy. The camera moves up from a low position, staring up into her face as she counts the petals; then her voice suddenly blurs into the terrifying voice of a countdown to the launch of a nuclear weapon. As this new countdown begins and the camera settles level with the girl's face, the visual dynamic also changes; whereas we began looking up at her, now she looks up towards the source of the voice, the audible confusion between the two voices mirrored in an uncanny visual uncertainty between our looking at the child and her looking towards something else. Her eyes widen in apparent terror and the camera closes in, going deeper into the pupil of the eye. The moment when we

are wholly lost in the darkness of the pupil, losing sight of the child precisely as our gaze merges into the child's vision, is the same moment that this darkness is punctured by a bright flash, as the nuclear bomb explodes. Johnson's own voice then delivers a brief homily over the darkness: "These are the stakes: To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark".

Clearly, this is the politically potent coercion by the child's image, as identified by Edelman, at work. Yet it's also more than that. The very proximity between the innocent child in the edenic space and the bomb is uncomfortable, the coercion being employed too direct. The child's image ends up, in fact, contaminated by the very violence she is supposed to be warning us against. After all, if the advert ostensibly attempts to warn us against an apocalyptic future, it associates that future with sight; the disappearance into the eye suggests that just as the consequences of nuclear warfare could never be undone, so too the knowledge of such things would itself destroy the innocence of the child – and by extension, of the world – forever. Yet, of course, we have already seen the bomb: "Daisy Girl" itself shows it to us, through the child's vision; and we lose sight of (and control over) the child just at the moment we disappear into what she is seeing. We must keep the child in sight, the advert hints, or go into the dark – a darkness the child has already seen, insofar as she knows of the bomb.

The narrative was perceived as an attempt to align Johnson's opponent, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater, with the figure of Dr Strangelove (Menand 1) from the eponymous Kubrick film released only a few months earlier, in January 1964. If the latter provided a model for LBJ to use the child to characterise his opponent as a dangerous madman, it wasn't the only such film with an influence on the perception of the child in the US of the early 1960s. In fact, another advert from Johnson's 1964 campaign also centred on the child – indeed, visually it contained nothing but the child for its minute-long duration.

This was the "Girl With Ice Cream Cone" advert, which showed a very young blond girl eating an ice cream while a voiceover discusses the chemical effects of radiation on children's bodies before seguing to Goldwater's opposition to the



Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, drawing a contrast (or is it a comparison?) between the girl's greedy consumption of the ice cream and the pollution of her body by nuclear radiation. Although presumably unintended, the extended shot of the girl licking the ice cream is a distinct visual echo of *Lolita* as portrayed in Kubrick's 1962 movie. The shared vocabulary between these political adverts and the films on which they draw points to the crossover between suspected sources of harm to the child, between sexual awareness and from nuclear war. In both cases, there is a strong ambivalence about whether the threat is outside the child or somehow within her; just as the "Daisy Girl" camera disappears into the girl's eye to find the bomb, so too *Lolita* – and "Girl With Ice Cream Cone" are ambiguous about whether the sexual threat is coming from new social forces or from some fundamental attraction of the child to those forces. Tellingly, the voiceover in "Girl With Ice Cream Cone" is apparently directed towards the child, but she seems not to hear it, instead remaining transfixed on her ice cream. It is up to us, the adult viewers, to recognise both the child and the threat correctly, which appear for us as a single image, the latter invisible within the former.

This is indicative of the repertoire of visual images to work through the child *as* threat and the child *at* threat in the 'post-war' twentieth century. I shall turn now to a novel published at the ideological 'end' of the post-war period, one which uses precisely this visual repertoire in order to make the imperative to look at the child, and the value of recognition of the child as the basis for her representation, violently troubling.

### 3. ***A Pale View of Hills* (1982)**

Kazuo Ishiguro's first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), begins in the English Home Counties during the early Thatcher years, towards a narrator who has lived through the post-war 'future' and is looking towards her own final years and to the future represented by her child. Any future here, though, is still utterly conditioned by the past, particularly by the genocidal nationalisms, and the use of atomic weapons, earlier in the century. Where the future is so conditioned by history, it turns out, the child is contaminated by it. Events in *Pale View* are driven by the fear

of what is going on inside the child, behind her eyes and out of the adult's sight, a concern that manifests itself through an obsessive gaze upon the child and into interior spaces, rooms both real and imagined, as adults wonder what is going on inside the child, whether it is disturbing or intimate, or both. As in "Daisy Girl", the child's interiority is identified with the atomic bomb itself.

Ishiguro's novel recycles, and renders uncanny, several tropes around children from the later twentieth-century horror film – tropes including a facial inscrutability to match the new intensity of the adult gaze; a role in revealing a repressed but fundamental dark reality; an intimate relation with death; and a central role in a final 'twist' ending. The most significant of these tropes is the visualised scene of child murder, which becomes a palimpsest for the conflicting ideas and suspicions of the child's uncertain mediation between past and future.

Films often appear in Ishiguro's novels, including in *Pale View*'s own references to Hollywood, and elsewhere in instances such as the uncanny misrepresentation of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in *The Unconsoled* (1995). Ishiguro (who has himself written several screenplays)<sup>10</sup> described himself as "intrinsically" influenced by cinema, remarking that, "I didn't read much when I was young, I watched films" (Thurley 1). *Pale View* identifies itself with the horror film only to finally play off the disjunction between its own medium and that of the film, both rehearsing and disrupting the equation between seeing and reading classically demanded by the horror film's twist.

In a more basic sense, Ishiguro's style here is cinematic, in that the various scenes set out in the narrative are always 'blocked': the way in which characters walk, stand or sit in relation to one another, and to their immediate surroundings, are almost always fully (sometimes obsessively) recorded; yet we are nevertheless at crucial moments left unsure what we are looking at. Just as horror films often determine their meaning only retrospectively, providing a series of visual clues that only make sense in a repetition or revelation at the film's ending (Hitchcock's *Psycho* is a good example), *Pale View* works through the same mechanism, though it also transgresses it.

Ishiguro's makes his novel so cinematic only for this sudden lack of what the cinema takes for granted, a sudden lack of ability to see, to prove essential. At the moment when the adult, alone with the child, is fully dedicated to the scrutiny of the child's face, it suddenly turns out to be the adult narrator – whom we have been seeing through, yet never seeing – who requires scrutiny, which is terrifyingly denied to us. Whereas in the cinema the audience securely witnesses the action through the apparently 'real' and quasi-omniscient gaze of the camera, Ishiguro uses a narrator who is often every bit as penetrative as the camera, but who finally turns out to be fundamentally disconnected from reality. Later we will explore the film *Don't Look Now* - but here, the problem is that we *can't* look now, when we most desire to.

*Pale View* is narrated in the first person by Etsuko, a Japanese woman who married an Englishman (now dead) and who at the opening is visited at home in an English Home Counties village by their daughter, Niki. Etsuko had another daughter, Keiko, who was "pure Japanese" (10) and who has recently committed suicide. Keiko's old room in Etsuko's house constantly troubles the latter's sleep, becoming increasingly blurred into the image Etsuko has of her daughter's suicide (though the latter actually took place elsewhere):

I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture – of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end. The horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter [...] it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things. (*Pale View*, 54)

The "picture" is further echoed in Etsuko's recurring dream of a girl who at first appears to be sitting in a swing, but is revealed to be swinging from a noose (96). This horror scene does not preclude consolation; on the contrary, it allows for the natural 'intimacy' (in a gruesome irony, one lost during Keiko's life) between the child and the parent. The room, an 'interior' space in a double sense, functions as a possessive frame for this intimacy. As an object of fascination, the room echoes many famous children's bedrooms in the horror cinema, notably Regan's in *The*

*Exorcist* (1973). In a psychoanalytically suggestive gesture (given its appearance in a dream), the room makes consolation available through repetition; it is only through repetition that Etsuko can develop the “intimacy” she enjoys. This has an important effect on time; although a traumatic past still appears in the present, these eruptions are fundamentally controlled, made knowable – just as Keiko’s suicide has been oddly domesticated in Etsuko’s imagination, brought through the dream into a room in the mother’s house. It has also been brought under control temporally; it can be anticipated.

As Caroline Bennett remarks, *Pale View* presents “a cornucopia of repressive symptoms such as splitting, dissociation, rationalisation and projection” (“Children and Trauma in the Early Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro”, 88), and this is underpinned by the novel’s cinematic aspects. Even the swing/noose juxtaposition is immediately suggestive of both the return of the repressed and a basic technique of the horror movie - the unexpected, uncanny visual transformation of a stereotypical image of innocence (often specifically of childhood) into one of horror (we’ll see this again, notably in *The Innocents*). It is through anticipation, though, and the basic desire for control over time that this indicates, that the alignment between the novel and the horror movie becomes most pronounced.

In the horror movie there are at least three kinds of anticipation at work, all of them ultimately an anticipation of violent death: that of the protagonists who encounter and must strive to evade a mortal threat; that of the killer or other force who constitutes that threat, and who lies watching the protagonists before making his move; and that of the audience, between the two, still behind the killer but often ahead of the protagonists (we typically see the face emerge from the shadows behind the victim before she does). Who anticipates, then, determines who lives or dies, and so it is here too.

At the outset of the narrative, though, there is no forewarning of this. For no immediately clear reason, Niki’s visit in the 1980s narrative prompts Etsuko to remember her life in early post-war Nagasaki (11). In that earlier time, Etsuko is married to a Japanese husband, Jiro; she is expecting their first child, which may or

may not be Keiko. Etsuko gradually becomes acquainted with an initially “unfriendly” and “proud” woman, Sachiko, and the woman’s ten-year-old child, Mariko. Etsuko begins to occasionally help to look after Mariko, whom Etsuko appears to consider somewhat neglected as a result of her mother’s preoccupation with her American boyfriend, Frank. Meanwhile, Etsuko and Jiro host an extended visit by Jiro’s father, Ogata, who is obsessed with an article written by Jiro’s former classmate, Shigeo Matsuda, which has severely criticised Ogata, who in pre-war Japan was a senior, and aggressively nationalist, pedagogic leader. Sachiko plans to leave for America with Frank and her daughter: plans dropped only to be revived as her relationship with Frank fluctuates. Etsuko becomes increasingly concerned about Sachiko’s irresponsibility towards Mariko, whose frequent long absences become even more worrying as reports of serial child murders circulate around the city.

This narrative is interrupted by brief returns to the 1980s, where Etsuko and her daughter Niki struggle to communicate; both are troubled by bad dreams and the proximity of Keiko’s old bedroom in the house. The novel climaxes in the Nagasaki narrative when Mariko goes missing yet again and Etsuko finds her. Following a disturbingly ambiguous passage, to which I’ll return shortly, the final chapter returns to the present as Niki and her mother discuss Etsuko’s move to England from Japan, a migration Niki considers a model of personal bravery. Etsuko however sees her other, deceased, daughter as its victim: “I knew all along she wouldn’t be happy here. But I decided to bring her just the same” (176).

The parallel ruptures between mother and child and between interior and exterior of the subject preoccupy the novel. Keiko’s paternity is never explained (though she is referred to by Etsuko as “pure Japanese”) and her sister, who lives a lifestyle and in a (apparently New Age-like) community of which her mother quietly disapproves, reflects a division created by Etsuko herself:

Niki, the name we finally gave my younger daughter, is [...] a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a Japanese name, and I – perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past – insisted on an

English one. He finally agreed to Niki, thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it. (*Pale View*, 9)

Naming is in a sense the first act of education, linking the child's entrance into language to a particular signifying system, one which, as Lacan famously argued, exists before the child's birth and will continue after the child's death (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 27). In such Lacanian terms, the killing of the child asserts the primacy of the symbolic order over the Real, an assertion taking place precisely when education fails (as Etsuko and her father-in-law believe it is failing in post-war Japan).

Etsuko's attitude to naming displays an unacknowledged ambivalence between the education of the child and the essence suspected within the child, one she associates with a traumatic past. This ambivalent suggestion of a latent quality within the child, which may or may not be manageable through education, hints at the importance of education within the novel. The anxiety and conflict over education here indicates its fundamental failure as a preparation for the future; the nationalist future that Ogata and others attempted to create through and in the children they taught has not come to pass. Given this, and the competing but uncertain sense that the Americans offer an alternative future that promises to indulge the child's personal ambitions, there is a crisis in anticipation of the child's future that repeatedly appears as an anxious, scrutinising gaze on the child herself.

In an ironic reversal of the repeated attempts by adults throughout the novel to divert or silence the child's critical faculties, the final function of Etsuko's child is to block her own tentative critical assessment of the past. Niki is only too keen to promote a quite uncritical version of her mother's past – particularly her migration from Japan to England - about which one of her friends is planning to write a poem. Etsuko views the proposed poem as attempting to disguise the supposedly obvious implication that her migration ultimately caused Keiko's suicide (11). In fact, criticism (including in the literary sense, though with a broader application), or the lack of it, is in itself a theme of this novel; Etsuko recalls that her daughters' piano tutor "was a very limited pianist and her attitude [...] had often irritated me; for

instance, she would refer to works by Chopin and Tchaikovsky alike as ‘charming melodies’” (50).

As often in Ishiguro, such apparently casual irritations as these consistently betray much more fundamental and unspoken anxieties, just as Mrs Walters’ banal and sentimental teaching is an ironic and bathetic echo of the much more serious failure of Etsuko’s father-in-law, Ogata, to promote any critical capacity in his teaching in pre-war Japan. They indicate both a deep anxiety over the capacity to think seriously about the future (or lack thereof), but also a desire for both aesthetic and political fulfilment and a frustration over their own ability to achieve this.

Simultaneously, this is matched by Etsuko’s antagonism towards those who magnify the difference between the adult and the child, and between past and present. This emerges around Etsuko’s attitude to her father-in-law and his detractors, her tendency to support Ogata in the face of criticism from those who support the new democratic order. Etsuko’s personal resistance to the possibility of criticism and to democratised thought aligns with her deep-rooted fear of a division between the interior and exterior, the individual and the nation, the father and the son, the mother and the daughter: a fear mapped on to the anxious gaze towards the child, anxious in part because of the absence of the authoritarian ‘education’ Ogata proclaims.

Mariko is the primarily object of this anxious gaze. This child is appropriated and used to advance competing moral positions, standing in for Etsuko’s own unborn child, growing inside the womb, and for a future that must heal the catastrophe of Japan’s defeat. Alongside this, she is used by the women to articulate both the attractions and anxieties of the possibilities for the fulfilment of ambition and personal advancement supposedly opened up by American capitalism. Mrs Fujiwara, who has accommodated the future by cheerfully abandoning her former social status to run a noodle-shop, readily uses this child as a conventional symbol of hope. Curiously, this hope is just as strong an imperative as the compulsive anticipation we observed elsewhere; both are concerned to foreclose the possibility

that the future might be threatening, and to do so through control of the child's interiority:

"You must keep your mind on happy things now. Your child. And the future [...] Your attitude makes all the difference. A mother can take all the physical care she likes, she needs a positive attitude to bring up a child. [...] There's a young woman I see every week," Mrs Fujiwara went on. "She must be six or seven months pregnant now. I see her every time I go to visit the cemetery. [...] It's a shame, a pregnant girl [...] I know they're being respectful, but all the same [...] They should be thinking about the future."

"I suppose she finds it hard to forget." [...] (*Pale View*, 24-25)

This episode complicates the association between violence and the desire for meaning at work in the novel; whilst that association is certainly still present here, it is complicated by the sense that Mrs Fujiwara's apparent willingness to abandon meaning (about the past, at least) is just as narrow; it shows a naïve degree of faith in the availability of someone's interior condition for external knowledge, and its openness to manipulation. There is, in fact, more in common between the two women than is apparent at first glance; both fear the identification of the future with death (even though of course that is the only thing the future can ever guarantee, and is a necessary predicate of the child's growing up). Their implicit agreement that the child's welfare depends on the mother's mental state also makes the child a purely internalised element of that mental state, rather than an external object. This is easily accepted at this point in the novel, of course, because the child is physically internal, but its significance, as with so many casual moments in Ishiguro, turns out to be far greater than its ostensible context suggests: Keiko is only ever internal in the novel, whether in the womb or in the memory of her death. She is, in a sense, only a name.

Here Ishiguro, then, draws an almost unbearable parallel between the gestating 'child within' of Etsuko's pregnancy and the 'children within' her memory of the dead Keiko and (ambiguously) Mariko. Even death, though, has a kind of dual



existence within this novel; in the Nagasaki narrative it is a matter of sacrifice and remembrance, and of Ogata's pining for the abandoned ethno-nationalist inheritance between generations; here death is an ideological matter. In the 1980s English narrative, though, Etsuko is facing her own lonely, mundane decline towards, presumably, ordinary biological death, perhaps just of old age. (Etsuko's desultory relationship with her surviving daughter, with all their failures of communication, emphasises this banality.)

For Sachiko, however, the child is to be a means for a vicarious future emancipation from the conditions of post-war Japan:

“Mariko will be fine in America, why won't you believe that? It's a better place for a child to grow up. And she'll have far more opportunities there [...] She could become a business girl, or a film actress even [...] so many things are possible.” (*Pale View*, 46)

Sachiko demands that Etsuko look at the child and read the future through and in her. Etsuko (who we already know did migrate out of Japan herself, though to Britain rather than America – an unexplained turn from the 'new' to the 'old' western power) seems conflicted. She sides with Ogata's disdain for the Americanisation of Japan (including the adoption of democracy and female suffrage) but is evidently fascinated by Sachiko's willingness to migrate to America (itself ambiguous and inconsistent - immediately after the passage above, Sachiko mentions her decision to leave the noodle shop, emphasising her pain in undertaking the job given her hereditary social status, betraying a lack of realism in her enthusiasm for American meritocracy). The noodle shop's symbolic opposition to the cemetery suggests how the child's ambition is bound up in the repudiation of death even, as Etsuko intuits, it inevitably reminds the adult of that death (for after all, ambitions for the child are for the child's life beyond her mother's life).

Education – about which Etsuko and Mrs Fujiwara argue – remains a key site of conflict between competing notions of authority, as Ogata implies in response to Shigeo Matsuda:

“We may have lost the war,” Ogata-San interrupted, “but that’s no reason to ape the ways of the enemy. We lost the war because we didn’t have enough guns and tanks, not because our people were cowardly [...] We [...] worked hard to ensure the correct values were preserved and handed on.” (*Pale View*, 147)

According to Ogata, to maintain these values, they must be reproduced – in Japan’s children – but lie dormant or latent, making use of the inscrutability of the child, until the opportunity to re-establish outward authority for Japan (and to regain guns and tanks) emerges. Both individuals see the war as having exposed a reality beneath hypocritical and unsustainable social norms, but Ogata locates that hypocrisy in the post-war present, whereas Shigeo locates it in the pre-war past (in either scenario, war is the revelation of essential reality). In either case, the child is expected to demonstrate this reality, to make it available for recognition.

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Seeing and reading the child turns out, then, to be inevitably related to the war as a fundamental disruption to the expectation of ideological and personal reproduction through the child. For this reason, both the war and the child disrupt the authorities’ normal procedures for managing death, a fact betrayed by the repeated and anxious association of the child with death in the novel.

When Mariko claims to have spent time with a woman living across the river, Sachiko at first claims this woman is entirely imaginary, but then reveals that the imagination – if that is what it is – is here a return of the repressed:

“This woman you’ve heard Mariko talk about. That was something Mariko saw in Tokyo [...] You see, Mariko went running off [...] down an alleyway, and I followed after her. There was a canal at the end and the woman was kneeling there, up to her elbows in water [...] she turned round and smiled at Mariko [...] she had that kind of look, her eyes didn’t seem to actually see anything. Well, she brought her arms

out of the canal and showed us what she'd been holding under the water. It was a baby." (*Pale View*, 74-75)

This woman was found in the process of both hiding sight from a child *and* hiding the child from sight; she looks without seeing, but is nevertheless engaged in the act of child murder. The woman does not "actually see anything" because there is nothing, and certainly no future, to be seen. This refusal of recognition is transformed into violence against the child, something which the child transforms, apparently, into her own visual anxieties:

"She saw everything? She saw the baby?"

"Yes. Actually, for a long time I thought she hadn't understood [...] She didn't start talking about it until a month or so later. [...] I woke up in the night and saw Mariko sitting up, staring at the doorway. [...] I asked Mariko what was wrong and she said a woman had been standing there watching us. I asked what sort of woman and Mariko said it was the one we'd seen that morning. Watching us from the doorway." (*Pale View*, 74-75)

The framing by the doorway indicates that the woman has become a defined image – or in Freudian or cinematic terms, a scene. Whilst this scene establishes a dynamic of looking, seeing, and meaning between Mariko and the murderous, and eventually ghostly, woman, it is actually about the mother's gaze, about what she reads in her daughter's face. The suspicion that certain scenes cannot be easily, if ever, abandoned (and the location of this fear in the child) emerges in such innocuous distortions as when Etsuko, discussing piano lessons, assures Niki that nothing learned at a young age is ever truly lost.

If that is true, it identifies education with trauma. Shigeo Matsuda makes this explicit when he tells Ogata, "in your day, children in Japan were taught terrible things. They were taught lies of the most damaging kind [...] *And that's why* the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history" (147, my italics). The murder of the child is a perverse act of *education*, for it forever

transforms the child by, and into, the 'correct values'. In fact, the child's death paradoxically confirms the child's value, which otherwise is the object of anxious doubt: only in death is the child wholly available for meaning. Here the child becomes paradoxically identified with memory itself; Etsuko, as the mother of a daughter who has died, one identified with an essential but lost Japan, is always attempting to master the past – much as the child-killing woman made the war into a symbol under her authority in drowning her daughter.

In order to facilitate their unburdened departure for America, Sachiko drowns Mariko's kittens, recalling the drowning of the child in Tokyo. Following this, Mariko has run away; Etsuko searches, and when she finds her -

"The insects were clustering around the lantern. I put it down in front of me, and the child's face became more sharply illuminated. After a long silence, she said: "I don't want to go away. I don't want to go away tomorrow."

I gave a sigh. "But you'll like it." [...]

"In any case," I went on, "if you don't like it over there, we can always come back." [...]

The little girl was watching me closely. "Why are you holding that?" she asked.

"This? It just caught around my sandal, that's all."

"Why are you holding it?"

"I told you. It caught around my foot. What's wrong with you?" I gave a short laugh. "Why are you looking at me like that? I'm not going to hurt you."

Without taking her eyes from me, she rose slowly to her feet.  
(*Pale View*, 173)

This is the final and most disturbing of the instances in the novel when we glimpse a difference between the (mostly) visually precise information Etsuko relates to us and the reactions of other characters to her actions. Etsuko suddenly starts talking as though she were Sachiko, referring to the plan to go to America in terms of “we.” It is impossible to securely interpret this uncanny change, the novel’s key “small but explosively significant slippage” (Bennett, “Children and Trauma in the Early Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro”, 84); the child – like us – looks up “questioningly” but it is not clear whether Etsuko is including herself in the family to reassure the child by pretending that she too is going to America, or whether Etsuko has taken on Sachiko’s voice because of some psychological slippage (the shocking possibility, indeed, that Sachiko was always only a projection of Etsuko’s). The combination of the reassurance of the child and the sudden collapse of identities produces a chilling effect, compounded in the revelation that Etsuko is carrying a rope, identifying her with the child-murderer preying upon Nagasaki (who killed the last victim by hanging). We might trust Mariko’s response because when Etsuko approached her alone once before, she also had something “caught around my foot”, which frightened the girl.

Here Ishiguro – like Henry James in *The Turn of the Screw*, as we’ll find shortly – reverses the convention by which the reader is given access to the exterior elements of a scenario only to enjoy the gradual revelation of the interior, of the characters’ buried motivations. Here, instead, we begin ‘inside’ the narrator but only gradually come to the uncanny realisation that her gaze cannot be trusted. This interest in the interior (recognised as central to Ishiguro’s work by critics such as Walkowitz, Robinson, and Black) emerges, then, as a source of violence directed towards the capacity for creativity and ambition located in the self but projected on to the child.

The child murderer turns out to have been closer to home than we initially suspected. The penetrative gaze, seeking to discover an essence inside the Other, uses violence as a way to ward off the fear of violence – and of the future – that actually produced it. The scene of the child’s death, whatever the adult’s precise role in it, offers the same consolation – as Etsuko hints when suggesting that Keiko’s

suicide confirmed her essentially Japanese interior quality within her – a reunion of the exterior and interior that refuses the possibility of interior thought as a source of disruption, creativity, or criticism - refuses, in fact, its very privacy. (The ghostly child murderer remembered from Tokyo appears in Mariko's dreams in a doorway - on the threshold between interior and exterior).

In Freudian terms, one would expect this fear of division between the interior and exterior self to reflect a desire to re-establish perfect, infantile, unity with the mother; and this hovering expectation haunts the ambiguity of Etsuko as a mother herself: in one timeframe, pregnant; in the other, contemplating her daughter's suicide; but always with the child somehow ambiguously 'within' herself. Ishiguro thus uncannily transforms the perfect affective relation, this total identification between parent and child, into a capacity for violence.

Just as *Remains* finds Nazis and the abuse of Jews not in Germany but in an English country house, so too *Pale View* insists that this killing of the child is not only found in post-war Japan but in 1980s Britain. What, we might wonder, is that Britain being accused of here, and why does this accusation take the form of a powerful taboo (a taboo which, as we saw in the previous chapter, 1980s Britain expended no little political energy defending) as violence towards the child?

In one respect, this takes the place of the classic 'twist' at the end of a successful horror movie, the scene where the security of identities is fundamentally and sickeningly undermined. Think again of the moment in *Psycho* when Lila (and with her through the camera, the viewer) finally approaches Mrs Bates, the murderer we have observed throughout the movie, only for the chair to swing round and reveal that the real murderer is elsewhere. Something similar happens in this final 'Japanese' scene of *Pale View*, in the revelation that the narrator herself, whom we are dependent on for our view of the scene, is – perhaps – the murderer. This final scene of (attempted?) child murder, echoes and elides the earlier 'scenes' in *Pale View*: the imagined suicide-scene within Keiko's room, the dream of the child on the swing/the noose, and the image of the woman drowning her child as apparently witnessed in Tokyo by Sachiko and Mariko.

The excessive number of child killings in the novel (those being carried out by the serial killer in the background to the Japanese narrative; the drowning of the child by the mother in Tokyo; Etsuko's apparent attempted murder of Mariko; and Keiko's suicide) both elicit and resist reduction to a symbolic or psychoanalytic explanation. As events, they are neither comfortably interior nor exterior, neither fully real nor securely unreal. (They are textual). The effect of this is to deny the desire for penetrative knowledge driving the visual gaze on the child throughout the novel. We're left, I am suggesting, instead with the status of the novel as text, that is as something produced by a human subject, one appearing to grant access to the most intimate of things (to paraphrase Etsuko's early comments), but who ultimately remains external to us. At this point, the novel's use of tropes and devices from the horror film appears as an ironic tease, for what the film provides (visual penetration and the return of the dead) is what the novel most absolutely denies to us at its conclusion.

Our attention is further drawn to the text's relation to death at the ending of the novel through (as so often in Ishiguro) tragicomical means. This is in the proposal by one of Niki's friends to write a poem about Etsuko's life. Following the text we've just read, this proposal seems ludicrously misplaced: The planned poem presumes to access and represent Etsuko's 'journey', both in the literal sense of her migration and in the contemporary pop-biographical sense of an individual's "journey". This irony underscores our own lack of access to the narrator. Although the novel begins by apparently giving us direct and unmediated access to Etsuko's interior monologue, it ends with this access emerging as irrevocably compromised and ambiguous: Etsuko's narrative may be haunting, but it also ultimately indicates the reality of death – because the 'truth' dies with her; it is not finally accessible to us, and thus the access to affective interiority presumed by the writer of the poem is shown to be foolish. This isolation from the ageing Etsuko reminds us of the fact of death itself, of the difference between her and the children in the novel; her own consolation in the face of Keiko's death is achieved only through an internalised image that contains both her capacity for affect and her trauma, but no clear image is available to us from Etsuko herself.

Our final inability to recognise Etsuko herself renders her own frustration over her inability to recognise the child both ironic and traumatic. Characteristically for Ishiguro, we are left stranded in a situation, where the divide between interior and exterior – and between the visual and the textual – remains irreparable; but we are nevertheless forced to rely on the narration of the individual. This poses a political question): who gets to speak, and on what terms? Who has the right and potential for representation, even where recognition is absent? What does this mean for the child? Ishiguro's insistence that the imperative to recognise is intensified by the memory of twentieth-century traumas also requires us to consider further how this imperative plays out historically.

As noted, much supporting evidence for this in cultural history comes from the child in the horror film. However, the post-war horror child who is the object of the adult's anxious gaze is not only found in those films.

#### **4. The post-war horror child in *The World My Wilderness* (1950)**

Rose Macaulay's *The World My Wilderness* takes the second world war's effect upon children as the context for its presentation of a 'horror child'. The novel is highly pertinent to this investigation because it is a particularly early example of the themes under discussion here, even including the ambivalence between the child who kills and the child who must be killed, the same child who constitutes the object of the adult's anxious gaze and the embodiment of a future changed irrevocably by the violence of the war.

Macaulay's novel is literally and thematically framed by quotations from *The Waste Land* – as an epigraph and as the last lines spoken – quotations charged with Macaulay's preoccupation with ruins (given free rein in her illustrated essay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 1953). Macaulay's concerns also fixate upon another trope, the French *maquis*, a word literally referring to a wilderness – here used to name both rural Provence and bombsites in the City of London – and also a name for the wartime Resistance. The combined, often ambiguous, use of the word here naturalises and essentialises violent political resistance - and locates this essentialism firmly in the child. Like Etsuko, the adults in this novel also come to



suspect that the war has revealed a reality that the child now inescapably embodies, and that this presents a direct threat to them.

The children in the novel live within a bewildering matrix of adult relationships. Helen, an English woman living in France, has divorced her first husband, the English lawyer Sir Gulliver Deniston, and since re-married the French Maurice Michel, who has now recently died in odd circumstances. Helen lives in Maurice's villa with three children: Barbary, her seventeen-year old daughter by Gulliver; Raoul, Maurice's son by his first wife (now also dead); and Roland, the baby son of Helen and Maurice. Helen is soon also visited by her older son Richie, Gulliver's heir from his marriage to Helen.

During the war Barbary and Raoul, despite the former being seventeen and the latter even younger, have apparently been active members of the local Resistance (*maquis*) which, it emerges, is responsible for murdering Maurice as a collaborator. The whole novel, then, is predicated and framed by another scene of 'child murder', but one in which the child – however uncertainly – has become the perpetrator, not the victim, of the killing. Hence, the novel is in turn haunted by the logical conclusion of this when combined with the repeated assertions of the impossibility of retrieving Barbary from barbarism: the conclusion that the adult should contemplate the killing of the child to protect herself (the same suspicion found between the lines of *Pale View*).

Partly due to their need for better education, Barbary and Raoul are both sent to London, Barbary to live with her father and Raoul to an uncle and aunt. Once she has arrived in London, Gulliver and Pamela (who also have their own new baby) have Barbary enrol to study art; but she secretly spends most of her time painting in the ruined bombsites of the City, in the company of Raoul and increasingly of petty criminals. Later, during a police raid in the ruins, Barbary runs away and, falling from a high wall, is temporarily left in a coma. Helen travels from France to hold a fraught discussion with Gulliver over Barbary's future, during which finally Helen plays her trump card: Barbary, she claims - perhaps untruthfully - is not Gulliver's daughter

but a former lover's; he relinquishes Barbary to return to France with her mother – and to the *maquis*.

This novel, framed by a mess of paternities, constantly reiterates the unreliability of the child as reproduction and her consequent inscrutability. A doubled case of such inscrutability appears when Helen walks in on her daughter watching her son:

The room was dim; in the first moment she did not see Barbary crouched by the cot, still in her wet frock, her dragged hair drooping like dank seaweed round her face. She got up, startled, defensive, pushing her hair from her eyes.

“I didn’t want to disturb him,” she whispered. “I only wanted to look.” (*The World*, 19)

This scene of multiple looks is rather cinematic in its specifically visual dynamic; it possesses that “choreography of the look” (67) that Lebeau identifies as a defining feature of the child on screen. The child’s inscrutability, the focus of the looking, becomes a horror when Helen recalls Barbary’s early infancy, and starts to read her daughter’s gaze on the younger child through it: “waking in terror, screaming at shadows [...] Barbary had been a wild baby” (19). There is a suggestive change in the novel’s presentation of *threat* here: The mother is compelled to protect her child, but what does this mean when one child is threatened by another? Particularly when that other may have committed the most extreme violence?

Barbary, and perhaps Raoul too, are to some ambiguous degree complicit in Maurice’s death; in a disturbing reference that echoes many other literary images of children’s play as coded and menacing (we’ll see this again, for example, in Ackroyd), Maurice failed to appreciate the real nature of the children’s ‘play’, supposing that “they were out playing [...] Red Indians” (12) when in fact they were part of an organised guerrilla unit that would ultimately capture and kill him. The menace in the child’s inscrutability emerges again in Barbary’s memory of a brief relationship with a German soldier:

She was silent; she would not tell him. A thin, fair young face, the face of the enemy, the harsh, broken French of the conqueror, the smell of the forest in October [...]...later the *maquis* had killed him.

No one had known. They knew that she had been caught by the Germans, beaten a little, released with a warning. They did not know that she had met again in the forest the one who had ordered her to be beaten and released; met him three times, and the third time it was a trap. (*The World*, 77)

Childhood inscrutability here is itself the trap, a three-time threat to the adult: in the decision of the Germans to release Barbary, in her relationship with the young German man, and in her lack of disclosure of this relationship to her fellow *maquis*. This structure of three, and the fairy-tale-like surroundings of the forest, echo classic stories of the child's dangerous and ambiguous entrance into sexuality.

Barbary's inscrutability also hints at an inability to escape from entrapment within childhood experience, particularly the experience of war. She is unwilling to make any distinction amongst the forces of established authority, considering the British police, a gamekeeper, her uncle, and even the housekeeper as 'gestapo' to be resisted, if necessary with violence; the experience of war has produced learned instincts that the adults eventually come to believe Barbary cannot overcome (25), a view Helen brutally ascribes to educational deficiency: "the child's so ignorant, she can barely read" (25). Although Helen exaggerates, the overly 'childish' nature and content of Barbary's reading as described elsewhere partly justify her comment (42). Barbary's educational poverty compounds her ethical simplicity, which becomes menacing in her attitude to her father's new wife: "She's no business here [...] she oughtn't to be here" (44).

Barbary remains dependent upon the morality of absolutes the war provided. The violence and loss this generates is related ironically by Helen as she plays with baby Roland: "But still he would remark at intervals, "Want Barby," and she would soothe him with, "Barby coming soon." To herself she added, Want Maurice.

Maurice is coming never" (36). The "wild" children Barbary and Raoul become proponents of a fundamentalist morality the adult world has, they believe, casually betrayed; the desire for political freedom, arising in reaction to totalitarian oppression, will – Macaulay hints – itself turn into a totalitarianism if immune to any process of humane education. Once again, we're in the territory Marlowe establishes when the child Edward III assumes power: Proposing to preach from "one of the niches on the walls" of a ruined church, like a statuary child saint come alive, Barbary declares -

"I shall say how divorced people can't really marry again. And I shall preach about hell [...] They don't have much hell in the English church, Richie says. But we'll have hell in our church." (*The World*, 58)

This peculiar liaison between violent subversion and fundamentalist morality targets the culture represented by Barbary's parents: Helen, the liberal, promiscuous widow of a collaborator, and Gulliver, the orthodox, patrician English lawyer. Both are targeted by Barbary's violent sense of morality, determined by the war and symbolised by the Last Judgements she paints on to ruined buildings.

The difference between Barbary and her older brother Richie, the difference that determines susceptibility to violence, is one of education, as Richie perceives: "I remember often thinking how differently I should have been treated at school for conduct such as yours. So I have grown up a civilised being, and you, so far, have not." (33) Richie values a classical, literary education (24-25), from which he has developed a sort of patrician liberalism, one that provides for a realistic, accepting attitude towards his parents: "[...] He had no Oedipus complex, and was no more jealous of the man his mother loved than of the woman to whom his father was married. Let them both, by all means, be happy" (154). Unlike Barbary, he has grown up.

Macaulay, writing in 1950, invokes a figure that will recur throughout later post-war culture, the horror child identified with a naturalised and essential violence. The theme of frustrated education, a pre-occupation for Macaulay as much as for Ishiguro and other authors discussed here hints, *inter alia*, that the adult's

resumption of control over the child's entrance into authority (the process called education) cannot happen until the adult resolves this problem – a resolution potentially available, shockingly, through the murder of the child.

In Macaulay's novel, this is left as a strictly symbolic potential. This does, however, suggest that Ishiguro's much more ambiguous scene of child murder, which transgresses the boundary between symbolism and realism and offers no certainty, has a deep hinterland behind it – one evident, as Macaulay's novel demonstrates, within only a few years of the Second World War. The reality of the world that adults choose to authorise is, in this scenario, necessarily conditioned by a capacity for violence derived from (or exposed by) the war, and ingrained within the child. Macaulay rather subversively associates this not only with the horrors of the Nazis and their collaborators, but with the moral absolutism she locates in the children of the *maquis*, emphasising the sense that the capacity for violence now evident in the world may not easily be re-educated out of existence.

The maternal figure ambiguously identified with the killing of the child follows the twentieth-century horror child around; and not only as a result of the war, but also of Freud's exposure of the child's openness to sexuality.

## 5. ***The Innocents* (1961), the Freudian Horror Child, and violence**

Several critics have detected stylistic and thematic connections between Ishiguro and Henry James (Su, "Refiguring National Character", 553; Walkowitz, "Ishiguro's Floating Worlds", 1049). Keith McDonald draws a particular comparison between the two authors in their adoption – as in *Pale View* – of an autobiographical narration style that tends to gradually undermine its own authority ("Days of Past Futures", 79). They also share what is (despite Macaulay's suggestive example) a rare common theme in both imagining the killing of a child by their female narrators.

In both *The Turn of the Screw* and *A Pale View of Hills*, the reader might suspect – particularly following Shoshana Felman's radical reading of *The Turn of the Screw*'s object as interpretation (or reading) itself – the child's death to be a consequence of the narrator's desire to find and fix meaning. James' novel ends

when the Governess - having become increasingly convinced of the communication of her two young charges, Miles and Flora, with the dead valet, Peter Quint, and former governess, Miss Jessel - attempting to force Miles to confess his relationship with Quint, only for him to die in her arms. Paradoxically, as in Ishiguro, a violence suspected in the child here transforms, at the last moment, into violence upon the child by the adult assigned to protect her or him. Like *Pale View*, the overall dynamic of James' novel – and the force of its traumatic ending – depends upon the related paradox of the novel's deep investment in the visual whilst the ultimately key visual referent for the reader turns out to be what we *cannot* see: as in Ishiguro, the narrator's face.

This dynamic is at least partially reversed in *The Innocents*, the 1961 adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw* directed by Jack Clayton, with a script written by Truman Capote along with Clayton himself and others. James' Governess, whom he left unnamed, becomes "Miss Giddens" for the movie. Her initial elation at gaining the chance to raise her young charges turns into a scrutiny, a visual obsession, which the camera replicates in the film. This film is important both for studies of the queer child and for the history of the child in cinema because of the sheer persistence with which it looks at the child, and because that look is always met by the gaze of the child in turn.

The film sits within the extensive and contested critical afterlife of James' novella, which, as Felman remarks, must "qualify as one of the [...] most *effective* texts of all time, judging by the quantity and intensity [...] of the critical literature to which it has given rise" ("Turning the Screw of Interpretation", 96). From the 1930s, critical battles pitted the "psychoanalysts", who read *The Turn of the Screw* as a proto-Freudian study in the consequences of adult sexual repression and childhood perversity, against those "apparitionists" who considered it a ghost story, its untoward events the effects of malevolent supernatural influence (see Bontly, "Henry James' 'General Vision of Evil'", 722). Later, critics increasingly identified the story's ambiguity and indeterminability as, paradoxically, themselves constituting the meaning of the tale. The real evil of James' story, they asserted, was the presumption of knowledge itself, as influentially argued by Shoshana Felman,

originally in her 1977 essay “Turning the Screw of Interpretation”, later expanded upon in *Writing and Madness* (2003).

Jack Clayton, director of *The Innocents*, concurred with the Freudian reading of James’ story (he claimed to have come up with such a reading independently, and only later to have realised that the Freudian account of the story had already been fully developed, most notably by Edmund Wilson in his 1934 essay “The Ambiguity of Henry James”). Clayton felt the Governess “more or less creates the situation” (qtd. in Sinyard, *Jack Clayton*, 92), though (perhaps sensing the misogynistic potential of his assertion), he qualified this by claiming that he sought to give an equality between her perspective and that of the children.

Clayton’s movie clearly punishes the Governess for lacking a Freudian realism with regard to both her own and the children’s sexuality. The sharp contrast it draws between the conventional, and probably hypocritical, bourgeois and Protestant morality the Governess expresses and the circle of queer men (The Master, Miles, Quint) who surround her (an image literalised in the film’s final sequence, where she is encircled by a series of statues interchangeable with the gazing ghost of Peter Quint), seems to adopt Freud’s authority - but with menaces.

The film’s Freudian sensibility is most evident with regard to the possibility of seduction both of and by the child. Much of this is presented through the remarkable performance by Martin Stephens as Miles, a performance largely conveyed through facial reactions, often shown in close-up, and edited to create sinister juxtapositions through the film’s innovative use of dissolves and montages.

The Miles this process creates repeatedly, queerly, foregrounds the instability of the child as category: Stephens looks like both a child and an adult simultaneously. He’s a physically small boy with cherubic features, but he dresses, acts and sounds like a gentleman; occasionally, he echoes the caddish demeanour of his uncle. The film gradually forces us to question, amongst many other things, the pleasure we take in the cute child who precociously but ingenuously acts the part of an adult. The problem with Miles is that he acts this part far too well; the Governess gradually - and probably we too, rather more quickly - comes to suspect that he

really is as knowing as he appears to be, that his kisses are, as it were, 'real' kisses. This suspicion is far more definite in the film than in the novella on which it's based; Miles on screen seems like a genuine, even a physical, threat to the Governess, despite his young age and diminutive stature. (Soon after his arrival, he begins to suffocate the Governess during a game of hide-and-seek, and only stops when they are interrupted).

*The Innocents* starred Deborah Kerr as Miss Giddens and was marketed as a competitor to the Hammer films dominating the period. Yet it was adapted from a 'difficult' literary text - one already noted (though the film preceded Felman's reading) for the ambiguity of its content, the impenetrability of its meaning, and the unreliability of its narrator, and which lacked much obvious dramatic action until its final moments. Why, then, adapt *The Turn of the Screw* as a mainstream horror film? Clayton's own comments (Sinyard, *Jack Clayton*, 92-94) suggest that a significant attraction of *The Turn of the Screw* was precisely its provision of a relatively rare template for a movie to focus on children as the object of its horror.

For reasons arising from their understanding of Freud and of contemporary social changes, Clayton, Capote and others were already turning their attention to the child and to child sexuality (Kubrick's *Lolita* would be released one year later). *The Innocents* was one of the very first horror films to put a child centre-screen and constantly pursued, his face constantly scrutinised, for the major part of the film's duration. This was a significant initiative, as demonstrated by the films that came after it.

The ubiquity of children in horror films can be dated to well into the post-Second World War era, when the horror genre itself had been long established as a successful strand of cinema (which it had been since at least the Bela Lugosi *Dracula* and the Boris Karloff *Frankenstein*, both 1931). Children made few appearances in Hollywood horror movies until the early Cold War era, a period when the Second World War remained a recent memory, and the fear of a nuclear war of annihilation was potent.<sup>11</sup> From this time onwards, increasingly young, often prepubescent, children frequently appear as the sources and objects of horror (see Phillips,



*Projected Fears*; Prince, *The Horror Film*). They typically embody an underlying reality emerging out of its failing repression by an increasingly weak and hypocritical society, in dramas of sexuality and violence that heavily, but not always with integrity, drew on Freud for their authority, as several famous examples show.

Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) centred on an adult trapped in his supposed childhood relationship with his mother, in one of the most famous (and exploitative) use of Freudian themes in Hollywood cinema. In the same year, another film also turned to creepy children, but as embodiments of the risk of nuclear conflict rather than of Freudian sexuality: Wolf Rilla's *Village of the Damned* (1960) depicted a series of bizarre unnatural pregnancies producing equally unnatural (and preternatural) children, ultimately identified as the products of an innovative Soviet bomb. One of those child actors, Martin Stephens, was chosen to play Miles in *The Innocents*.

Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) drew the focus of horror to the unborn child gestating inside the womb. *Night of the Living Dead* (also 1968) showed a daughter eating her father and murdering her mother as one of its final atrocities. *The Exorcist* (1973) put an actual child very visibly centre-screen, creating a legacy of perpetually recycled images (such as Regan's spinning head) in popular culture thereafter). *Don't Look Now* (1973) showed the child appearing both as the victim and as the agent of horror. *The Wicker Man* (1973) dispensed with such ambiguity, exposing the child who appears as apparent victim as in fact the bait to draw the adult towards a horrific death. *The Omen* (1976) made the child the incarnation of Satan. *Halloween* (1978), the original slasher movie, follows the rampage of a young murderer, after having located his violent impulses in a pop-Freudian childhood witnessing of sex; *Halloween's* cruder successor 'slashers' maintained the prominence of these themes throughout the 1980s and beyond.

*The Shining* (1980) had an abundance of children as ghosts, as victims, but most especially as possessors of Second Sight. In 1995, John Carpenter, director of *Halloween*, re-made *Village of the Damned*, placing more (and more exploitative) emphasis on the scene of childbirth. Later *The Sixth Sense* (1999) again put a child

with *Second Sight* at its centre, and gave him one of the most prominent roles in the history of the genre, making his face the visual focus of almost all the scenes of the movie (whilst the movie's other main character was a child psychologist). The child, Cole Sear, has visions that demonstrate the continuity of violence and cruelty as aspects of the human condition, yet which also suggest that recognition of this condition, through the child, is the means for salvation.

This indicative account of the horror child on screen records the phenomenon of which *The Innocents* is an early and crucial case, one that stages a more extended gaze directly upon the child's face than even the other films featuring horror children had undertaken by 1961. Throughout these movies, everywhere children are looking and being looked at, as though they might make visible the origin of the horror that threatens the adults. As Lebeau says, the adult is defined by the "capacity to know what to do with" the image of the child on film (*Childhood and Cinema*, 127). Simultaneously, the child as pre-socialised human allows the horror to be revealed as essential, natural, fundamental. Often, these two functions come to a climax in the scene of child murder, where the adult finally decides "what to do with" the child, yet in doing so and breaking the taboo against violence upon the child, becomes in some measure indistinct – morally, sometimes visually too - from the threat the child represented. The adult thus proves the truth of the essential reality revealed by the child.

These horror films repeatedly use Freudian models and figures, even counter-intuitively enlisting Freudian psychoanalysis to assert recognition of the supernatural (such as Dr Loomis' affirmation that it was "the bogeyman" who has brought about the horror in *Halloween*). In fact, the frequent appearances of the child as the focus and source of horror are virtually matched by the constant arrivals of psychoanalysts, psychologists and psychiatrists in these films, often as authoritative interpreter. Such figures appear in *Psycho*, *The Exorcist*, *Halloween*, *The Sixth Sense* (as the protagonist), for example. As Nathan Hale notes, in these films "psychoanalysis was often a magical cathartic cure" (*The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States*, 290). In *Psycho*, the psychoanalyst both provides the conclusive decoding of the plot, explaining the previously concealed facts of

Norman Bates' life, and authoritatively pronounces upon the origin of the horror: a dangerously universal event of witnessing sex (the Freudian primal scene). Similarly, when the absent parents in *Halloween* return (too late into the scene), and cry, "Michael! What have you done?" they already know the answer; enlisting Freud, *Halloween* suggests that we all know the answer, because this is what the child is like.

Although *The Innocents* has no psychoanalyst character, it is thoroughly infused by Freudian ideas, or at least a version of their perceived implications. In the focus on Quint's charismatic attraction and Miles' sadism, and the relative ease with which they jointly destroy the Governess' self-possession, one can sense a disdain for bourgeois and rationalist modernity and perhaps (for reasons we'll see in a moment) an implicit indictment of the Victorians for laying the ground for the catastrophic events of the twentieth century with a repressive social code.

*The Innocents* foregrounds the Governess' sexual desires and compulsive need for secure knowledge: the film conflates the two. She is willing to know only what she can recognise from within her own stable, morally rigid worldview (identified implicitly with her own childhood and upbringing). This need for stability emerges from her will to create a timeless state of being at Bly, one that promises permanent access to the 'innocent' joy of children, as well as control over their education. At Bly, time for a while indeed appears suspended, all the more when Miles returns after expulsion from school, taking him out of his educational development. Miss Giddens willingly suspends lessons in response to tantrums, and she makes no effort whatsoever to arrange Miles' return to formal education – rather she asserts her desire for him to remain at Bly indefinitely.

As Kuhn comments of *The Turn of the Screw*, "at Bly, the governess constructs the Victorian fairy-tale paradise [...] from which the sullyng realities of death and sex are banished" (146). Whether this is true in the film depends upon how "sex" is understood: Miss Giddens appears to want, and briefly to get, access to all the pleasures of *jouissance*, in the form of the delightful and pointless play of the children; but without the excess, the infusion of pleasure by pain (echoed in the

sado-masochistic relationship between Quint and Jessel) also classically associated with *jouissance*. Paradoxically, in order to preserve her total knowledge of the children (embodied in the apparent innocence of her play with them) Giddens must not permit herself any sexual knowledge. This is because to know of desire, the film hints, is to know of the existence of that which one cannot wholly perceive – here, to know of qualities of the child that are not visible in her or his face, however much the camera, following Giddens' own gaze, lingers upon it.

Miss Giddens responds with horror to her growing sense that the children may be hiding something from her, and she believes that their confession of this inner darkness will somehow redeem them, and her. It is the force of this belief, transformed into violence, which appears ultimately to cause Miles' death. Here violent killing appears oddly as a denial of the reality of death, because Miss Giddens associates it with Miles' salvation, taking him out of a world that is living but contaminated by death, and where the child is contaminated by the adult. In practice, too, the killing is a moment of embrace, almost of envelopment of Miles into Miss Giddens' body, and thus symbolically dissolves his otherness (rather as we earlier saw Etsuko perfect an "intimacy" with the originally "disturbing" vision of her daughter's dead body; in both cases, the child's dead body overcomes the frustrations its living version provoked in the adult).

The film's ending implies that Miles' death is a result not of the Governess' need to recognise the interior reality of an ultimately inscrutable child, but of her unwillingness to recognise the child who puts his own sexuality (and his 'adulthood') on display and through that demands that the "dirty-minded" Giddens (as he calls her shortly before his death) recognises her own sexuality, too. Rather than Miles' death being the tragic result of a violent need for total recognition of an irretrievably ambivalent child as it is in Felman's reading of the James novel, the film's visible Freudian aesthetic sustains the sense that Miles is indeed rather a recognisably perverse child throughout.

The dynamic between Miss Giddens and Miles (and behind him, Quint and the "Master", the children's uncle) is altogether more recognisable in terms of

Freudian repression and displacement in her film incarnation than in James' Governess. When Miles implies that Giddens finds his "being naughty" exciting, she kisses him hard on the lips, in one of the film's most famous scenes - and one not found in James. As noted, Miles himself gives an implicitly Freudian account of Giddens' motives in the moments immediately before his death, calling her a "hussy" and a "dirty-minded hag", accusations not put in his mouth by James (nor does James' Miles use a similar vocabulary), and which introduce a direct note of sexual violence absent from the novel, the same violence Miles displayed earlier in seemingly attempting to strangle Giddens. At no point in the novel do Miles or Flora clearly pose an actual physical threat to the Governess; in the film, Miles visibly does.

Clearer eruptions of sexuality and violence appear through subtle details. In both novel and film, under pressure from Giddens in the moments before his death, Miles finally admits the fault that caused his expulsion from school: he "said things." Tellingly, Capote and Clayton add a crucial expansion on this to their script. In the film only, Giddens questions Miles about where these "things" came from, and he explains that he made them up: they came from within himself. Whilst Giddens apparently suspects that the "things" actually came from Quint, the ambiguity over the ghosts' reality allows the possibility that he may have admitted the truth, and that the "things" were inherent to his own nature. Either way, he is contaminated with the adult. (The film's Freudianism does not prevent the ghosts being presented with a degree of apparitionist realism; though we might suspect that they come from Giddens' mind, they certainly aren't secure there. The recognition that the ghosts of Quint and Jessel demand, though, is entirely sexual in its implications, so – as in the later horror films discussed above – here is no real conflict between Freud and the supernatural.)

In the film, Miles' willingness to seduce the Governess parallels the refusal of seduction by the Master, who invites the young woman in only immediately to send her away, and also the more ambiguous refusal by Quint, who refuses to appear to the Governess on demand and seems more interested in the children than in her. Miles offers a sexual openness the other men in the story deny, but its cost is that

Giddens will not only know herself as subject of (and to) desire, but will also know the child as, in Freud's famous phrase, polymorphously perverse.

There is a misogynistic implication here: the frigid woman has to admit her desire for these males, who assert their phallic control through their unpredictable appearances and disappearances, in order to escape the violence they enact upon her from within their closed circuit of male (homo)sexuality, an escape only possible through adopting the abject position of Miss Jessel (a position also apparently shared, horrifically, by Miles' sister Flora). Suggestively, this would involve surrendering the authority she otherwise possesses over those men by virtue of practical ability (her advantage over the absent Master), of adulthood (her advantage over Miles), and of social class (her advantage over Quint). All that must be set aside, and she must acknowledge herself as pure desiring woman, if she is to stop herself being tortured by these men (in the film, occasionally an actual physical torture at Miles' hands).

Another omission between novel and film is of an element so fundamental its absence, curiously, could easily be overlooked (as it largely has been in critical discussion). This is the removal of the frame narrative James uses, where a group of friends are telling ghost stories only for one to introduce the story of the Governess who, he says, has herself since died. The absence of this frame in *The Innocents* removes the role of her death in confirming the final impenetrability of the narrative, and of the child. (The ironic implications of this for the Governess' certainty of an afterlife are also lost.)

Felman argues that –

The question [...] can no longer be simply to decide whether in effect the 'Freudian' reading is true or false, correct or incorrect. It can be both at the same time. It is no doubt correct, but it misses nonetheless the most important thing: it is blind to the very textuality of the text. (*Writing and Madness*, 163)

According to this, James plays on *The Turn of the Screw's* very status as text – itself underlined by the framing death of its narrator - not only to make the frustration of recognition the novella's central theme, but also something deliberately enacted upon its reader, too.

Instead of James' frame, though, the film begins in circular fashion with an anguished voiceover, beginning "All I want to do is save the children", delivered by the Governess and an image of her wringing her hands; this is retrospectively understood as a flash-forward to after Miles' death. Whilst it would be unfair to downplay the level of ambiguity that the film retains, the removal of Giddens' own death transfers responsibility for the deaths of the children from the Governess' desire to recognise their true nature, to her failure to recognise her own supposed true nature, emphasised by the attempt at self-justification in her voiceover.

*The Innocents'* changes to its source material allow it, then, to produce an influential impression of the child as a sexual and violent threat, who reveals an underlying reality about the human condition. The novel's emphasis (according to Felman and those following her) on the desire for recognition as the source of violence was subtly amended, through the written script, the performances and their editing, to make the failure to recognise these underlying truths about sexuality and the potential for violence the cause of *actual* violence in the film.

The film's use of the child star Martin Stevens adds resonance with the other forms of actual and feared violence dominating its period. Stephens was chosen for the part of Miles because of his previous successful role in *Village of the Damned* (1960), where a group of children embody both totalitarian power and the threat of nuclear warfare. However distant the Freudian-Victorian world of *The Innocents* seems from this context, the use of the child to embody an essential violent reality, and the imperative to recognise that reality, is common to both. The two films accordingly share a focus on Stephens' face and gaze; whereas in *The Innocents* the disturbing effect of this is achieved through Stephens' remarkable acting, in *Village of the Damned* it was cruder, with bright dilated pupils appearing in his own eyes, both alien-like and evoking the threat of the bomb's flash.<sup>12</sup>

The visual echoes of this recent other role in Stephens' performance as Miles accentuate *The Innocents'* imperative for recognition of the child, linking its sexual violence to broader fears of destructive and newly revealed realities in the early 1960s. Though the child thus revealed is highly disruptive of the existing order of aesthetic and social representation, above all because of his contamination with adult desires, recognition of his essential reality could, the film hints, contain this disruption. This hint is carried principally in Miles' death, with which the film begins and ends; the death of the child is not really a loss when it is transformed into a general meaning, a meaning which even seems to transcend time itself, as indicated by the circularity of the film's frame (as noted, a sharp departure from James) and, of course, by the ghosts active within it. Yet as both the arrival of an exploitative version of Freud in the horror cinema and the Cold War associations carried over by Stephens tell us, this desire to go outside time is itself, ironically, historically specific, born of the anxieties and aspirations of Clayton, Capote and their collaborators in the early 1960s. Like Jarman thirty years later, they chose to use the child to embody a future we need only recognise, it seems, in order to end time itself as a disruptive force.

Yet at the same time, this reading of the film is not quite fair. The anxiety over the ambitious child, the child who can imagine and play out (as Stephens' Miles literally does) a future version of himself, is not wholly eradicated by the circular time established at the film's ending. Ironically, this residual anxiety appears perhaps most clearly in one of *The Innocents'* non-Jamesian scenes.

It shows Miles and Laura enacting a small performance for Miss Giddens and the cook, Mrs Groes, that culminates with Miles, wearing a crown, reciting a poem (actually a translated extract from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Kavyam*) that suggests both erotic longing and the invocation of a spectre. The poem calls on "my lord" (whom Giddens identifies with Quint) to rise from his grave and enter, and Miles proceeds with the disturbing performance until he is almost pressing his face up against the window. The poem implicates sexual desire – which is one function of time, of the child's passing into adulthood – in death, another function and sign of time.



The scene's implications remain as taboo today as they were in the 1960s, with a very young child shown as sexually aware and apparently a willing participant in an erotic relationship with an adult; that this situation appears in a supernatural guise could provide a cover for otherwise unacceptable themes (a suspicion directed towards some equally taboo elements of *Don't Look Now* (Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema*, 125), as we shall see later). Yet whether or not this is true, the summoning of the dead 'lord' is not just such a cover. Desire – which we could characterise as the disposition towards reproduction of the self through sexual relations – emerges here as intimately related to death, to absence; this is precisely the de-stabilising paradox that Giddens has attempted to banish from Bly. This paradox guarantees that the child's ambition for his future will never be wholly knowable: this ambition is inspired by encounters with the dead, at least in the sense that a text provides an ambiguous trace or spectre of a dead author, as the indistinction between a poetry recital and the summoning of Quint indicates. The child's ambition will also (perhaps) only be fully realised after the death of the adult who watches the child now.

Ironically, though, this performance is also the point in the movie following which Giddens decisively views Miles as possessed by Quint. As this suggests, it is here that Miles appears to have made himself, at last, fully recognisable, in apparently communing with Quint before Giddens' eyes. If Giddens desires to know Quint, to *read* him, Miles' performance demonstrates the power that can accrue to those who promise to satisfy such cravings. Remembering the fact that Miles' recitation is a performance for Giddens suggests a potential alternative reading of the scene. Is Miles manipulating or seducing Giddens by deliberately hinting that he possesses what, or whom, she desires? The child who is precociously aware of adult desires – who has gained ground, as it were, in the game of anticipation that is his education – is a dangerous one. In this he echoes the role of Edward III at the end of *Edward II* (and for spectators of both films, the crown provides a visual echo between the two). Thus, even as *The Innocents* demands that we recognise the child under threat of violence, it betrays an underlying realisation that our desire for recognition might itself be turned against us. In this, it reflects the stereotypical

horror child on screen whom it helped to popularise: this child cannot win; the killing of the child is paradoxically required to clearly see, and thereby save, the future.

## 6. The horror child and the revelation of reality: *Psycho* (1960) and *Halloween* (1978)

Freud, in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, describes the difficulties of recovering the child for analysis:

The embryo cannot be demonstrated in the adult [...] in the marrow-bone of a grown man I can, it is true, trace the outline of the childish bone-structure but this latter no longer survives in itself [...] The fact is that a survival of all the early stages alongside the final form is possible only in the mind, and that it is impossible for us to represent a phenomenon of this kind in visual terms. (Freud, *Civilisation*, 19-20)

As heavily Freudian as Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) is (its backstory centres on the primal scene), it does not hesitate to directly represent "a phenomenon of this kind in visual terms"; it even does so in the "childish bone-structure." This moment follows directly from the psychiatrist's reading of Norman, when Norman's head dissolves into the skull of his mother. This takes the viewer immediately and visually to the moment when Norman killed her (it is her dead skull that appears) and assumed her identity, the moment of originary childhood trauma and childhood crime. (Although Norman was an adolescent when this occurred, the murderous oedipal scenario keeps him effectively trapped in the dynamic of a childhood apparently dominated by his mother.) This final shot of Norman/mother is the cue for the viewer to do a kind of re-reading of the whole film in his own mind - through the image of the child. We recognise the reality previously hidden to us through the child, and vice-versa.

This ambiguously endorses Norman's psychotic delusion, that his mother is not really dead, or rather that death (despite the fear of violent death he provokes) is not a really significant thing, for he now exists in a state of indistinction between life and death – or a state (appropriately enough for Hitchcock) of 'suspense'. In fact,

the revelation of the world as fundamentally and timelessly conditioned by sex, violence and sexual violence necessarily makes this the basis for any authority that seeks to be effective in the world.

Kendall Phillips observes that in the first slasher film, John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1970) "the monster no longer threatens to unleash chaos into an orderly world but, quite to the contrary, Michael Myers functions as a punishing avenger who imposes order in an otherwise chaotic world" (*Projected Fears*, 126); not unlike Macaulay's *Barbary*, we might notice. *Halloween* is certainly concerned with the regulation and ordering of sex and violence. The 'order' sought by this young man who dominates the film is in fact a brutally conservative one, bringing back an atemporal reality to a society in the grip of a foolish version of the future - so weak it allows teenagers, themselves unsupervised and with the supervision of children delegated to them as babysitters, to have sex and take drugs; a society so weak it cannot keep Michael secure. The festival of Halloween itself, in its appropriation of horror for entertainment, betrays the precariousness of this society's attempts to manage violent realities.

Appropriately, *Halloween's* final scene ends with a frenzy of looking, as four locations, all possible hiding places, appear simultaneously in a split screen, stretching our gaze beyond its ability; and still we cannot see Michael. In the knowledge that he is there but invisible, we have to keep a vision of him in the back of our minds at all times, everywhere. In fact, this vision is the image of Michael as a child, the only time we have actually seen his (unmasked) face and the moment of his own knowledge of the horrors of the world and the beginning of his resulting career of killing. (Michael has also never grown out of 'infancy' in the simple sense that he never speaks).

Between 1950 and 1978, the idea of the child as killer, who can be defeated only by adults breaking the greatest taboo and killing the child, has gone from subtle symbolism in Macaulay to direct imperative in *Halloween*. Like *The Innocents*, the latter indicates that such control of an otherwise violently disruptive future can only really be achieved through recognising the child for what he is.

## 7. See – or die: *Don't Look Now* (1973)

*Don't Look Now* establishes the image of the child who is both killer and killed as an object of adult obsession. Here the Red Riding Hood-esque child-figure in red is pursued obsessively in both the mind's eye of the viewer and the margin of the screen. *Don't Look Now* ties a European literary heritage (Roeg's film is based on a Daphne Du Maurier novel and is visually influenced by Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971; see Bradshaw)) with the mainstream horror movie. It became a highly influential film, initially popularised by its major Hollywood stars, Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland.

An architectural historian and his wife, John (Sutherland) and Laura Baxter (Christie), have a daughter, Christine, who tragically dies in the opening scene by drowning in a pond. Moving from England to Venice where John, an architectural historian, is contracted to assist restoration of several churches, his wife Laura meets two elderly sisters staying at the same hotel, one of whom, Heather, has Second Sight. She is able to convey messages from the dead Christine; Laura is delighted by this, though John is sceptical.

Whilst a series of murdered bodies are intermittently pulled from the canals in the margins of the action (as in *Pale View*, a serial killer is operating in the 'background' – or is it?), John continues work on the churches' restoration. (Roeg is an admiring reader of Peter Ackroyd (see Brooks, "Time and Time Again"), whose own narrative of child murders around a series of churches appears in the next chapter.) Various disturbing incidents occur during John's work, and both Laura and the Bishop who has hired John suggest possible supernatural interference. John, however, asserts his rationalist scepticism, and becomes angry with Laura when she participates in a séance with the two sisters and receives a supposed warning from Christine, saying that John is in danger and should leave Venice.

A call from England, reporting that their son (at boarding school) is unwell, prompts Laura's return to England, leaving John alone in Venice. Walking the city at night, John occasionally spies a figure wearing a hooded red garment suggestive of the plastic red mackintosh Christine wore on the day she died. He pursues, but loses,

this figure in the maze of canals and alleyways. One day he sees his wife, dressed in black, travelling on the canal on a barge with the two sisters; shocked (because Laura is supposed to be in England) he initiates a search for her that leads to the sisters being arrested, before a call from Laura establishes that she is, in fact, indeed still in England. Embarrassed and demoralised, the same night John sees the figure in red yet again, and this time pursues it with greater determination, until it leads him into an abandoned palazzo. When cornered, its red cloak falls and it is suddenly revealed as not his daughter, but an ancient female dwarf who slaughters him with a knife.<sup>13</sup>

At this macabre conclusion John is shown to have in fact possessed his own Second Sight all along, but also to have deliberately repressed it; as he staggers to the floor, losing blood rapidly, an extended flashback shows all the moments when his death was foreshadowed, only for him to ignore the premonitions. Further proof comes when the inexplicable vision John previously had of his wife in black on a barge turns out to have been actually a vision of his own funeral. Refusing to listen to his daughter's voice when communicated by Heather, he was led astray by what appeared to be a vision of his daughter, the figure in red— an incarnate evil in this Manichean world. Although John speaks Italian better than Laura and, unlike her, is able to converse with the locals, this does not finally prevent him being lured to his death. To speak – the source of authority and political agency – is, the film suggests, useless if we cannot correctly read what we see – and what we find in Roeg's Venice is a reality less political or historical than aesthetic.

It is unsurprising, perhaps, that the child at the end of the movie, the false Christine, is revealed to be both young and ancient, for the essential reality we are compelled to recognise, under threat of violence, is a timeless one. Accordingly, death itself is only real here to the extent that one believes in its finality. When Christine's supernatural presence is sensed by Heather, she is reported to be happy, laughing (including in her very first appearance, where Laura is reassured firmly that "she wants you to know that she's happy.") A powerful evil also exists, but Second Sight offers a chance to protect against it, and if death itself is not final – Laura smiles knowingly as she travels to her husband's funeral – the victory of the good is

secure. In this optimistic insistence on the supernatural and on the 'other' regions of consciousness, the film reflects its period and the celebrations of anti-establishment and anti-rationalist, even esoteric, thinking then in circulation ('Second Sight', firmly endorsed by the film, implicitly references the use of drugs, as well as prayer and meditation).

In the opening scene, Laura is reading a fictitious esoteric book, *Beyond the Fragile Geometry of Space*. Here the child is identified with both a liberalism that connotes optimism towards the future and an openness to the esoteric possibilities of reality. When Laura and John meet the bishop for the first time, in response to his querying whether she is a Christian, Laura responds that she is "kind to children and animals." The child in question, Christine, is first seen pushing a wheelbarrow in the garden, and playing with a talking female soldier who identifies herself as a commandant, suggesting that this child is free to play unconstructed by gender conventions. Inside the house, Laura reveals that her reading has been prompted by her daughter: "Just trying to find the answer to a question Christine was asking me." Thus, the events of the film begin, literally, with a question of education, though ultimately it compels the translation of the child's ambition and creativity not into her future but into her afterlife.

As Lebeau notes, "the film is renowned for its realistic depiction of the lovemaking that takes place between the bereaved couple after the mother has been assured that her dead daughter is with them, can see them" (*Childhood and Cinema*, 125). Christine's presence here reverses the quasi-Freudian paradigm adopted by *Psycho* and many of its successors, for the child's presence at (and implicit witnessing of) the sexual act does not cause harm – indeed by enabling Laura's readiness for sex, the knowledge of her daughter's presence provides a form of sexual liberation. This scene, famously, is presented as a visual duality as shots of vigorous sex acts are interspersed with the couple dressing for dinner afterwards. By thus manipulating time, the camera (which cuts repeatedly to the clock in the room amongst all the undressing and redressing and sexual action in between) identifies itself with *Second Sight*, and hints at its ability to punish for disregard of that *Second*

Sight: if the film, via Roeg's peculiar editing, can (and of course it always can) change the course of time, then what it gives it can also take away, not least the lost child.

This scene's sense of the movement of time seems initially liberating within a film often trapped in repetition of image and words (the malaise is evident at the first dinner when Laura says she will "just have what I had last night"). Yet somehow even this movement into time is an eruption of semi-heavenly timelessness, provoked by Laura's happy realisation of the indistinction between life and death, just as the departure of most people from Venice leaves the city as a timeless sepulchre, which Heather then finds to be full of the presence of the dead. It is rather the movement of ordinary, worldly time that seems oppressive.

Shortly after this scene, the couple who have been (after an implied period of abstinence and emotional distance) briefly physically united, are separated. Laura returns to England to attend to their son, whilst John remains in Venice. Yet the separation is also metaphysical: from this point on, John, alone, is on a direct trajectory towards his violent death, whilst Laura remains in the state of faith in a timeless reality that is confirmed in the very final shots by her enigmatic smile at her husband's funeral.

Christine is associated with the symbolism of desire, both through her presence at the sexual act and through her Red Riding Hood-like appearance. The association is also emphasised through Roeg's borrowing of the visual language of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and more specifically through Visconti's then-recent (1971) film version of the same. The obsession with the gaze and the imagery of the hunt through Venice for an object of desire is shared between the two films, and in both too desire is irrevocably associated with death as a kind of punishment – both protagonists die whilst enjoying an uninterrupted gaze, long thwarted, on the desired object. The visual echoes of Visconti allow Roeg to have the viewer participate in John's desire – and in his punishment – and for him to subjugate sex, like death, to the transhistorical universe he locates in Venice.

The depth of the film's antipathy towards the reality of death emerges *inter alia* through the ostensible naturalness and randomness of Christine's death by

drowning – apparently an accident, with no one to blame but one of the basic elements of life, water, yet the sudden appearance of the red-cloaked dwarf on the slide immediately rebukes the viewer for any acceptance of the incident as such a natural occurrence. The point is endlessly reiterated through the presence of water throughout the film, which is never just water as it appears, but rather an active agent of the Manichean universe; as in Mann's *Death in Venice*, this universe is almost classical in the extent to which its elements are anthropomorphised. Here the real target of the film emerges as not merely rationalist 'single sight' but the rationalist account of death itself, that is, simply of death as the end of consciousness.

In this light, the film's title takes on a more aggressive meaning – the command "don't look now" directs us not to turn away from the dwarf and her violence, but to turn away from the reality of death, present in the unbearable image of the dead child Christine retrieved from the water with which the opening scene ends. By asserting the unreality of death, the film draws us away from the painful rupture represented by the dead child – the awareness that not only will our own consciousness, our own subjecthood, ultimately be ended by the fact of physical death we see embodied before us, but that the transfer of what we consider meaningful in the world – the process of education – from our consciousness to the surviving object that is the child, is itself uncertain and vulnerable. A school is on the periphery of this film, but the indistinction between education and violence is, once again, at the centre.

## **8. The Horror Child**

The horror child, we've found, compels us to turn seeing into a reading – and, as *Don't Look Now* says, into believing. Only by a correct reading of the world, through the child, can we hope to ward off the violent future that the revealed nature of the world – revealed by psychoanalysis and by history – promises to us. Ishiguro, though, compels us from the start to wonder who is actually responsible for this essentialism, and what kind of choice we might be faced with in its absence;



or, as the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (but not, despite the title, *The Innocents*) puts it, “if he *were* innocent, then what on earth was *I*?” (119).

In the next chapter we will continue this investigation by moving chronologically further into the 1980s and considering why this moment of an apparent ‘end of the post-war’ remains contaminated by twentieth century crises of authority and of the future. This period, the ‘Thatcher years’, are treated as a political and cultural end to the ‘post-war’ but they remain, as we shall find, profoundly anxious over the future.

The need of authority to align representation with recognition, and the literary text’s capacity to resist that alignment (a resistance that may or may not be aided by the text’s critical readings) will remain our central concern. We shall continue to find the demand that children make themselves available for recognition as the condition of their political or aesthetic representation, and the capacity to imagine violence against them for their refusal to do so. Indeed, the demand to be available for recognition is more consistent than the presumed nature of what must be recognised as the child. The consistency, however, is found in the demand that the child embodies a future that is not really that much of a future at all, but rather wholly identifiable as an existing, if partly hidden, underlying reality. The horror child is both a key trope in recent cultural history and an invitation to ignore history itself, to desire a timeless space where seeing is reading. It’s an invitation to which some political projects profoundly feel the attraction.

### Chapter 3: The Disappearing Child in Thatcherism and Theory

A group of children were peering through the railings of the park [...] “Some queer found him late last night,” the inspector was saying and then he added, since Hawksmoor did not reply, “Some queer might have done it”. (Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor* 110)

In the previous chapter we explored the vast post-war hinterland behind the representation of violence towards the child in a 1980s novel, Ishiguro’s *A Pale View of Hills*. In this chapter, we shall move into the 1980s proper, sustaining our concern with violence towards the child, and with the relation of this to both the imperative for recognition of the child and her political representation.

The ‘Thatcher years’ of 1979-1990 symbolically represent – indeed, were deliberately presented by Thatcherites themselves as representing – the end of the post-war period in Britain, supposedly characterised by a broadly social democratic ‘consensus’ (Smith, “From Consensus to Conflict”, 64-65). They replaced a dominant political narrative of historical progress, and an acceptance that a future different to the past was both probable and desirable, with the proclamation of allegedly essentialist and timeless values; the future could still change, but only change towards a more perfect rehearsal of these fundamental and pre-existing values was approved.

As we shall see (and as we already began to find in the first chapter), Thatcherism had a special interest in the child as the repository of the ambition that would underpin her new (and yet timeless) social and economic order. In this political and cultural landscape, the child’s role as embodiment of the future naturally became explicitly contested ground, the site of culture wars. Thatcherism’s investment in the future – and therefore in the child – was, as we shall find, highly conflicted, claiming to celebrate both the child’s innocence, and his creativity and ambition.

Yet this period of political and cultural history, which the literary texts we'll consider here variously represent, parody and undermine (often all at once), should not be considered in isolation or as historically discrete. Rather, as I shall show, Thatcherism constituted amongst other things a mode of reading, and of reading the child in particular – one that reflected other modes of reading struggling with the apparent failure of post-war progressive history. I shall discuss this here with reference to the rise of Theory in literary and cultural studies within 1980s Britain. Thatcherism and Theory share a profound interest in the child, one I explore through the disappearing child as a persistent, demanding trope across the literary texts discussed in this chapter. This child risks acting as a dangerous and uncanny reminder of the facts of death and desire to which Thatcherism seeks to deny recognition, and to which Theory wishes to extend recognition; the result in both cases, curiously, is imagined as the child's disappearance.

### **1. Thatcher(ism): Recognition as political power**

The dream of the leader's presence seeped through to an unexpected depth. (Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, 59)

Thatcherism's attitude to the child was structured around a number of basic and unacknowledged tensions. Thatcherism asserted both the indulgence of the child's ambition and the strict political limitation of the nature of that ambition; it viewed the child's natural desires as aligned with capitalism and entrepreneurialism, with wealth creation and the free market (or, as popular culture more crudely but perhaps accurately termed it, with "loadsamoney").<sup>14</sup> Yet except in very particular formulations, even in particular places, that desire had to be perpetually deferred. Thatcherism was a promise for the future, a promise allegedly denied under the post-war social democratic consensus. It sought the restoration of a natural order,

but the benefits of that order required both faith and imagination to be seen, particularly in the early 1980s before the 'Big Bang'.

In these conditions a promise risks becoming something close to a fantasy or a dream, as several of the most successful literary representations of Thatcherism suggest. They take us into an unresolved tension between reality and fantasy that perhaps explains the obsessive element in Thatcherism's on-going hold on British intellectual culture, as Su observes:

Literary texts continue to portray the "Thatcher revolution" as the most significant shift in British politics and culture since the so-called post-war settlement [...] contemporary British literature is defined in terms of responses to a set of political, economic, and cultural forces associated with Margaret Thatcher. (Su, "Beauty and the Beastly Prime Minister", 1083)

According to this, we are all Thatcher's Children – including literary authors and their critical readers. The predominant (though not universal) attitude of those writers and critics who have contributed to the literary representation of Thatcherism remains oppositional, reflecting the views of much of the British cultural establishment of Thatcher's rule as both dangerously authoritarian (see, for example: Hall, Stuart, 15; Rogers, 106-108) and thoroughly philistine (see, for example: Burgess, 147-148; Charmley, 239).

Whether or not we are really all Thatcher's children, both Margaret Thatcher and her government, and the society they governed, had a profound interest in actual children. In the real political history of the 'Thatcher years', the child, far from disappearing, increased in prominence in political discourse and legislation, as Rutter notes: "Bastardy was removed from the law books (1989), and caning outlawed in schools (1982) [...in 1989] Parliament passed the Children Act and the United Nations declared its Convention on the Rights of the Child" (*Shakespeare and Child's Play*, 172). This constituted a drive to *represent* the child in law and policy. Yet at least some of this drive was prompted by an apparently urgent need to recognise what had allegedly been unrecognised before: the facts of child abuse and

abduction. Now the overlapping themes of the child *at* threat and the child *as* threat generated obsession, even moral panic, in public life:

Four major inquiries into child abuse and a number of sensational individual cases showed the traditional British family to be terminally dysfunctional, children its victim [...] And out of the tangled mass of accusation and counter-accusation [...] came national self-examination. What kind of adult could perpetrate child abuse, we wondered. And, more anxiously, the questions we almost didn't dare to ask, What kind of child could participate in it? What kind of child was its product? (Rutter, *Shakespeare and Child's Play*, 173)

The 1987 Cleveland scandal, to which Rutter refers above, arose from a new unwillingness to let secrets about children remain in the dark; following it, the 1989 Children Act introduced a new duty for local authorities to investigate suspected harm to a child. The child was now to be brought into the light, by the full resources of the law and the State, the reality of his condition represented as a political priority. ChildLine, offering a free and confidential service to those who recognised themselves or others as children being abused, was founded in 1986. As noted in Chapter 1, Jacqueline Rose claims that the 'discovery' of child sexual abuse "can fairly be called one of the traumas of the 1980s" (*The Case of Peter Pan*, xi).

Margaret Thatcher's government endorsed this work to bring the child into the light. The idea of the child as in darkness, unrecognised, was considered profoundly troubling. As observed earlier, in the anti-gay discourse adopted by some Thatcherite politicians and their supporters and codified in Clause 28, children appeared as both the explicit victims and implicit embodiment of a threatening future; and their need to be offered an acceptable reading of the world as it should be was asserted as the proper aim of their representation in politics. When the Thatcher government turned to gays, the drive to bring what was 'really happening' to the child into the light was curiously inverted, so that recognition had to be denied in order to, supposedly, change reality. Recognition was the basis of political representation (in both cases, to be withdrawn from queers).

In a now-notorious assertion to the 1987 Conservative Party Conference, Thatcher stated: “Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay.” The very next line of the speech went on, suggestively: “And children who need encouragement [...] are being taught that our society offers them no future”, as though the risk of destroying the future carried over from the thought on gays. (Clearly, one hardly needs a queer theorist to find the association between queerness and death here).

Even whilst Thatcher professed her concern about the possibility of “no future”, she thus sought to ensure that there would *be* no future that differed from the past in certain essential respects. The possibility that some aspects of reality might evade or resist recognition, and that these might affect the future and therefore deserve some form of representation, was effectively prohibited. The speech’s simultaneous evocation and dismissal of the existence of gay children reinforces that the suspicion that the child being disappeared here, the ‘real’ child, is the one who is always at risk of becoming *other* than the child – precisely the risk presented to the Thatcherite imagination by the gay child, or child of gay parents, if the paranoia towards reading materials is anything to go by.

The Thatcher government’s public attitude to gays (which was simultaneously its attitude towards children) thus complicates the picture of a drive to bring the child into the light, hinting that recognition might be withheld as much as extended in the functioning of a power acting to control the future. It is in fact precisely this withholding of recognition that Alan Hollinghurst, Ian McEwan, and Peter Ackroyd – the authors discussed in detail in this chapter - present as causing the child disappearances in their novels. I will argue that if we take their representations of Thatcherism seriously, the child must be understood as constituted within the gap between recognition and representation, the gap which – according to these texts – Thatcherism sought to eliminate.

Adam Phillips argues that the most shocking revelation delivered by psychoanalysis is that sexuality is not, in reality, reproductive, and that children know this (*The Beast in the Nursery*, 26). The child’s sexuality is dangerous,

according to this, because it disrupts an order based on the reproduction of certain values and the repudiation of others (the child's education). This is Edelman's "reproductive futurism" again, and the possibility of its absence, as Phillips hints, opens up a potential equality of pleasure that evades the selection of values, the abjection of harm and the projection of virtue, that lies behind the demand (made, for example, by Clause 28) to positively identify the child as child. Yet I do not follow Edelman in concluding that this resistance means that sexuality, and life, untied from reproductive futurism should lead to a radical affirmation of the present that denies the political function of the future. Instead, it is precisely through the contradictory attitude expressed by Thatcherism towards pleasure, and the child's capacity for pleasure specifically, that leads to a realisation that the future – with all that implies for creativity in time, and for ambition – should indeed be the proper object of politics, but not as Thatcherism imagines it.

Thatcherism has a contradictory attitude not only towards the child but towards time too, as we shall find here. Whereas childhood is ordinarily both defined and destroyed by the temporal (it's by definition a period that cannot last), Thatcherism's desire for authoritarian stability takes the form of an impossible need for an atemporal child, one never passing out of the state of childhood. The killing of the child we observed in the last chapter is replaced here by the disappearance of the child in favour of recognition of a permanent 'child within'. Hence in these novels, the ideal of the child in representation is (as Edelman claimed) indeed a predicate for the removal of the real child's rights – notably the right to create a potentially disruptive difference to the past. This removal takes the form of a withdrawal of representation from the child whose ambitions frustrate recognition.

With this in mind, I want to look at Thatcherism and the child in literature.

## **2. A fantasy so outrageously improbable: Thatcher and the child in fiction**

Several literary texts include both Margaret Thatcher herself and children amongst their characters. The same works often depict recognition, or its denial, as fundamental to the Thatcherite project – something which becomes evident, *inter*

*alia*, through the prevalence there of fantasy, presented as the willed recognition of things that may not exist, and the wilful disappearance of things that do - including the child.

Thatcher's dancing with the high-on-cocaine narrator of *The Line of Beauty*, and (in the most recent obvious example as of this writing), her appearance through the gaze a woman comes to willingly share with an IRA assassin in Hilary Mantel's *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher* (2014), are variants on the theme: one a fantasy of seduction, the other of violence. In Mantel's story, the opportunity for assassination arrives when Thatcher is in hospital for eye surgery; this, combined with the repeated focus on the gaze between her, the assassin, and woman who becomes an unanticipated collaborator in the crime, draws attention to Thatcher as central to a way of seeing. On film, the biopic *The Iron Lady* (2012) depicts Thatcher's life largely through a series of her (fictionalised) fantasies and memories; the real Baroness Thatcher's eventual dementia seemingly gives the filmmakers licence to imply that there was always a strong element of fantasy in both her character and her career.

This notion appears not just in retrospective portrayals like those noted above, but also in contemporaneous representations of Thatcherism. The popular 1980s *Bildungsroman*, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 and ¾* (1982), neatly captures the period as characterised by a borderline absurd tendency to view the world through the image of Margaret Thatcher, and implies that this had particular effects on children. This is literalised when a message about "three million unemployed" is discovered written on the Prime Minister's cleavage in her picture hanging on the walls of Adrian's school, after which the Thatcher-idolising headmaster tests Adrian's handwriting (241). Mrs Thatcher's icons inspire fevered devotion from male followers, and tolerate no sacrilege; the headmaster goes mad soon after the violation.

Thatcherism as a form of vision and of fantasy, centred above all on Mrs Thatcher's own image, are the common themes here. Interestingly, they are reflected in language used by some firsthand witnesses to the Thatcher project; John



Biffen suggested that to the Prime Minister and her staff, 'the rest of us were all partially sighted' (Qtd. in Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, 448). Ian Gilmour's title for his critical memoir of the Thatcher government, *Dancing With Dogma* (1992) even uses curiously similar imagery to *The Line of Beauty* to associate Thatcher as desired fantasy figure (the object of the dance) with her political project's attempt to redefine reality (the dogma). All this supports a sense that the extension and withdrawal of recognition operated as a fundamental mechanism of Thatcherism as a political project.

Salman Rushdie remarked: 'The election of 1983 is beginning to look more and more like a dark fantasy [...] so outrageously improbable that any novelist would be ridiculed if he dreamed it up' (qtd. in Su 159). At the other end of Thatcher's premiership, Howard Brenton described her departure as feeling "as if the curse had been lifted" (173). To others, though, the fantasy was seductive: *The Line of Beauty* depicts a sexualised obsession with the Prime Minister, the same one acknowledged in reality by François Mitterand ('the eyes of Caligula and the mouth of Marilyn Monroe' (attributed)); Christopher Hitchens (in his essay on "The Iron Lady's Sex Appeal"); and Alan Clark (qtd. in Moore 436).

Of course, Thatcher is neither the first nor the last politician to be accused of selling a fantasy. Yet the theme is unusually persistent in representations of her project from both opponents and admirers, and consistent in how Thatcher's own image is shown to function as the object of fantasy – a function presented as central to the success of her project by the popular TV political satire *Spitting Image* (1984 - 1996), which ruthlessly exposed the excessive investment in Thatcher's image.

In *The Line of Beauty*, Thatcher appears to have altered her country's ability to recognise reality; Monique Ouradi describes the effect on her husband and other men as a hypnotism (221). These men are being simultaneously compelled and seduced towards acceptance of a single way of reading the world (Gilmour's 'dogma'), one that Hollinghurst slyly juxtaposes with the practice of reading in literary criticism (the events of the novel substitute for the doctoral thesis Nick Guest is supposed to be writing (384)).

The government's own rhetorical emphasis, however, was often on recognition of an imminent future, where the 'pain' of monetarism, industrial conflict, and unemployment would be paid off with the pleasurable potential to fulfil individual ambition:

[...] For us, it is not who you are, who your family is or where you come from that matters. It is what you are and what you can do for our country that counts. That is our vision.

But if things are improving, why—you will ask—does unemployment not fall? [...] people know there is always a time lag between getting the other things right and having a fall in unemployment. [...] The other day, at a Youth Training Centre, I was delighted to see a poster saying "It is the customer that makes pay days possible." So those young people are not only learning new technology; they were learning [...] the spirit of enterprise. (Speech of 12/10/1984 to the Conservative Party Conference)

Particularly before the greater prosperity of the second half of the 1980s, Thatcherism based itself on deferred pleasures (the "lag"); it required the recognition of a potential behind present reality, a substitution of the vision for the visible. Rhetorically, this easily slid, as above, into a focus on the specific potential of children and youth.

This is powerfully suggestive of how the political representation of the child under Thatcherism was not only about the child's embodiment of the future or his vulnerability to abuse. It was also about the child's ambition, his entrepreneurial potential. Again, the compulsion is to only recognise this potential, and all will be well. This "spirit of enterprise", though it conjures a vision of the future, is essentially atemporal; it need only be properly recognised by the child (through the visual suggestion of the poster) to be fulfilled.

As we saw earlier, one of the most popular 'family' television programmes of the time, *Jim'll Fix It*, paid tribute to this focus on childhood 'spirit' by allowing

children to act out their ambitions for the camera. Savile, as we noted, hinted at the authoritarian imperative co-existing awkwardly with Thatcherism's vision of pleasurable ambition; in his own multiple service to the state, he affirmed that social mobility, wealth accumulation and personal exhibitionism need never conflict with the national interest or authorised morality. He offered, in fact, the opportunity to not recognise the former imperatives as potentially contradicting the latter. As with Clause 28, this non-recognition also applied to his sexual ambiguity; Mrs Thatcher was adamant that it would not trouble his own political representation, overruling her officials when they cited Savile's lifestyle as a reason to prevent his award of state honours (Davies 315).

Thatcherism's fantasies were, then, often understood specifically as fantasies of the future, albeit a future often identified with an idealised past or a set of essential qualities. *Spitting Image* audaciously captured this in its special episode for the 1987 General Election, Mrs Thatcher's third win and second landslide (also dramatised in *The Line of Beauty*). This episode included a parody of a scene from the 1972 musical movie *Cabaret* where a handsome young boy sings "Tomorrow Belongs to Me", which begins resembling a paen to Nature but turns into a Nazi anthem. In the *Spitting Image* version, Mrs Thatcher's cabinet are listening to the boy. This child's face fades disturbingly into that of the grotesque Thatcher-puppet before a series of cuts follows to images of negative consequences attributed to Thatcherism: Environmental degradation; a property price bubble; closing hospitals – all implying that the vision of the child is just a fantasy. Finally, ending the song, the puppet-Thatcher reappears against a dark background and repeats, in an echoing voice, the line "tomorrow belongs to me".

This performance of Thatcherism's investment in the child hints at why it is both so outrageous and yet so appropriate that literary depictions of Thatcherism repeatedly use child disappearance as a central trope.

### **3.     *The Child in Time***

Ian McEwan's 1987 novel *The Child in Time* has Thatcher appear in person as a character (though playfully unnamed other than as a Prime Minister with the

female pronoun). McEwan presents child disappearance as a necessary consequence of her political project when the three-year old daughter of Stephen, himself a children's author, disappears in a supermarket and despite frantic searching remains forever missing (perhaps hinting at the leftist suspicion of Thatcher's 'super market' as a moral threat). The novel narrates not only the failed search for the daughter, but also Stephen's gradual descent into attempted retrieval of his own childhood, and his co-option on to the 'Prime Minister's Official Commission on Child Care'.

Quotations from the fictional 'Authorised Childcare Handbook' begin each chapter, consistently asserting a fundamental and natural relationship between childhood and free market economics, together producing a counter-reformation to the 'pallid relativism' (7) of social democracy. The handbook, as education policy, attempts to align representation with recognition; its premise is that we've always known what is true, but briefly erred in the post-war period, an error we must now correct:

Childcare writers of the post-war era sentimentally ignored the fact that children are at heart selfish, and reasonably so, for they are programmed for survival.

Introduction to The Authorised Childcare Handbook, HMSO. (*The Child in Time*, 155)

This proposition makes it impossible, McEwan's novel hints, to take the future seriously as the object of politics. As Walsh argues, "what made Thatcherism such an impossible-Real object for the British culture of opposition was that it succeeded in revoking the gradualist guarantee of social progress, exposing this as premised on conditions obtaining in Britain between the 1940s and the 1970s" (169). In other words, time was up: abandoning post-war aberration, Thatcherism presented itself as a return to a natural and timeless order, thus tending, as O'Shaughnessy observes, to "freeze history into essence" (301; tellingly, after proclaiming a return to "Victorian Values", Thatcher added, "they are also perennial values" (O'Shaughnessy 390). McEwan proposes that the child herself, as *being in time*, is excluded in this assertion of an essential and timeless reality.

The handbook attempts, as education policy, to align representation with recognition; its premise is that we've always known what is true, but briefly erred in the post-war period, an error we must now correct (sentiments familiar from *The Line of Beauty*). The Handbook's representation of an attempt to align political and legislative policy with a supposed Nature places this novel within a theme McEwan has returned to at several points during his career, most recently in *The Children Act* (2014). Here, McEwan demonstrates the arbitrary element in judicial decisions on the child, by portraying the case of a boy who wishes to refuse treatment for a fatal illness due to his religious convictions, and who is just a few months short of the legal age of majority at his eighteenth birthday. As the barrister for the parents (who, as Jehovah's Witnesses, support their son's views) points out, the age of majority is essentially artificial, a legal construction wholly inadequate to the ethics of the situation. Yet, ironically, the convictions of those he is defending themselves derive from a fundamentalist and absolutist version of the Law (in this case, that of the Old Testament) that permits no such discretion or acknowledgement of the openness of human judgement, its contingency on history and culture.

These fundamentalists echo the drive towards dogma that McEwan identified in Thatcherism years earlier, in *The Child in Time*. In this situation, the Law (in the broadest sense) becomes paradoxical – it is an assertion of authority over a recalcitrant reality, yet it presents itself as aligned to fundamental underlying rules of reality itself. The recalcitrant element now has to be dismissed as superficial, sentimental or illusory (as Thatcherism saw post-war socialism) or as an artificial and unnatural contamination (as it viewed queers and social deviants); the child at times occupies both or either position, but is never easily reconciled to the Natural Law (hence why, *in extremis*, he is disappeared).

Ironically, time itself has become unreal in this society; it has to be projected as a vision:

Kate's growing up had become the essence of time itself. Her phantom growth, the product of an excessive sorrow, was not only inevitable [...] but necessary. Without the fantasy of her continued

existence he was lost, time would stop. He was the father of an invisible child. (*The Child in Time*, 2)

This suggests that Thatcherism has attempted to eliminate time through the disappearance of the child, who can now only exist as a phantom 'within' the child, a Doppelgänger to the 'child within' Thatcherism viewed as the source of ambition and enterprise. At one point, the Handbook grimly casts this ambition itself as only the just repayment of a debt for the interruption childhood makes to the essentially atemporal nature of social and economic life:

Above all, childhood is a privilege. No child as it grows older should be allowed to forget that its parents, as embodiments of society, are the ones who grant this privilege, and do so at their own expense. (*The Child in Time*, 90)

This supports a hint McEwan offers throughout his novel: that the authoritarian and indulgent tendencies in Thatcherism play out their inherent (but unrecognised) contradiction through the child. This is summed up in terms Charles Darke, who publishes Stephen's books, uses. An ambitious entrepreneur himself, Darke substitutes the 'child within' for the real child: 'This book is not for children, it's for a child, and that child is you' (28). Once this substitution takes place, the child's ambitions and the needs of authority need not be in conflict.

However, Darke's story turns out to become an uncanny parallel of Kate's disappearance and a breakdown of the Thatcherite vision for the child. Darke goes from being a publisher to becoming a government minister, and an indulged political and personal favourite of the Prime Minister herself. This glittering career is destroyed, though, when he suffers an apparent mental collapse that takes the form of regression to a childlike state. Thatcherism's ideological identification of free market economics with an essential idea of childhood breaks apart in the appropriately named Darke, whose retreat from public life into a private narcissism parodies both Thatcherism's rhetorical use of the child, as per the Handbook, and its affirmation of private interests, both of which he exposes as hypocritical and contradictory. Darke is the archetypal ambitious Thatcherite, a metaphorical son to

the maternal Prime Minister, who nevertheless ends up demonstrating a potential gulf between the pleasures of ambition, self-fulfilment and self-indulgence and the interests of the authorities.

Thatcherism invests in the child as the reproduction of the social order; yet its presentation of itself as a revelation or (to use a psychoanalytically charged term) a release of previously repressed natural forces required an investment more specifically in the young adult male. Whilst this male was over the threshold of adulthood, his characteristics, which constituted a certain directness in simplicity in approach to life, would often be viewed as 'childish' under alternative paradigms of value. This male could be the City Boy, from a working class background, free to make (in the phrase of the time) 'loadsamoney' in the now-freer markets; he could be one of the privileged, parasitical graduates who populate the new political and social economy of the 1980s (the economy of 'big banging', as it were) in *The Line of Beauty*, or here, as we find him in Charles, the personal and political favourite of the Prime Minister herself.

This, again, exposes a paradox of Thatcherism. One might say that Thatcherism preserves the fantasy of absolute and unrestrained indulgence, but requires it to remain within the bounds of fantasy precisely in order so that it can continue to safely operate as the organising principle of the world. Like Mrs Thatcher herself, it requires desire to have its effect but that desire must remain in crucial respects within well-disciplined boundaries in order for the system to remain stable and to successfully reproduce itself. This is a more extreme reflection of the obvious tension between Thatcherism's traditional and nationalist rhetoric and its economic liberalism (as discussed in Brooker, *Literature of the 1980s*, 16-17).

These contradictions were reflected in the Thatcher government's somewhat conflicted attitude towards 'youth culture'. Whilst Thatcherism favoured a certain type of ambitious young man (both symbolically, and to a degree, in practice) it was deeply antagonistic towards others (such as miners, New Age groups, and politically active gays) – divisions that reflected its highly ambivalent attitude towards the individual, the individual's capacity and desire for pleasure, and the relation of that

capacity to actual or symbolic infancy. The persona of Mrs Thatcher herself was crucial to that control, as both McEwan and Hollinghurst intuit – this wouldn't have worked in the same way without her role as the oedipal mother only too pleased to have her sons take the place of the “wet” Establishment paternalists.

The indulgence offered by Thatcherism is successful to the extent that it aligns with her instrumentalist assumption that the essence of the self and of the world are known, not a matter for serious dispute; but this instrumentalism has to re-assert itself when the desire provoked and unleashed by the offer of indulgence finds itself, as Freud suspected, ultimately immune to satisfaction and so permanently resistant to social restraints.

Of course, in opposition to Thatcherism's release of the young male comes an antagonism, embodied in both the image of Thatcher herself and in the young men released by her, towards the older male – or specifically towards a certain version of older male authority, a certain ‘establishment’. In real political history, such older men were the Tory ‘wets’ like Lord Carrington, Ian Gilmore, Peter Walker and others, as well as more symbolic opponents like former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (whose line on Thatcher “selling off the family silver” pithily captured the antagonism). In literature, this older male establishment appears in such figures as Lord Kestler in *The Line of Beauty*, and in a more middle-class incarnation as Stephen's father in *The Child in Time*. This older patriarchy is identified with the post-war, post-Attlee British order, characterised (in a historical simplification, of course) by a predisposition towards the economically active state as a significant counterbalance to, and in some key sectors even a replacement for, private enterprise; and as a project (albeit limited and gradualist) towards social justice and greater equality; these men are also identified with broader notions of fair play and restraint (as when Lord Kestler mops up the damage caused by his son-in-law's naïve involvement in speculation and asset stripping), establishment opponents of the ‘greed is good’ formula through which Thatcherism's oedipal economics were perceived to indulge the younger male's ambition, aggression, and ego (and, unacknowledged but exploited by the Prime Minister herself, his sexual desire).



McEwan and Hollinghurst are particularly aligned in discerning, and then developing, the idea of Thatcher as this perverse new variable in oedipal fantasy – the mother who, rather than disciplining or restricting the child, offers the (primarily male) child the prospect of unlimited indulgence and unlimited consumption, provided he adheres to certain conditions – and not only this, but she even goes on to castrate the patriarchal father, the post-war establishment man, whose authority threatens to thwart the indulgence of the boy. This formula operates (often through metaphors of sexual fantasy, dreams, and hallucinations) throughout *The Line of Beauty*:

The men did something naughty, and got away with it, and not only did they get away with it but they've been asked to do it again, with a huge majority. (Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, 62)

This indulgence of the male child or childish male disintegrates, of course, in McEwan's Charles Darke character, whose disintegration suggests the dangerous potential for the political investment in the child within to emerge as a return of the repressed, an eruption of the unserious yet ambitious 'youth' who so revolted the real Mrs Thatcher in the 1970s.

The regression of personal time for Darke is an uncanny parody of the collapse of political time proclaimed by Thatcherism's conceit that no future (and therefore no politics) are required beyond return to essential and unchanging values - the cancellation of the future's difference, explicitly identified here as a matter of childhood. The space of the awkward child that Darke's regression opens up also establishes an equally awkward non-synchrony that the Thatcherite project, with its elimination of the difference between past and future, seeks to deny.

The desire to know the child is itself turned by Darke back on the Prime Minister; he enacts an excessive child-ness that frustrates her terms: it's totally recognisable, and yet (because of being recognisable to excess; he's too much of a child) absolutely and ironically unacceptable to Thatcherism. 'The child' goes, then, from being a term for the recognisable origins of the self (as formulated in the Handbook) to representing that which must be disappeared, that which cannot be

recognised even – ironically - when it is most recognisable. There is something about the child here that is fundamentally disruptive, different, and ‘private’ in a way totally unacceptable to Thatcherism; and the only way to prevent this difference affecting the public realm is to ‘disappear’ it. Such is Darke’s fate when he becomes a child again. Darke exposes how pleasure always risks becoming political, paradoxically when it is most concerned with pleasure itself – a theme that also appears in *The Line of Beauty*. This leads to Darke becoming the second disappeared child in McEwan’s novel.

Darke’s enforced ‘disappearance’ from the public realm is also a play on Thatcherite ‘privatisation’. Here, the private, as what is known to exist but nevertheless not recognised, disappears from representation; hence the disappearance of both Darke and of Stephen’s daughter. Despite its proclaimed ‘privatisation’ agenda, Thatcherism cannot admit a distinction between the private and the public - the distinction that Hannah Arendt saw as the necessary predicate of politics in *The Human Condition*. The private as the difference that might be represented but cannot be recognised – the difference suspected in the child – is the target of this.

It’s useful to frame this reading of Thatcherism (as presented by McEwan) with the role of the private in Hannah Arendt’s work. For Arendt, the necessity of the private space for the citizen’s participation in politics was a need simply for the difference between the private and the public (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22-79), a difference that however was not abstract or theoretical but physically embodied in the private space of the home:

[...] The four walls of one’s private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world, not only from everything that goes on in it but also from its very publicity, from being seen and being heard. A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. [...] The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of

publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in. (*The Human Condition*, 71)

The private here was not the fetishised and flattened (or in Arendt's term, the visible but shallow) images of desire used to imagine the 'private' under Thatcherism, but the basic conditions of life, the principal characteristics of which was simply their unknowability, their removal from the public realm and from the regulatory authority of the state (although Thatcherism professed to despise regulation in some contexts, it was not shy to attempt to regulate the social lives of citizens and the education of children, as Clause 28 showed). Arendt's terminology here would read oddly against conventional critiques of Thatcherism; she demands due regard for private property, and explains this demand in apparently negative terms: the substantial – or, in her language, deep – element of the self, the self deserving and capable of political participation, needs a "hiding place"; there is no utopian sense of the withering away of the distinction between individual and social needs, but rather the sharp reinforcement of that distinction, as indeed *The Human Condition* emphasises throughout. Arendt is also uncompromising in demanding that this privacy is not a metaphor, but rather a very "real, non-subjective" space.

Significantly, Arendt also saw such political participation as the source of potential immortality for the subject, in the sense of the survival of his works beyond his own death; in fact, the kind of immortality she identified (itself a form of representation) actually *requires* the existence of death, and of time. Arendt provides a frame, therefore, for us to conceptualise Thatcherism's desire for the atemporal and its peculiarly anti-political politics, as summarised in Thatcher's famous declaration of the worthlessness of discussion: There Is No Alternative. Death – as the ultimate marker both of the movement of time and of the privacy of the subject – is as unacceptable to this politics as is the child, as we shall find in the next chapter.

Despite the official 'privatisation' agenda, the possibility of the private as the basis for politics (politics understood, following Arendt, as a temporal disturbance ultimately dependent on the adult's death) was effectively banished from

Thatcherism's essentialist vision, which depended on the absolute alignment of political representation with the recognition of what, supposedly, had been reality all along, Thatcher's 'perennial values'. For McEwan, the child is the victim of this; and so his title, *The Child in Time*, makes an even more politically significant assertion than is at first apparent. The child does not die, but merely disappears, written out of representation, wilfully erased from recognition.

McEwan shows us that the child is excessive; the Darke narrative in particular shows that Thatcherism's presentation of a vision of pleasure as key to its political success could be undone by pleasure becoming political. Pleasure's tendency to excess – what Lacan called *jouissance*, an excessive pleasure with both destructive and creative consequences – creates a dangerous possibility of the unrecognisable, of excess not necessarily reducible to the symbolic order fundamentally located in an atemporal vision of the past.

In its attitude to the future, as to the child and to all things, Thatcherism simultaneously claimed economic rationalism and moral clarity, a combination it viewed as having disappeared in the post-war years. Its attitude to pleasure and to creativity was accordingly compromised by its authoritarian embrace of rationalism and morality, as is evident in Margaret Thatcher's own account of how her vision of the future replaced one on offer in the 1960s and 1970s:

Indeed, this was a period of obsessive and naive interest in 'youth'. Parents worried so much about the 'generation gap' that even teenagers began to take it seriously. A whole 'youth culture' [...] emerged. [...] There was vibrancy and talent, but this was also in large degree a world of make-believe. [...] Carnaby Street in Soho, the Beatles, the mini-skirt and the maxiskirt were the new symbols of 'Swinging Britain'. [...] They concealed the real economic weaknesses which even a talented fashion industry and entrepreneurial recording companies could not counter-balance. (*The Path to Power* 148)

This argument is clearly as much moral as economic. Indeed, Thatcher drew little distinction between economic rationalism and Methodist morality; elsewhere in

her memoir, she alleges that the Bloomsbury Group's "rejection of the Victorian virtues in their own behaviour" (110, meaning their relationships outside of heterosexual marriage, contributed to the allegedly negative consequences of Keynes' post-war economic legacy. Most noticeable here is the revulsion at the possibility that 'youth' might be seriously different from their predecessors, and at the potential of their imagination to produce objects and ways of living with the possibility of seriously disrupting the culture itself. The "generation gap" must be wilfully unrecognised.

The great unspoken fear here, though, is that entrepreneurial ambition might arise from the *same* set of desires in youth (and ultimately in childhood) that produce political and cultural dissidence. Curiously for a political project that sold itself on a vision of pleasure to come in return for adherents' willingness to recognise their own entrepreneurial spirit, Thatcher indicates a profound fear of entrepreneurship, and of pleasure becoming political. McEwan captures this contradiction between the indulgence of ambition and political authoritarianism well in *The Child in Time*. Alan Hollinghurst would dramatise it to the point of excess – precisely the frivolous, pleasurable excess towards which Thatcherism was so schizophrenic.

#### **4.     *The Line of Beauty***

Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) is, perhaps counterintuitively, an important text for Thatcherism and the child. This is because it perfectly dramatises the abjection of the real child, who is always coming out of childhood, for the sake of projecting an ideal future. This, of course, reflects Thatcherism's attitude towards time, its status as a political project based on a curiously atemporal vision. Writing in the early 2000s (Clause 28 remained in force until 2003), Hollinghurst was well placed to explore this vision of the future as now itself part of the past (a fact bleakly emphasised by the novel's insinuation that more deaths from HIV-AIDS will follow between the end of its chronology and the time of its publication) and yet as a vision with powerful continuing effects.

No other literary representation of the Thatcherite project probes its ironies and contradictions towards pleasure so far as Hollinghurst does here. The title is suggestive of this, most obviously in referring to the lines of cocaine that function as a motif in the novel. Another such potential meaning suggests the “line” as containing beauty, in the double sense of securing it, giving the subject a place where he knows he will find aesthetic (and other) pleasure, and yet simultaneously restricting it to that place. This reflects how self-indulgence (the novel brims full of beautiful bodies, houses, art, cars, parties, alcohol and cocaine) can be infinitely enjoyed so long as it is entertainment without effect, desire without disruption. The sources of potential disruption in private excess are managed through their non-recognition in the public realm, until finally an act of publicising (and publication) ends the party for Nick and his adopted family.

In this novel, images, the objects of fascination, control the relation between public and private, a function presented as lying at the centre of Thatcherite politics. This reflects Cohen’s contention that the spectacle should properly be viewed not as opposed to, but rather as “implicated in historical experience [...] vision belongs to lived private and public experience” (*Spectacular Allegories* 1). In other words, images can make history, even in the act of forestalling it and containing it. This is true of the society of *The Line of Beauty*, which has become overwhelmingly visual, above all in the iconography of ‘The Lady’ herself: “And the wives, you see, all look like...her – they’ve all got the blue bows, and the hair” (62). That this society is governed by the fantasy image is shown by a telling irony; early in the novel there is a suggestion that Thatcher will attend Toby’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party, but Nick determines that the idea is merely Gerald’s “fantasy” (59); later, when Thatcher does actually attend Gerald’s party, the real event is witnessed by Nick as a fantasy because he is high at the time.

Here, Thatcherite fantasy clearly depends on not recognising those things that might disrupt it – HIV/AIDs, gay sex, sexual violence, racism, and mental illness; Clause 28, with its specific prohibition on recognition of the queer in the family, lurks in the novel’s background throughout. This desire to not recognise correlates with the fantasy of timelessness at work, together producing the impression of a latter-

day Gilded Age – apparently timeless, actually doomed – underlined by the shadowing presence of Henry James, the subject of Nick’s doctoral thesis.

Signs of the *costs* of arresting time appear constantly but similarly (until the ending) confined to the background, in casual references to the rollback of progressive advances on race, gender and sexuality, collectively suggesting that a temporal reversal of the ‘post-war’ future in favour of a return to some essentialist pre-existing Britain is well underway: as O’Shaughnessy says, Thatcherism’s attraction was in part that it offered “to abolish complexity and uncertainty by suggesting that the future could be lived through the past” (“The Lady Turns Back”, 295). The act of arresting time requires a peculiar sort of ‘child disappearance’, the disappearance of Nick as desiring child whose desire is inevitably disruptive. This disappearance occurs when the attempt to simply not recognise Nick’s sexuality finally proves a failure.

The narrative is also Nick’s *Bildungsroman* (the novel begins shortly after his graduation from Oxford, and takes place during a period when he is still theoretically engaged in study). The eventual downfall of the Feddens’ world (a localised embodiment of Thatcherite society) arises directly from the sources of desire in Nick’s childhood, from his upbringing as a favoured child, but one growing up in a conventional and provincial environment, lacking the possibility of sensual encounter with the new and the different which – as is evident in his choices, at least initially – Nick desperately desires. This is clear when Nick returns to his hometown in his car, a gift from Wani:

[...] Some lads, or ‘louts’, roamed about under the arches of the market hall. The market hall was the jewel of the town [...] It had been the pride of Nick’s childhood, he had done a project about it in school [...] at the age of twelve it had been ranked with the Taj Mahal and the Parliament Building in Ottawa in his private architectural heaven. The moment of accepting it was not by Wren had been as bleak and exciting as puberty. Now he revved round it, the lads looked up, and he savoured the triumph of returning home in a

throaty little runaround. It was as though the achievements of sex and equities and titles and drugs blew out in a long scarf behind him. (*Line*, 285)

Here Nick's childhood ambition and desire is firmly aligned with both his sexual and his socioeconomic adventures since graduation. This links a Freudian notion of polymorphous infantile sexuality (as described by Phillips, above) with the compromised indulgence of desire and ambition offered by Thatcherism; the passage clarifies the sheer sensuality of the child's ambition, situated simultaneously in the 'real' world of politics and money and in the unrecognised world of queer sexuality. That this is temporally and politically a disturbance is neatly figured in the literal disturbance Nick's car creates, suggestively drawing the gaze of the lads.

There is an attention here, again, to the uncertain boundary between fantasy and reality. Nick, imagining the minds of the lads, wonders whether they might imagine the sensual pleasures to which he now has access, but concludes that they cannot; although they see him, they will not (he believes) properly recognise the extent of his privilege, a non-recognition that underpins the social order insofar as it contains the hint of menace behind the lads' presumed jealousy towards Nick's car.

The menace is contained by the louts' assumed political and aesthetic ignorance; for them, the market hall is just a place to hang out, not an architectural wonder. Thus when Gerald's comically compromised need to not recognise his own involvement in Nick's gay lifestyle is mentioned, we might note that Nick has internalised a rather similar psychological tactic. Gerald is aware of Nick's sexuality, enough to worry about the association between the two of them (though Hollinghurst slyly implicates Gerald's own exhibitionism in Nick's queerness), but of course cannot admit to recognising it. This refusal of recognition must be maintained in order to secure the political and social status quo.

Refusal of recognition is therefore, paradoxically, actually a form of claiming to know the other here, a form of knowledge that prevents the extension or revision of political representation. The desired position for the subject here is the sadistic position of power where one can choose to share or withhold that knowledge from



others (as Nick mentally denies the possibility of such knowledge to the lads). This is ultimately directed towards power over *time*, refusing the possibility that the boys could grow up to be as Nick has become and therefore disallowing the possibility of socioeconomic, as well as sexual, disruption. Desire here is desire to be other than oneself; when this wish is limited to the self, the resulting paradox means that desire can continue only as an image of what it originally was.

This reflects how the images work in the novel, as both the objects of desire and the authorities controlling it. Thatcher's own image is the principal example of the latter, of course. Yet this control works by exploiting how even the same image, as the novel persistently hints, itself constitutes an object of desire; Thatcher herself is such an object, and the novel repeatedly associates the fascination created by her image with queerness.

This echoes a moment early in the novel when Nick is looking through a series of adverts for men seeking sex and relationships, when he comes across Leo, leading to the beginning of their relationship. In this moment, Nick – though a graduate – is still a child in the sense of being new to serious relationships and to the world he is about to enter. The randomness of the images in the adverts, and in his selection of whom to contact, shows desire and curiosity – two factors associated, as above, with Nick's childhood and his pre-adolescent fixation on the market hall – as aligned with this unpredictability, this peculiar equality of objects of desire, even when the result of the encounter may significantly determine his future. There is a randomness in the recognition of affective value here, in that behind one of the images Nick will find a depth and human substance, a transformation from the two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional, sensuous and affective and pleasurable, encounter. (This also applies to Nick's childhood love of architecture; only some of the two dimensional drawings that fascinate him will be matched by reality.)

Evidently, this fascination with images, their tendency towards randomness combined with their potentially profound effect on the future, is potentially disturbing to the political order, as indicated by the fact that it leads directly to

Nick's gay life and all the ultimate consequences of that. Given this, it's telling that Nick's cocaine use, his sex life with Wani, *and* the images of Margaret Thatcher all provide an order where pleasure and the fulfilment of desire can be secured in an orderly, predictable, non-random way. They transform the disruptive potential of desire, ambition and creativity into something that can be anticipated, and contained. Yet the inevitable result of this is that the lifestyle thus produced becomes peculiarly two-dimensional, a consequence figured in the glossy magazine that Nick and Wani produce, the fact that Wani can only have orgasm to pornographic images, and the fact that Nick is left with a photograph of his encounter with Margaret Thatcher, his memory of which is clouded by his having been high at the time.

These are images that provide pleasure in fantasy only, or as Nick puts it to Lord Kessler, they possess a "style that hides things and reveals things at the same time" (54). In Lacanian terms, it's an attempt to reconcile the excitement and pleasure of the self's investment in the image of the Other with a totalising symbolic order – and of course the two are only reconcilable if one has reliable fetishes, tools for stimulation (like cocaine, sex and money) that function to both generate and control fantasies, to frame them. In these fetishes, then, one can indulge what one would not otherwise recognise; as Nick calls it, this is the "heterosexual queenery" of the Tory MPs whose queerly excessive desire is invested in the image of Thatcher herself. The power of these images lies in that they provide 'excess' whilst denying the capacity to actually exceed their boundaries (which would create, as does eventually happen, a political disruption).

Nick's return to the Barwick market hall, however, is an early signal that this state of affairs cannot last. The evocation of his childhood ambition and creativity at this time hints at the potential for disruption that still lies behind his current lifestyle; and indeed his private desires, identified here with his childhood, will eventually go on to bring down Gerald, by then a government minister. Hollinghurst thus locates the disruptive possibilities of time – of 'growing up', of entering into desire and even of dying – in Nick himself as a peculiar kind of real child. This desire involves the humiliation as well as the satisfaction of the self (the "bleak" and

“exciting” puberty of realising that the building is not by Wren), because it exists in time; it arises from lack and loss, but also generates a creativity that is not, ultimately, ever fully available for the authorities to anticipate. (Curiously, in both *The Line of Beauty* and *Hawksmoor*, architecture, as a discipline poised between imagination and the real, is a metaphorical site through which this is explored.)

This desiring and ambitious child is, of course, himself one of the fetishes of Thatcherite fantasy; his ambition and desire is supposedly indulged but only in a fantastic way, divorced from time, from politics and from death. Serge Leclair, in “A Child is Being Killed”, offers a suggestive frame for this:

Whoever does mourn, over and over, the loss of the wonderful child he might have been remains in limbo [...] But whoever believes he has won the battle against the figure of the tyrant [this child] once and for all cuts himself off from the sources of his creative spirit and thinks he is strong when he stubbornly resists the reign of *jouissance*. (Leclair, 3)

In the scenes of Nick’s return to his provincial hometown quoted above, he has just come back from a somewhat awkward visit by Gerald to his parents’ house, one which brings up the gap between his childhood, when his parents invested in him as their intelligent and sensitive only child, and his present reality, which his parents do not fully understand. Nick finds that he “felt for both parties, as though he were witnessing an argument with himself” (284); he shares his parents’ mourning, as Leclair might say, for his parents’ ideal of himself. However, his current life is marked by a willingness to abandon his childhood ambitions, his *jouissance*, in favour of its pale image in his coke-and-sex-filled life with Wani; a fetishised performance of *jouissance* that never quite enters into it because it attempts to avoid the knowledge of loss, attempts to be secure and available for anticipation. It is telling that in this same scene, Nick finds out from Gerald that Wani lost his own little brother years earlier, something he has never told Nick (281).

Since the fetishised life of High Thatcherism, and of Nick and Wani’s affair, has to banish the existence of loss and death, their reintroduction through the AIDS

crisis constitutes a return of the repressed, forcing into sight that which this society desires not to recognise. Suddenly, death as a disturbing rupture in time reappears, seen as a vengeance on homosexuals. The culmination of this is that the desiring child himself re-appears as a lurid version of Nick himself, conjured up by Gerald's paranoia, at the moment when time re-erupts to destroy the fantasy life of High Thatcherism, the private taking an unexpected revenge on the proponents of 'privatisation'.

At the novel's ending, time suddenly re-erupts as Nick's experiences are re-told in a lurid narrative delivered by Gerald, who imagines Nick as a changeling child, taken in by the Feddens only to deliberately destroy them - driven by resentful malice over his own homosexual inability to produce children. Following Edelman, we can clearly see that there are two children in play here: the recalcitrant real child (who, like Nick, is always in fact growing up), and the fantasy child on whom the values of family and state are pinned – Thatcher herself acts as the 'revenant oedipal mother figure' (Duff 182) at the centre of this order, bent on reproduction but increasingly, as the 1980s go on, lacking a meaningful reality to reproduce, as shown by the failures of the various heirs in the novel – Toby Fedden, whose semi-arranged relationship with the daughter of his father's business partner falls apart; and Wani Ouradi, Nick's lover, dying of AIDS after long sustaining an entirely staged heterosexual engagement.

The fantasy child takes priority (despite the spectacular disintegration of the Feddens' world) over the real child, and hence Nick is finally excluded, disappeared, from the Feddens' lives. Gerald accuses Nick of being (figuratively, but with literal implications) a child murderer; but what is actually lost is Gerald's narcissistic self-image; the child here is the purely fantasy root of the self, the real child (all the more real because he has, at least in a purely temporal sense, grown up) abandoned.

This society based on the visual hates what cannot be seen, what lies outside, exceeding and disrupting the image, which turns out to be primarily Nick's queerness (although this is in part a scapegoat for other things, of course). It hates the three-dimensional, which threatens to demand a representation of what cannot

be recognised, or seen, because authority here – which is authority over time itself, over history ('No Future' being the guiding mantra) depends on the visual image.

*The Line of Beauty*, then, suggests that the private self originating in the desiring child demands a temporal, even a historical politics, a politics that (as the AIDS crisis both symbolically and practically shows) cannot escape – even depends upon - individual mortality, as the final reminder of time's passing. Thatcherism's attempt to arrest time and politics cannot survive, as the fates of both Nick and of the Feddens shows. The novel shows that this attempt demands both acknowledging and containing the desiring child in the fetish of the ambitious child, and proposes an analogy between this child's role in Thatcherism and its implications for a politics of reading; Nick derives such authority as he has from his supposed ability to read books, people and objects. It is in the practice of reading in its broadest sense, Hollinghurst suggests, that we must look to unpick the psychological tactics adopted by Thatcherism.

Such a practice of reading would have to take a very different approach towards the relation between recognition and representation. The novel's interest in images as both the objects of creativity and ambition and, consequentially, the tools of authoritarian control subtly hints at the unpredictability inherent in the child's curiosity and capacity for pleasure. Such curiosity leads to the future and to demands for extended political representation and rights, as demanded by gays. The virtue of such demands, though, can never be truly demonstrated through a requirement to be available for recognition, to submit to the controlling frame of the image, the image imagined to guarantee the future and make it available for recognition. The authorities' desire to nevertheless maintain such recognition as the basic for representation sustains their interpretative and political authority, but only at the cost of the real child's disappearance. As *The Line of Beauty* hints through its framing reference to literary studies and literary criticism, this inability to truly read the child has implications for the fundamental function of reading as a mode of political and interpretative authority.

## **5. Thatcherism and Theory: Peter Ackroyd**

Why, do we not believe the very Infants to be the Heirs of Hell and  
 Children of the Devil as soon as they are disclos'd to the World?  
 (*Hawksmoor* 9)

Peter Ackroyd's early novels are concerned with both Thatcherism and the child. His first, *The Great Fire of London* (1982) neatly parodies both Thatcher's 'Victorian values' rhetoric and the leftist accusation of a revived 'Dickensian' poverty by imagining the return of a ghostly extra-textual Little Dorrit to early-1980s London. *Great Fire* explores the marginalised groups of the early Thatcher years – such as student radicals and gays – who were, both occasionally in their own and frequently in right-wing discourse, associated with the mantra of rebellious youth expressed in the Sex Pistols' famous rejection of time: 'No Future' (a slogan suggestive of just how fundamentally the presumption that the future was the proper object of politics had been questioned in the years leading to the Thatcher premiership).

However, Ackroyd was as much influenced by then-recent developments in literary theory as by the British culture wars; the influences of Lacan, Derrida, Saussure and others on his work is widely recognised (in studies by Gibson and Wolfreys, and by Onega, as well as being evident in his own theoretical work and early novels - Derrida is even discussed explicitly, though with comical inconsequentiality, in *Great Fire* (91)). Before beginning to write novels, Ackroyd had already authored a radical New Critical work, *Notes for a New Culture* (1976). His third novel, *Hawksmoor* (1985) presents a powerful narrative of a queer and uncanny difference arising from the individual's childhood experience of alienating privacy, a difference that Thatcherism must (in this Ackroyd agrees with Hollinghurst and McEwan) necessarily refuse to recognise.

*Hawksmoor* is also a novel structured around the child's abduction and murder. Through this, Ackroyd traces Thatcherism's origins in Enlightenment rationalism (as he identifies them) and imagines an oppositional project drawn from his knowledge of Theory (here particularly, though not exclusively, psychoanalytic and Lacanian), and from his interest in the uncanny geography of London, where he finds forces recalcitrant to rationalist discourse and Thatcherite capitalism (Link,

“The Capitol of Darknesse”, 518). From this, he produces a compelling account of the reality to which Thatcherism refuses recognition, a reality apparently realised at the ending in an ambiguously violent moment of indistinction between adult and child, a moment that itself eliminates time – and politics.

The novel is structured as two parallel texts that unify at the ending: one is the first-person narrative of Nicholas Dyer, a macabre Doppelgänger of the baroque architect Nicholas Hawksmoor (c.1661-1736), who recounts his life as it has led to his present (1711) commission to build seven new London churches. The other text is a third-person narrative in the mid-1980s, where a detective called Hawksmoor investigates a series of murders – almost all of children - perpetrated in Dyer's now-derelict churches. Dyer discloses to the reader that the architecture and geography of these churches represent a coded catechism for the gnostic religion into which he was abducted following his parents' deaths in the 1666 plague and his subsequent abandonment on to the London streets, and to which he still adheres. This Manichean faith reveals evil and darkness as true and necessary elements of an essentially unchanging world, elements which are in Dyer's view ignorantly suppressed by the discourse of Enlightenment led by his rival, Sir Christopher Wren. For Dyer, Wren's rationalism will always fail, because it refuses to recognise those uncanny and abject, but fundamental, conditions of the world (revealed to Dyer in childhood) that would disturb Wren's arrogant belief in an enlightened present where the scientific method can recognise, and thus represent, everything that does or could exist. Against Wren's public leadership, Dyer is as private an individual as it's possible to be (once again, ironically the individual who truly 'privatises' is precisely the queer child Thatcherism fears).

At the opening of the novel, we are immediately faced with the text as the ground of the child's entrance into authority; and this text is more monumental, more authoritative, than one might normally expect:

Dyer took his scale from the plans he had already drawn up and, as always, he used a small knife with a piece of frayed rope wrapped around its ivory handle. For three weeks he laboured over this

wooden prototype and, as by stages he fitted the spire upon the tower, we may imagine the church itself rising in Spitalfields. But there were six other churches to be built also, and once again the architect took his short brass rule, his pair of compasses, and the thick paper which he used for his draughts. (*Hawksmoor*, 1)

The adult controls the relationship between the child's fragile thought, the organisation or ordering performed in the text, and the reality on to which this order is imposed – between black lead, ink, and finally stone. Yet this control is never perfect; in *Hawksmoor*, the text is both more real, and the real more textual, than usual: the narrative itself is especially close to the author, to his living and breathing body, as when the preface initiates the reader's position of bodily closeness to Dyer ("yet now, for a moment, there is only his heavy breathing as he bends over his papers" (1)), a position maintained throughout by the intimacy of his narrative (somewhere between stream of consciousness and the maniacal aides of a Marlovian antihero)<sup>15</sup> and by his frequent references to body parts and bodily function. Breath - life – is bound into the page, which is therefore no longer dead. Both the survival of the subject beyond his own mortality and the possibility of authority are at stake as the adult bids the child write yet tries to control the pen himself. Yet whereas the body is conceived as singular and the text as a mediating representation between the subject's mind and the external reality it promises to ultimately re-order, the text now *takes the place* of the body's singularity – but without the body's mortality (just as, of course, the churches function as monumental tombs, replacing the decaying body with a more perfect body of stone). The symbolic order condensed in the text is imagined as wholly subsuming the subject, even the subject who has created the text.

As Dyer admits, there is always the possibility of his being in the 'wrong suit', of creating a merely fantastic order – yet the paradox (and, perhaps, the reason for Dyer's good cheer) is that if the fantasy holds sufficient power for the subject, it doesn't matter (rather as for Mrs Thatcher, 'conviction' – that is, an internal sense of the order of things - admitted no mediation with reality). Murder, of course, is a final assertion of fantasy over reality – it forcibly aligns reality with the 'order' of the



subject who commits the murder, and it destroys the other subjects who might think, or imagine, differently. Yet here it is also conceived as redemptive for the murder victim – for the child.

By offering an alternative spectral existence, Dyer produces the fantasy of penetration without exposure, without risk, for the sake of which the killing of the child is in fact redemptive: “They sacrificed Boys since it was their Opinion that Humane life [...] could not be secured unless a vyrgyn Boy suffered in stead” (21). The killing of the virgin prevents the loss of the object (the boy) to the subject (Dyer); both are re-constituted as a single subject, in the collapsing movement considered by Freud as the primary project of religious feeling (*Civilisation and its Discontents*, 8). Indeed, the objective itself as that which is Other to the subject is banished by Dyer, hence the series of real churches in which his murders take places finally collapses into a fictional church.

In 1980s London, detective Hawksmoor investigates the serial murders in and around Dyer's churches. Whilst pursuing his investigation, he faces pressures from police colleagues to use new algorithm-driven technologies promising greater predictability, even pre-emptive knowledge, of crime – an apparatus of modernity targeted by the police towards basically superstitious fears: of paedophiles, of the loss of control over urban space, and of social outsiders – the homeless, homosexuals, and ‘feral’ children. Statistical and automated prediction of crime here replaces political attention to human problems, and simultaneously eradicates the future as a source of threat (echoing Arendt’s claim that in modernity, politics tends to be reduced to mere management of the social, a form of management that dissolves private into public (69)). Ackroyd presents these technologies, deployed by an authoritarian and homophobic Thatcherite police force (*Hawksmoor*, 110), as the successors to Wren’s Enlightenment. Like Hollinghurst and McEwan, Ackroyd targets the Thatcherite insistence on the revelation of a human nature that must necessarily be located in the child, and simultaneous demand that this nature must be set free – a process enabled by the acceleration of the capitalist economy and removal of restrictions upon it – yet even this ‘setting free’ must itself be restricted by the requirement to be predictable, reproducible (as the detectives’ new computer

systems promise). Dyer's refusal to be visible (and therefore predictable), his refusal to allow the child to enter into reproducibility, and his insistence on an alternative vision of immortality, all indicate modes of authority repressed in the Thatcherite paradox.

For Ackroyd, both Thatcherism and the Enlightenment participate in an ahistorical fantasy of controlling, even eliminating, the future: a fantasy that ultimately dismisses death itself as any significant rupture in the individual's mastery of the world. Death (which Arendt saw as a predicate for the kind of immortality achieved through political action) is the final and most necessary condition for a politics of difference; it demands attention to a world from which the subject will be absent; it requires the conscious conception of the state of unconsciousness – or in other words, the representation of that which cannot be recognised. Hence the police computer, attacking temporality as a limitation on recognition, aims to also eliminate death itself, alongside ensuring that the child is never exposed to a disruptive or dangerous experience.

It becomes evident to the reader that Dyer, through his diabolical scheme to make the churches a kind of permanent *text* to overcome mortality and time, is himself responsible for the 1980s child disappearances, a once-abducted child returning to haunt the ideological heirs to Enlightenment rationalism. Meanwhile, Detective Hawksmoor becomes increasingly detached from his professional investigation as he gradually suspects the ghostly truth; he becomes ever-closer to the figure for whose 'true' name he substitutes. This finally results in a union between Dyer and Hawksmoor at the novel's close in the Church of Little St Hugh, named for the child saint apocryphally murdered by Jews and the only one of *Hawksmoor's* churches to be wholly fictional, textual, rather than erected by the historical Hawksmoor. Here, in a culminating killing, the two men dissolve into one another and the text becomes spoken in a single voice, authoritative yet, curiously, finally identifying with the child in the closing words: 'And I am a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity' (217). (It's suggestive that Arendt contrasted "eternity" to "immortality", seeing the latter as political and the former as apolitical and atemporal; the key difference is the acknowledgement of death (Arendt 17-21)). A

new version of the child has been produced, again, by the child's own disappearance.

Ever since his childhood experience of his mother's death, Dyer's life work is simultaneously a reaction to the trauma of witnessing death and an attempt to gain authority over language, and this is where the novel's parodic representation of Theory, as well as Thatcherism, becomes most apparent. For Dyer, 'common' language displays the subject's lack of mastery; when the subject speaks publicly, he forfeits both the form and the substance of his words to time: a forfeiture to the past (from where the words originate) and to the future (where, as the distorted phrases recurring between the 1711 and 1980s narratives indicate, the words will be misused). For Dyer, 'common' language displays the subject's non-identity with itself - the splitting, in fact, of subject and object, the maternal loss at the root of the child's entrance into sexuality. Ackroyd makes this splitting explicitly and especially violent in Dyer's personal history, where it appears as the death of his parents.

In *Hawksmoor*, the common people's discourse is saturated with cliché, proverb, and rhyme, with speakers ignorant to the point of unconsciousness about the origins of their own words; yet it is only by attending to these distortions, making them visible, that one can seek to recover the original, the source of authority (hence our knowledge that detective Hawksmoor's name refers to the distortion in which the architect Hawksmoor has been twisted into Dyer cues us immediately in this authoritative position). For Dyer, truth is obscure, difficult, and available only in code, the ability to interpret which is the basis of his aggressively isolated authority. (Suggestively, Ackroyd's own fictional and 'non-fictional' writing often foregrounds his knowledge of the hidden origins of places and of the etymologies of words).

Dyer seeks mastery of past and future through access to a hidden language at the centre of the universe, one not disorderly and alienating (as the existence of death and desire demands) but rather fundamentally ordered, and one he can speak through giving it architectural expression. Doing so gives him an advantage over the common masses, a means of reading the world, which is in fact the most precious

thing he can pass on to the child (at the opening, Dyer is doing precisely this for his young apprentice). It is this orderly language that is identified at the novel's ending with the total mastery of time; to achieve this, death itself (which Arendt suggests is the basis of politics), is being eliminated here, as too is desire (Dyer's murders substitute for the gay encounters through which they are understood in the minds of the police force (110)).

At the novel's ending, language, as the medium for authority, is still present but only as a kind of paradoxically silent language: "And when they spoke they spoke with one voice [...] their words were my own but not my own [...] they were watching one another silently" (217). The traumatic splitting between the subject and the crowd in childhood is healed by the discovery of a unitary, knowable authority at the origins of language and of the world.

There is a suggestive parallel here with *Don't Look Now*, where John Baxter also turns detective in the final part of the story, similarly located around a set of derelict churches. Baxter is killed (in a murder similarly characterised by silence and by the collapse of time) both because he has refused to relinquish his rationalist distinction between the living and the dead (and so ignores the warnings that come from his dead daughter via a seer) and paradoxically because he relinquishes this at the wrong moment, following a being that has the appearance of his daughter. Hawksmoor becomes Dyer's final victim because, in acknowledging and following Dyer's presence, he too relinquishes the distinction between the living and the dead, prompting their euphoric union – a union of two adult males that oddly (but now not so oddly) results in their becoming, in the singular, a "child again".

The patterned order of silent witnesses at the end of *Hawksmoor* echoes Kermode's assertion, in *The Genesis of Secrecy*, of privileged and secret knowledge as lying at the root of a western literary and critical tradition, planted there by Christianity. Dyer – like Ackroyd – has, in fact, applied this tradition to his own traumatised experience of a certain moment in modernity, from which he has derived truths of which the masses – the outsiders – are ignorant. As Kermode suggests, this has always been – as the explicitly religious origins of the phenomenon

indicate – about overcoming mortality. It is his “dying generations of [insider] readers” (2) who are brought together, in the religious “oceanic” spirit identified by Freud, at the close of *Hawksmoor*, united by their shared access to the truth. Kermode argued that the “operations [of hermeneutics] may require the professional exercise of stealth or violence” (1). Reading Dyer, we might find this prescient.

Dyer’s specifically visual operation of power – he sees those who cannot see him - recalls Virilio’s identification of the individual who sees others whilst concealing himself as a key figure in the development of modernity (in warfare, but also in the expansion and centralisation of political and social power). This has some application to Dyer’s mission; the churches are in fact built to enable him to (continue to) see even where and when he lacks bodily presence, and to use sight as a means for both violent control and controlled violence.

The collapse of architectural and technological power into visual desire that Ackroyd produces here links important strands of late twentieth-century literary Theory, from Virilio to Lacan; and the power to be present when absent is not only permitted by the computer technology in which detective Hawksmoor finds his colleagues placing such faith in the 1980s – it is also enabled by the much older idea of the spectre. Edelman, building on Žižek describes the powerful attraction of the fantasy of the subject who is present even during his absence: “To be there *always*, though unperceived, to inhabit the space of perception as such and thus to become the witness to one’s absence, one’s disembodiment” (*No Future*, 34) is, he suggests, a fantasy at the heart of religious promises of immortality; it is also central to Dyer’s own version of this promise.

Here Dyer’s murders of the children of Thatcher-era London become visible as the rescue of the child not from privatisation but from the publicising of the ‘private’ individual. Dyer rescues the children from this ‘public humiliation’ (of the sort Thomas Hill, and the tramp, experience) and simultaneously from the requirement to enter into adulthood and ultimately to reproduce; they are rescued for privacy and the privilege of intimate desire - the privilege and intimacy

conferred, as we have noted, by and through the text itself. Dyer retrieves the notion of the private as that which can be represented (in code) but which remains not available for general recognition.

Yet the greatest irony in *Hawksmoor*, as we may be beginning to suspect, is that Ackroyd has nevertheless made Dyer's project a direct, if perverted, parallel to its Enlightenment and Thatcherite opponents. Whilst the Enlightenment seeks a totally predictable future, Dyer's satanic vision, for all its ostensible difference and its claim to recognise those things politically favoured fools like Wren cannot, aims for exactly the same thing: mastery over time, and the collapse of past and future into a single present. Dyer's is yet another project for No Future, designed to end the mundane world of the crowd and of the temporary political order in favour of correct recognition of an absolute and atemporal authority. Here *Hawksmoor's* sustained appropriation of psychoanalytic imagery, to serve its interest in childhood trauma and language (as already observed by several critical readers, like Link, Hocksoon, and Taube) is significant.

Link, who explores *Hawksmoor's* engagement with psychoanalysis, argues that whilst the novel does indeed provide a resistance towards Thatcherite rationalism, this is complicated and rendered ambiguous precisely by the parallels between its rationalist and anti-rational elements. We should add to this how Ackroyd audaciously draws attention to the Lacanian and Thatcherite forces in the novel as projects of reading with shared characteristics. This should be read, I believe, as a parody of critical reading after Lacan. Dyer not only lives a Lacanian life, he reads that life in a Lacanian fashion:

Why do we not believe the very Infants to be the Heirs of Hell and Children of the Devil as soon as they are disclos'd to the World? I declare that I build my Churches firmly on this Dunghil Earth and with a full Conception of Degenerated Nature [...] there is a mad-drunken Catch, Hey ho! The Devil is dead! If that be true, I have been in the wrong Suit all my life. (*Hawksmoor*, 9)

This bizarre declaration utilises Lacanian concepts including the alienation of the child (in the image of 'disclosure' to the world); the object ("Dungil"; "Degenerated" – Link also notes (520) the importance of the object in *Hawksmoor*); language (the "Catch"); lack and the phallus (the building of the churches). Above all, though, the ironic self-awareness of the final words, the mischievous suggestion that Dyer's 'Suit' works as a symbolic order where the coherence of the order takes primacy over reality, confirms the Lacanian parody at work. Ackroyd had directly quoted, and discussed at length, Lacan's statement that "it is only the signifier that is important, not the signified" in *Notes for a New Culture* (111), and in *Hawksmoor* he translates this interest from theory to queer parody.

Dyer's project, based as it is on knowledge of supposedly originary symbols, symbols he in turn repeats in the form of his churches, further parodies Lacan's suggestion that language and the Symbolic exist before the subject's birth (and therefore will also survive his death). Ackroyd implies that in asserting the totalising nature of the Symbolic, Lacan unintentionally opens the possibility of an authoritarian reading of the world, one that removes the subject undertaking the reading from his own subjugation to death (and therefore to the child). Although Lacan conceived his work as "Copernican", undermining the human subject's mastery and stability, and sought to avoid making the symbolic into "only a re-appearance, under a mask, of God" (Lacan 35), Ackroyd equates his thought with religion with almost comical directness, and equates it with the mastery sought (and achieved) by Dyer.

The irony of this is confirmed in how the child in *Hawksmoor* acts a version of the Lacanian Real, for there is something within the child (as Dyer's own childhood, indeed, suggests) that resists the masterful knowledge of the adult and thereby resists incorporation into the Symbolic; the child visibly embodies the adult's own death, reminding him of the Real that alienates his consciousness from his own body. Yet Ackroyd makes a sick joke of this by demonstrating that incorporation of the Real into the Symbolic can, in fact, take place if one turns to the 'corpse' latent in 'incorporation', and kills the child. The murdered child, deprived of the disruptive difference that risks emerging from his subjectivity, becomes a mere object, one

wholly available to the symbolic order rehearsed by the murderer; they do not read, but are available for reading. Hence at *Hawksmoor*'s ending, the narrator finally recognises himself as a "child again" only when there is nothing left to recognise but the representation itself – a perfect reading, at the cost of the real (or Real) child.

Such a perfect reading emerges as a collapse of author, character, and potentially (it is implied) reader too. It is thus only at the novel's close that an assertive and unequivocal "I" appears in the narration (despite the self-assertion of Dyer) and this is no longer in Dyer's first-person voice nor in the third-person account of detective Hawksmoor. It seems instead to be Ackroyd's 'own' voice, saying "I am a child again". Dyer is, as this implies, at least partially a projection of his author, who sees true authority in all-encompassing but secret knowledge that is above and indifferent to the daily business of the world.

Ackroyd's increasing solidification of this project can be observed through the changes in focus of his novels; whilst his use of a kind of magical historicism is fairly constant, there are nevertheless significant changes of theme and scope in his writing career. In his first novel, *The Great Fire of London* (1982), his imagining of a return of Little Dorrit to early 1980s London implicitly critiques Thatcher's rhetorical return to 'Victorian values', and dwells upon the marginalised groups of the time, especially radical leftists, gays and non-whites. Yet even here there was already a highly ambiguous attitude towards the value of any kind of political engagement – or even with engagement with the contemporary as anything other than that which can be resolved through mystical resolution with the past. After meeting a group of radical young people living with an academic who delivers an extended diatribe on how early-Thatcherite London has resurrected the social conditions of the Dickensian city in only slightly subtler form, the main character, a film director, muses –

He felt oddly threatened by this group of young people, and yet at the same time vaguely sympathetic towards them. Despite their foolishness, they had a point. Perhaps he would give the film more of a documentary look. (*Great Fire*, 84)



The same 'vagueness' can be discerned, perhaps, in *Hawksmoor* – Ackroyd presents Thatcherism (and the Enlightenment) as ignorant and cruel, but he is highly ambivalent about whether anything outside the intellectual and literary sphere, anything *political*, should be done about this. In Ackroyd's later career, the sophistication of the 1980s novels gradually descends into the cultural nationalism of *First Light* (1989) and *English Music* (1992), before Ackroyd abandons the novel entirely as a vehicle for this thinking, which reaches its apogee in the deeply conservative *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (2002). Remarkably, Ackroyd himself claims not to view the change from New Criticism to historicism as particularly significant; in interview he remarked that, "the contrast between humanism and modernism doesn't strike me as probably being very important now. I think there are other forces, other contexts [...] the London sensibility, the visionary sensibility, the English Catholic sensibility" (218-219). This hesitant dismissal can be explained, I suggest, by the fact that Ackroyd's 'historicism' here is in fact just as ahistorical as the former theoretical stance; it is about 'history' as access to a timeless utopia known through 'timeless' traditions or "sensibilities", much like the vision of *Hawksmoor's* ending.

More generously, we can acknowledge that despite Ackroyd's failings, he establishes a powerful counter-narrative to Thatcherite 'rationalism', where the *revenants* of what rationalist economics have attempted to dispose of re-emerge, in uncanny sites of intersection between embodiments of ideology and the real geography of 1980s London. Ackroyd queers Thatcherism's equally simplistic claim to a retrieval and restoration of a pre-existing, constant reality in its own moment, exposing its own ahistoricity, its profane dismissal of the significance of death itself as marking any significant rupture in the world. Yet Ackroyd's conclusion is, ultimately – and like his antihero's churches – an authoritarian construction that uses the child's death to assert the primacy of the disembodied intellect over the chaotic world of death, desire, and growing up. One thing being lost here, of course, is the possibility of a sexuality – and, behind that, of a private life – being represented politically even in the public sphere where it goes unrecognised.

*Hawksmoor* locates the child's drive and capacity for creativity, troped in the theme of building, in that private zone. The power of Thatcherism's political offer similarly depends, I suggested, on its appeal to the desire of the male to release his creativity, to 'make' money, with the quasi-maternal Thatcher symbolically castrating the literally paternalistic post-war order that is assumed to deny that creativity. Yet creativity, if we accept the accounts given here, inevitably arises in response to conflict and chaos, to the trauma of an uncertain world, to the disruption between past and future. To echo Dyer's declaration once again: "I couldn't weep then but I can build now"; creativity initially emerges as an act of desire, desire to project the self beyond the body. This is, of course, exactly why Dyer builds; yet his buildings are also sites of theory and mastery, and authored texts that extend authority through violence. In his case, then, creativity has been perverted by an attempt to eradicate the conditions that gave rise to it, and the creative object (the building or text) is no longer a medium for the creative transgression between public and private realms, but a site for the reduction of the Other subject – here, the child – to an object, a dead body to be absorbed into the subject.

In becoming spectral, achieving a mobility of consciousness independent of the physical and mortal body (a powerful fantasy in various formulations, of course) Dyer has achieved the ability, like Faustus whose name he takes for a period, the ability to 'fly' anywhere in the world, to see and experience at will. Yet (indeed rather like Marlowe's Faustus) he is drawn back to the same place, and his influence is ultimately highly localised (and Ackroyd insists throughout his career, of course, on the absolute importance of the local, of the specific place). Ultimately, then, the subject's desire for infinite, unconstrained, creative mobility has turned into a certain narrowness – the spectre roots himself exclusively in particular places, and ultimately a textual place, as though the ultimate locality is within the pages of the book itself.

It is not too fanciful to suggest that this has a parallel in how Thatcherism, which in one sense should be a manifestation of an entirely universal theory, the neoliberal theory of the destiny of mankind towards the free market, was in practice a highly narrow project, one deeply suspicious and exclusive of foreigners literal and

figurative. This is to say that when these projects offer an indulgence of the subject's individual creativity but then turn aggressively against the chaotic world from which that creativity arose, and develop an authoritarian formulation that (actually or symbolically) adopts a paranoid and murderous stance towards those who undermine or oppose its logic, they inevitably turn antagonistic towards the creativity on which their original attraction was predicated.

For both Ackroyd and for his narrator, their ambition makes the child a problem to be resolved, to be 'fixed' in the way James' Governess sought to fix Miles. For in indulging the ideal of a spectral, endlessly penetrative yet disembodied self with a masterful relation to reality as a whole, the child is a physical reminder of the incomplete and uncertain course (as Dyer himself admits) of reality, Bersani's trauma of "uncompleted endings". Yet as the Thatcherite capitalist might put it, a problem is also an opportunity: mastery of the child, as paradoxical and elusive as we might expect that to be, will affirm the permanence of the 'I', of the authoritative vision. This can be achieved, as Ackroyd achieves it, by 'disappearing' the child from the real into the textual, into the book that bears two names; one Ackroyd's own and the other (the title, *Hawksmoor*) a joke whose meaning only he can reveal.

Even in the most (literally) violent attempt to reach outside Thatcherism's narrow and philistine approach to representation, we have found ourselves, Ackroyd ambiguously but inevitably indicates, trapped within the desire for stability and coherence from which it first arose. The effect of this is to draw attention to *reading* as potentially such an operation of power, and the demand posed is not to offer a historicist conviction of Thatcherism for its arrogance and authoritarianism (as justified as such charges might be), but to examine the conditions that turn the disruptive potential of childhood desire into a desire for mastery of time and the absence of politics. In doing this, we might usefully follow Arendt's belief that the private is simultaneously psychological (the need to go unseen and unheard, unrecognised) and material (to be based in the physical space ultimately controlled by the political processes of representation).

## 6. The child in time

Thatcherism, we've found, seeks to 'disappear' the child as the embodiment of time, and of the private which (antagonistic towards Thatcherite 'privatisation') demands acknowledgement of the difference between the public and private realms, the latter impenetrable and disorderly, a space of desire and of death – but also of ambition and creativity. This is the space of the child, in whom Hollinghurst, McEwan and Ackroyd have each found the persistence of a disruptive desire, a capacity for difference that is (following Arendt), both private at source and political in effect. The difference between source and effect is the difference constitutive of time itself as the object of politics; it is the space between a *reading* of the world and a change to its representation, either political or literary. We can locate the child, therefore, precisely in this gap, and conclude that this accounts for the persistence and centrality of her disappearance in literary representations of Thatcherism.

Hollinghurst, McEwan and Ackroyd place this scenario in a historically specific set of circumstances prevailing from c.1979 to the present, when Thatcherism proclaimed an end to the post-war future and identified the future instead with an essentialist past. Ackroyd both reiterated and exceeded this account not only by locating Thatcherism's origins in earlier discourses of rationalism, but also in suggesting that Thatcherism as a *reading* of the world has parallels in other forms of reading, even perhaps (as his theoretical references imply) our own as critical readers. Even here, Ackroyd implies, the desire for mastery, for the elimination of time and politics, is always at risk of erupting. As Rose said, we need to consider what we seek in our own readings.

This provokes the question of whether it is possible – either for politics or for literary criticism – to read in a way that represents more than we can recognise; that represents, in fact, the never wholly perceptible interests of the child who will survive us. If it is possible, it would probably demand that we too are 'in time' in a dual sense: in reading within the terms of temporal political history, but simultaneously attending to the disturbances within that history when the failure of

representation and recognition to coincide produces the disappearance of the child – who, unlike at the end of *Hawksmoor*, is both fictional and all too real, both object and subject of reading.

If, then, the implicit critique of Theory, found both in *Hawksmoor* itself and in my reading of Ackroyd's own ambiguous position in his novel, sounds like the conventional accusation that the Left turned to Theory and representation when it lost the material capacity to engage in political change, this needs important qualification. We do, indeed, need to turn to history and to real politics, as these representations of Thatcherism suggest. However, we need to do so not because the matters to which Theory, particularly psychoanalytic Theory seeks to attend – desire, ambition, death and the child herself – are unserious or unimportant, or because the real political needs for the future are obvious, but rather the opposite: because we cannot see and read the future through the child, other than through violence towards the real child. This is not, therefore, the typical criticism of the effect of Theory, made by Terry Eagleton amongst others, as a deviation from the real politics towards the politics of identity. On the contrary, this rather suggests (and here both Arendt's theory and Ackroyd's historical awareness are helpful) that modern politics has been based around identity since well before the 1980s, even though the markers of twentieth-century time in the 'post-war' and the supposed 'end of the post-war' for various reasons intensified the demand for identity, for a figure available for recognition. Such demands persist not because of Theory or even of Thatcherism in themselves, but rather because the anxieties and attractions to which they respond are psychologically real and thus historically persistent.

There is, nevertheless, an imperative to change politics, including the politics of reading, here: this is the imperative to no longer base political representation on recognition, on identity. Rather, as Arendt argued, we need to accept the necessity of the private space and private life for political representation – something which is known to exist but yet cannot, by definition, be presented and made available visually. This particularly applies, as the ironies of Thatcherism show, to the child in growing up and exercising her creativity and ambition.

The texts considered here suggest that we should not extend access to representation to the child on the basis, and prerequisite, of the child demonstrating some set of essential values, qualities or truths. Such a mode of predictability is in conflict with the child's ambition, with her stake in the future, even when (as in Thatcherism) it tries to align with it. The equality of pleasure indicated by the role of images in *The Line of Beauty* hints that such attempts at prediction are false, and cannot last. Which aesthetic objects, then, and which texts, should be made available for the child's education – since Clause 28 attempted to control exactly this? The readings offered here suggest that precisely those texts and objects Clause 28 attempted to remove from schools should be those provided to the child: those which allow her to imagine herself as other than the child. Only through extending access to such things (and as the case of the market hall, the car and the lads in *The Line of Beauty* showed, controlling of access to pleasure is fundamental to authority in practice) will political representation itself ultimately, though not in any selectively predictable way, also be expanded.

Although Thatcherism may have aimed for atemporality, it was in fact itself a historical phenomenon; although it may have had great cultural longevity, other phenomena within political culture will increasingly supplant its real, and perhaps even even its perceived, importance. Yet analysing its literary representations, and their odd common interest in child disappearance, exposes some broader implications for the relation between the child, time, history and politics. It is on these that we shall build in the next chapter, turning to the works of Kazuo Ishiguro.

## Chapter 4: Death, Politics, Aesthetics: Kazuo Ishiguro

Throughout the preceding chapters, we have observed a number of persistent attempts in recent cultural and political history to eradicate the movement of time in favour of an essential present - attempts represented, sometimes advanced, through the disappearance of the child and the eradication of private life.

This kind of private life is consistently both associated with the future and located in the child – not the fetishised image of The Child (as described by Edelman) but the real child who is always growing up, always becoming different to herself and therefore always, as McEwan proposed, “in time”. The child’s private life involves a contamination of the present and the future, one produced through the child’s ambition, imagination, and knowledge of the adult’s forthcoming death. Real politics, we’ve come to contend, itself depends on this private life. This is the argument crucially made by Hannah Arendt, and it is one that has been urgently re-engaged with in recent years by theorists such as Wolfgang Issig (in *Privacy: A Manifesto*, 2008), Raymond Wacks (*Privacy: A Very Short Introduction*, 2010) and Josh Cohen (*The Private Life*, 2013). In this thesis, the dependency of politics upon privacy has become evident even, or especially, where political projects laying particular claim to both reality and the private (like Thatcherism) have in fact attempted to abolish private life and thus, paradoxically, abolish meaningful politics – politics as the possibility of change.

The novels of Kazuo Ishiguro dramatise this association of the private with the child and, through her, with the future. They use this to implicitly demand, as we shall find, representation without the precondition of recognition.

Ishiguro’s characters also repeatedly approach death as the ultimate form of privacy (and thus, paradoxically, the ultimate guarantee of politics). For these characters, the child’s embodiment of a future beyond the adult’s death typically does not immediately produce consolation, but rather trauma. Various authoritarian regimes respond to this trauma by attempting to eliminate death, precisely in order to abolish the future and disappear the child. As we’ll now readily anticipate,

following the previous chapters, this fantastic political project becomes apparent through an attempt to eradicate the future and disappear (or kill) the child. This is a politics, carried out within institutions, paradoxically based on a fantasy of the abolition of institutions and the ending of politics. I will go on to argue that the ethical implications of the child and authority in Ishiguro demand a renewed attention to institutions as sites where the relation between private life and political representation is managed.

Whereas in the last chapter we considered representations of the child in Thatcher-era Britain as a historically specific location in which a contest over the child and authority played out, for Ishiguro the issue of history remains central but is not limited by correspondence to specific times and places (indeed, Ishiguro frequently presents such correspondences only to undermine them in the most disturbing fashion). The authoritarian regimes depicted by Ishiguro seek to produce a child out of time in a dual sense – a child both located in a fantasy of natural order (echoing the deep cultural tradition, described by Kuhn, of locating the child in an Edenic and atemporal place (66)), and a child gruesomely ‘out of time’ as she faces the threat of imminent death. Ishiguro’s work is replete with such ironic and uncanny responses to conventional expectations for the revelation of meaning.

Ishiguro identifies this scenario at work both in a specific set of psychological tactics - used by individuals to defend themselves against their own mortality and their loss of authority – and simultaneously as at the heart of his uncanny version of post-war politics. For Ishiguro (to echo my earlier reading of Marlowe), politics – including authoritarian politics - is always in the mind, but the mind is inside a body that the authorities can, in the final instance, destroy. Whether they do so or not is conditional on whether the individual can present some interior essence or value for recognition by the authorities.

The desired receptiveness, and feared recalcitrance, of the child’s mind for education is, of course, once again at issue here. This all ultimately produces a symbolic and practical question of reading: Both the adult’s need to teach the child



to read the world, and his desire to read the child and so secure the world (and the future).

Ishiguro's novels in crucial respects respond to, anticipate, and parody their own reading - and the politics behind those readings. The "ethical imperative is Ishiguro's signature" (Groes and Lewis 2), and his awareness of, and willingness to play with, the ethical complexity involved in the reading of his own work is central to my arguments here. For Ishiguro, 'real' politics and the politics of reading are ambiguously but closely related; he suggests that in the private time and space in which we read, something of value and potential practical importance can be produced, and this is the time and space we institutionalise as 'education', or the school, for the child. This productivity or creativity is not necessarily predictable, though; it is not available for anticipation, or on demand for the adult's gaze. For this reason, because the child's private and creative life is as likely to frustrate the authorities as to satisfy them, neither the time nor space for this private life – nor, it turns out, for life at all - can be taken for granted. The question of the child's political representation is necessarily an issue of institutions, of the organisation of time and space for her education.

It is, therefore, through reading Ishiguro that I shall complete my own reading of the child and authority in contemporary literature. In doing so, I will consider Ishiguro's texts in thematic rather than chronological order, whilst nevertheless paying attention to their development of the author's political thought, and to the responsiveness of later works to the readings of earlier texts. In doing so, I will both draw upon and critique the substantial, and still expanding, field of scholarship on Ishiguro, notably work by Walkowitz, Bain, Black, and Sim.

## **1. Death and Authority: Ishiguro's Children**

Freud, explaining "why it is so hard for mankind to be happy", cites "the three sources of human sufferings, namely, the superior force of nature, the disposition to decay of our bodies, and the inadequacy of our methods of regulating human relations in the family, the community, and the state" (*Civilisation and its Discontents*, 43). The matter of "regulating human relations", the realm of

authority, is, according to Freud (so often behind or in the margins of the critical readings of the child and authority referenced here so far), conditioned by the existence of death – a death perpetually risked by the “superior force of nature” and eventually guaranteed by our biological “disposition”. Freud makes two important propositions here: that the authorities regulating life are inadequate; and that this inadequacy concerns the fact of death in some way. If this is correct, it suggests that an ethical authority – for Freud, implicitly an authority that expands human happiness and reduces suffering – could only be one that somehow becomes more adequate to its task through recognising its own inadequacy; I shall argue, from reading Ishiguro and following the preceding chapters, that this should include recognising its own inability to recognise.

More immediately, though, we can recognise that Freud’s formulation concerns the child. It implies the dependency of authority on an anticipatory faith in the child, conveying the desire to recognise what we, as mortal adults, ultimately cannot: the adult whom the child will become. In the child, we want to recognise our own reproduction. Ishiguro, rather like Freud, exposes a crisis in this faith in the child that results only in more frantic attempts to restore it – ultimately leading to the attempted erasure of death itself, which makes the child in one sense curiously unnecessary. Yet in Ishiguro, the same imperative also demands the permanent accessibility of the ‘child within’ the adult, as a paradoxical means for the adult to eliminate all traces of the actual childhood condition of incompleteness, of always passing from the past into the future prematurely and without achieving a unified present. Thus when death is abolished, the child becomes (just as we saw with Thatcherism) an unlikely (and often uncanny) marker of permanence.

As a historically important tool for projecting authority beyond the death of the individual author, the text plays a crucial role in the authorities’ treatment of the child. If the text is normally part of the education that, in teaching the child to read, also makes the child available to be read by the adult, what are we to make of texts that frustrate or disrupt precisely this operation?

As we saw earlier, in the final paragraphs of the 'Nagasaki' narrative in *A Pale View of Hills*, the act of child murder is a non-event. It takes place, as it were, 'between the lines', a vagueness that itself structurally echoes the implication of violence, in that the child can be written in or out of existence with worrying ease. Like the bad dreams that haunt Etsuko, the child has become a subjective, or textual, problem – even, Ishiguro dangerously hints, when she's still a 'real' child, albeit an unknowable one, recalled from the past by an unreliable narrator.

In (perhaps) killing Mariko, Etsuko is attempting to destroy some excessive demand that the future places upon her, a demand felt in the body. (This is exposed, as we noted, in her finally adopting the voice of Sachiko, collapsing the 'real' child Mariko, external to Etsuko's body, with the baby gestating inside her, the foetus constantly overburdened with representation of an essential Japan or, alternately, of the new globalised world). Here it is the unseen and unrecognisable factor in the child, the child who appears to both demand and frustrate recognition, that must be eliminated from representation. In this elimination time itself is stopped, because death is – in the attempt to exile it – incorporated into the regulation of life: As Etsuko puts it when contemplating the image of her daughter's death, it is "possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things" (54). When mortality as fundamental rupture between past and present is erased, an eternal present is created, one where the difference between recognition and representation – the fundamental basis for politics in the true sense, we might say following Arendt – is eradicated. This is literally the case in *Pale View*, where past and present are recounted (and thus experienced by the reader) simultaneously, and where the dead girls of different periods merge into one another.

In seeking to transcend death, Ishiguro indicates, one becomes governed by it in life. Everything in the world is brought 'within' the subject in this situation, but the life that remains to that subject is an empty one. This is precisely the situation in which the elderly Etsuko finds herself; and yet it is the child, despite her best efforts, that continues to disrupt this state of affairs. The child is a kind of persistent object that frustrates attempts at perfect incorporation into the symbolic order, something

that might usefully be read alongside Arendt's arguments on the object's importance for politics:

Under the conditions of a common world, reality is not guaranteed primarily by the 'common nature' of all men who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of position [...] notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object. If the sameness of this object can no longer be discerned, no common nature of men [...] can prevent the destruction of the common world [...] men have become entirely private, that is, they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others [...] They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times. (*The Human Condition*, 57-58)

The child is poised between the 'common nature' of, in Edelman's phrase, "reproductive futurism", and its role as the persistent object demanding a common world, reminding the adults that they will die and that the child herself will inherit, thus disturbing the singularity of experience by, paradoxically, reminding the adult of the final guarantee of singularity: his mortality. Framing this chapter with both Freud and Arendt, then, a common concern with the difficulty of sustaining a public realm adequate to cope with the disruptions provoked by the child, and by the unknown future she signifies, will inform our reading here. To have an authority adequate to the child, in fact, and thus in a peculiar sense (as Freud hinted) adequate to its own inadequacy, is the imperative Ishiguro presents for us.

## **2. Authority and Death (in Venice)**

Ishiguro's short stories in *Nocturnes* (2009) meditate on the implication of art in the inevitable death of the artist (or author), the anticipation of which is expressed through the tropes of the evening, the dying part of the day (revived from his earlier novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1986)). "Nocturne" refers to both a musical composition and to a night scene, naming this symbolic connection between death and the text.

In *Nocturnes*' first story, "Crooner", an itinerant musician working in the café orchestras of Venice encounters a childhood hero, an ageing American singer in the Tony Bennett/Dean Martin mould called Tony Gardner, visiting Venice with his wife. Janeck, the narrator, enthusiastically recounts how Gardner's records consoled his mother during his grim childhood in an unnamed eastern-block country, leading Gardner to unexpectedly enlist him for a favour: together, they will surprise Mrs Gardner with a serenade from a gondola below the Gardners' hotel balcony. Soon, though, Janeck is shocked to learn that the purpose of the performance is actually to mark the long-married couple's separation:

"Mr Gardner, are you saying you and Mrs Gardner have to separate because of your comeback?"

"Look at the other guys, the guys who came back successfully [...] Every single one of them, they've remarried." [...]

"I still don't get it, Mr Gardner. This place you and Mrs Gardner come from can't be so different from everywhere else. That's why, Mr Gardner, that's why these songs you've been singing all these years, they make sense for people everywhere. Even where I used to live." (*Nocturnes* 30-31)

This peculiar separation is prompted by anticipation of death: "She needs to get out now, while she has time. Time to find love again" (31) says Gardner of his wife. Suddenly, though, the notion of "getting out" - of autonomy – is transferred to another death framing the story:

"Your mother. I guess she never got out."

I thought about it, then said quietly: "No, Mr Gardner. She never got out. She didn't live long enough to see the changes in our country."

"That's too bad [...] Too bad she didn't get out. I don't want that to happen to my Lindy." (31-32)

This asserts a startling equivalence between the promise of political autonomy in which one woman did not survive to participate and the other woman's freedom to leave her apparently happy marriage to further her career (and Tony Gardner's freedom to do the same). Janeck's enthusiasm for the songs as supposed instances of universal language "make[ing] sense for people everywhere" underpins his sense of political utopianism;<sup>16</sup> there is an equivalence drawn, too, between aesthetic and political representation, with a strong implication that both concern death in some way.

For Janeck, the music enables an absolute connection between singer and listeners; it is a window on the soul, giving access to an intersubjective authenticity, and a personal authority: "Your music helped my mother through those times, it must have helped millions of others" (24). The connection between author and reader (or singer and listener) literally enables the afterlife of the parent in the child, through the aesthetic representation it provides. Tony Gardner, however, is the sceptic, dissatisfied by this 'authenticity'; he wants instead to make a 'comeback' predicated on an anticipation of the death he intends to ward off by re-marrying to a younger woman - which itself, in ironic juxtaposition with Janeck and his mother, re-opens the possibility of a child, of Gardner insuring himself against death through procreation as representation. This story ironically parodies the trope of the child as text.

When Gardner himself meets the child that his texts have in part created, he sees him as "sweet" (25), but continually stresses their mutual difference from each other: "My friend, you come from a communist country. That's why you don't realise how these things work" (16). *Nocturnes* is a series of variations on this theme: The sometimes uncanny, but more often farcical, denial of common meaning – a denial that itself becomes a form of evidence for the existence of death in the face of a disbelief in or disregard for the world beyond the self, the "common world" described by Arendt. Reading Ishiguro's work, there is often a sense that such a "common world" seems to exist but remains hardly penetrable; it can be represented, but not always recognised; it is not transparent to the gaze of others, as Janeck finds. For Ishiguro, the common world is more of a floating world. This

does not, however, clothe the individual's intentions in elevated mystery: they might be quite banal.

Ishiguro develops this theme in part by proposing a curious equivalence between the subject facing death with the individual alienated by *distance*. Distance and death are compounded in all the relationships in "Crooner": Janeck's geographical distance from his home country emphasises the death of the mother who "never got out"; the geographical distance between Janeck and Tony Gardner, restored at the ending and meaning, Janeck suggests, that he will not see Gardner again before his death; and the planned separation of the married couple, the Gardners themselves, is of course made in response to awareness of their approaching deaths. In this, there is an implication that mortality is both an ultimate guarantor of privacy in its own right and as an analogue for a recalcitrance, an unknowability in the Other, even during life. This also links those who lack political representation because of time and mortality with those who lack it because of distance; Janeck's mother is in both categories. The child, who uniquely provides a sight of the future in which the adult subject will not live to participate – but who persistently complicates and frustrates the adult's recognition of that future – is at the centre of the issue.

"Crooner" is essentially the story of an encounter, in Venice, between a young and a much older man, who is also a celebrated artist – an encounter that ends with a vision of death. Reduced to this structural core, Ishiguro's story looks much like an ironic reflection, even a parody, of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912); a number of incidents in "Crooner" ironically re-work episodes in Mann's novella. Whereas in the latter, the older man is suspended in an obsessive gaze upon the younger, and never actually speaks to him, in "Crooner", the approach is made by the younger man, almost at once. For Mann, Venice's commercial life (particularly embodied the figure of the gondolier, who re-appears in ironically banal form in "Crooner") is ominous, swollen with foreboding symbolism (incidentally laying ground for the Venice of *Don't Look Now*); for Ishiguro, though, the gondoliers and hoteliers are humans who create Venice's atmosphere for commercial consumption by cheap and obvious tactics (4-5). For Aschenbach, the youth is the

source of inspiration, of artistic truth; for Gardner, Janeck is a naïve and embarrassing, even morbid, devotee of his most dated material.

In Mann's story, the world – or at least Venice – exists wholly from the perspective of a central, privileged subject. For Aschenbach, every transaction is portentous, full of sinister meaning, as though the banality of commercial life must be concealing its true implications for the educated masculine subject. It is part of Ishiguro's bathos that his story is, by contrast, narrated by the seller rather than the consumer; the re-telling of a story about death in Venice thus brings authority into question, compromising it in a different way than is Aschenbach's, and divorcing representation, both political and artistic, from recognition.

This is confirmed by Ishiguro's most significant revision of Mann, the reversal of the power of the gaze. Mann's novella is famously preoccupied with the erotic relationship between distance, death, and the gaze, until at the end it finally appears that this distance might be transcended:

He rested his head against the chair-back and followed the movements of the figure out there, then lifted it, as it were in answer to Tadzio's gaze [...] And before nightfall a shocked and respectful world received the news of his decease. (*Death in Venice*, 79)

The moment when distance is overcome is itself the moment of death; in this world, one cannot know death – as Aschenbach does, in the figure of Tadzio – without dying oneself. In Mann's classical landscape, the earthly is merely an inferior shadow of the perfect form that resides in eternity; here death is unreal, or rather a passage to a more real state.

For Ishiguro's Tony Gardner, however, the knowledge of death conditions but also allows for life. The consequences of this remain ambiguous, as the separation of the Gardners may be less genuinely about freedom than the idea that, facing the end of life but unable to imagine the world continuing outside the self, a unitary and permanent fulfilment of the self must be achieved while there is



(supposedly) still time – in other words, one must use the time that remains to eliminate time altogether.

For Mann, the gaze on the child gives access to fundamental truths, to atemporal values that are actually preferable to the temporal and living world. To see is overcome distance, in order to achieve an ecstatic union with the desired Other (a union, through death, not unlike that with which *Hawksmoor* concludes). This produces the perfect aesthetic representation (Mann's text collapses into the desire with which it is concerned, symbolically losing its own status as an object), which removes the subject from the debased, commercial real world. Death, for Mann, is thus imagined to actually produce a more affectively satisfying form of existence than ordinary life offers, a condition affirmed through the spectacle of the drowning city. Ishiguro reverses all this, suggesting that to see the Other is *not* to know him, and that artistic representations are not perfected through an ecstatic overcoming of death. Rather, in fact, they have to be understood as produced in the knowledge of death, and often 'read' after it. Ishiguro's ambiguous association between aesthetic and political representation here is indicative of how his work repeatedly parodies the presumptions that confer the right and possibility of representation.

### **3. Language and Politics**

Ishiguro is, then, evidently engaged with the relation between reading and seeing – with the right to interpret, as a penetration of that which would otherwise be private, as a form of power. I want to briefly investigate further the politics of language, of articulation, and particularly of the right to speak as constituting a potential for representation, in Ishiguro. Often, in the societies portrayed by Ishiguro, such a right to speak is predicated on recognition.

Ishiguro's best-known novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is concerned with the subject's attempt to manage a radical disintegration of his own version of political representation in the knowledge of his approaching death. This emerges here, *inter alia*, in Stevens' repeated disquisitions on butling. Stevens' vocation generates the novel's central tension, between his need to celebrate his service to

Lord Darlington as an achievement of consequence, whilst simultaneously strictly limiting that consequence to exclude Darlington's support for appeasement and thus ultimately excluding implication in British inaction and ill-preparedness towards Nazism – an implication signified here by children killed or abused: Darlington's substitute-child Mr Cardinal, the son of Stevens' hosts on his travels, and the Jewish servant girls dismissed from their position.

Stevens repeatedly asserts his belief that a great butler is essential to the moral achievements of a Great Man; the butler is the private man(servant) behind the public Man. Yet by the end, with Lord Darlington dead and Stevens' own death approaching, he finally admits a fear that he has wasted his life; and it comes to seem that a different relation of public to private, requiring new ways of speaking about and 'reading' other people, is needed to replace the one he has espoused throughout his life.

A principal theme of *Remains* is the *scale* of moral consequences latent in trivial incidences (Walkowitz identifies this as a key theme throughout Ishiguro's work), hinting at the individual's lack of mastery over the full implications of his life, a lack Stevens dedicates his career to eliminating. Stevens holds that his every small act is vital to the operation of a Great Man's household (supported by the declaration that "the fate of Europe could actually hang on our ability to bring Dupont around on this point" (84) whilst Dupont is in fact entirely preoccupied by his painful feet). "A 'great' butler can only be one, surely, who can [...] say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman – and through the latter, to serving humanity" (123). Stevens draws a sharp distinction between public and private as essential to this operation:

The great butlers [...] wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit [...] he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. (*Remains*, 43-44)

This echoes Arendt's sense of the dependency of political participation on a private life. However, Stevens' professionalism replicates gentlemanly values

(identified by both him and Lord Darlington as the proper ground for political participation) in the space where the gentleman is both alone and not alone, his private (but servant-supported) home. In a sense, then, even whilst Stevens proclaims the importance of the distinction between public and private, his own role is to fill in any possible gap or lack that might arise between the two. It is to ensure that Lord Darlington's visible mode of living matches his supposed inner nature.

The American senator, Mr Lewis, articulates a distinction between "real" politics and Lord Darlington's projects, unwittingly making a distinction that disrupts Stevens' identification with his employer: "his lordship here is an amateur [...] and international affairs today are no longer for gentleman amateurs [...] You here in Europe need professionals to run your affairs" (106-107). Stevens is the epitome of "professionalism", the virtue to which Lewis makes his unwelcome appeal, but his professionalism is avowedly apolitical - even amoral in his deference to Lord Darlington's dismissal of two Jewish servants.

In the wider historical world that (as Stevens notes) used to come to the interior spaces of Darlington Hall (thus negating any need for him to ever much visit the external world), the individual's ambitions are opposed by the anti-democratic aristocrats who taunt Stevens in order to demonstrate the supposed fallacy of universal suffrage. Years later, though, the advocate of post-war Socialism, Harry Smith embarrasses Stevens by advocating for "dignity" not in service to a master but as the right to one's own voice:

"If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now [...] there's no dignity to being a slave. That's what we fought for and that's what we won [...] That's what dignity's really about." (*Remains*, 196)

This dignity in democracy has itself arisen from death: "Some fine young lads from this village gave their lives to give us that privilege" (196-198). Stevens begins to find that the wilful refusal of his own capacity for political representation actually exacerbates his responsibility for the dead. Death is in the fabric of the novel, from

Lord Darlington and Stevens' father to Mr Cardinal and the many young men killed in the war. Ironically, Darlington and Stevens believe Cardinal to have no knowledge of sex, and awkwardly teach him about it, only for their circumspection towards biological facts to be overtaken by death as the ultimate biological fact: the death of Cardinal himself.

Stevens' own reading is undertaken for self-education, but of a curiously constrained form; the novel tellingly opens with him in the house's library - not reading, dusting the portraits. Later, Miss Kenton intrudes into the butler's pantry:

"Now I wonder what it could be you are reading there, Mr Stevens."

"Simply a book, Miss Kenton."

"I can see that, Mr Stevens. But what sort of book – that is what interests me." [...]

"Really, Miss Kenton," I said, "I must ask you to respect my privacy." (*Remains*, 174)

Stevens describes the room, like his book, as a space that is private yet nevertheless essential to the success of his professional, 'public', identity (174). By extension, then, in seeking to expose the book – which she finally does by actually prising it from Stevens' fingers – Miss Kenton is seeking to expose the properly private and recognise some interior, affective or desiring, self inside Stevens, something available for her to identify with. She is bewildered to discover that "it isn't anything so scandalous at all. Simply a sentimental love story" (176). Stevens has an explanation:

There was a simple reason for my having taken to perusing such works; it was an extremely efficient way to maintain and develop one's command of the English language. (*Remains*, 177)

Stevens claims to practice reading as a purely technical linguistic exercise, unconcerned with values – because he already has a secure sense of value that this

reading is to serve in a purely mechanistic function. He is afraid of the incompleteness, the openness to education and to the potential disruption of imaginative pleasure, that the act of reading threatens to expose inside himself. This reflects how Stevens (himself childless) seeks to exile any compromise to his “dignity” that might associate him, even symbolically, with the child: hence his highly stilted relationship with his own father and his tragicomical introduction of his father not by reference to their relationship but simply as another “Stevens”.

Earlier in the novel, Stevens' musings on the English landscape, interspersed with his philosophy of butling, show that he holds that essentialist conception of language we have encountered elsewhere both within and outside Ishiguro, a conception wherein the best language, paradoxically, is silent:

We call this land of ours Great Britain [...] and yet what precisely is this 'greatness'? [...] What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it. [...] (*Remains*, 29)

This 'silence' – literally the lack of a “shout” - is once again the ideal language because it is mere transparent representation of an essential, indeed transcendental, value, one possessed of total authority: it need only be properly recognised.

Yet Stevens finds himself - ironically in order to retain his professional ideal of perfect service to his employer – anxiously needing learning a new language, “banter.” This imperative has come about, of course, because Lord Darlington is dead, and because an American has been able to buy his estate, whilst the ideal silence in language (or “restraint”) advocated by Stevens has been exposed in its most ironically literal application, his silence in the face of Darlington's support for Nazism. Stevens ultimately gains no obvious consolation from his attempt to redeem his relationship with Miss Kenton and finally say what he never said to her before; her final reason for refusing a renewed relationship is the arrival of her granddaughter: the child has thwarted the adult's attempt to forestall death.

Ishiguro uses *Remains* to historicise the relationship between political representation and recognition of essential qualities, and thus associates that dependency with some of the worst ethical and political failures of the twentieth century. For Ishiguro, though, history is never at a safe distance from either the self or contemporary political culture.

#### 4. *Never Let Me Go*

The condition Arendt described in terms of the disappearance of a common object leading to a destruction of the public realm appears with remarkable directness in *Never Let Me Go*. As we shall see, here the individual's rights – the protections agreed for the private individual within the public realm – depend on an act of recognition that has now failed to take place; there is no longer any common object. This fundamentally arises from an unwillingness to accept death as demanding that we represent what we cannot recognise: the child.

Ishiguro's narrators are particularly close to the reader: an abnormally intense proximity achieved via Ishiguro's deliberate technique, which first sets up a persistent sense of 'reserve', of a gap between the narrative and the experience that must, we assume, lie behind it, only then to give us a series of clues by which we can tentatively reconstruct that experience – we are never on the surface with Ishiguro, but rather inside and between the lines. This paradox of the distance inherent in the text and the almost bodily intimacy with the narrator into which we are drawn is foregrounded in *Never Let Me Go*'s title, though to some extent it characterises all Ishiguro's novels. Paradoxically, though, the phenomenological closeness established between narrator and reader does not finally collapse one subject into another in a utopian and ecstatic moment, but rather brings the reader nearer to the reality of death. Just as in Ishiguro's first novel, *Pale View*, the initial impression of unmediated access to the narrator's thoughts is highly misleading.

*Never Let Me Go*'s title page, setting the scene in "England, late 1990s" is a premature cue, to be followed only in retrospect, to the realisation that the reader is trapped in the future as much as the narrator (who on the novel's timescale has presumably already "donated" and "completed" (died) by 2005) is trapped in the

past. The title page's disorientating claim to periodicity immediately frustrates its potential reading as 'science fiction'; the novel's banal settings and realistic human relationships equally frustrate its reading as 'dystopia'. Richard Robinson observes that in Ishiguro, "the hyper-realist reader – who did not care to linger over the ontological jolt of the final pages of *A Pale View*, or who enjoyed picking [Ishiguro] up for getting the butler to pass the port in *Remains* – is set traps" (108), and this opening in the late 1990s is another such trap, targeting expectations of dystopia or sci-fi.

The indication of Kathy's birth date as c. 1965, and her time at Hailsham as therefore the early 1970s, makes her childhood coincide with the real decade of 'no future' in Britain, of punk, the Winter of Discontent, the film version of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the Sex Pistols' "God save the Queen" (1977), and Jarman's *Jubilee* (1978). The decline of Hailsham and other 'progressive' institutions for clones is also roughly concurrent with the discourse (as discussed in the previous chapter) of a failure of post-war optimism from the mid-1970s onwards.

Like the Britain of which it is a refraction, *Never Let Me Go* presents a society of 'haves' and 'have nots', where what the former 'have', in this society's own terminology, is the status of the "normal" or "original". This dogma gives rise to a cruel paradox; the closeness of the clone to their Original is taken as an absolute determinant of the clone's ethical status, but actual closeness – bodily closeness – is denied to them; ultimately, even the reassurance of proximity to one's own organs – the blood, heart and stomach – where emotions were traditionally and are still figuratively said to reside – is denied. The ultimate result of this system is the perpetual maintenance of biological, bodily life that is assumed to be essentially meaningful – indeed, to be the source and origin of all meaning – but which Ishiguro exposes as increasingly meaningless.

Hence *Never Let Me Go* narrates a reversal of the conventional (Freudian) narrative of the child's entrance into authority, both because meaningful authority, even of the most normal kind, is denied to the children with whom it is concerned and because these children are perversely compelled to reverse their own

development, first in order to seek their “Originals” and later to prove their own “Originality.” In order to enjoy virtual access to the agency and future – the authority – denied to them, they conversely have to look, in a cruel parody of pop-psychology, ever more deeply into and on to themselves, and back towards their childhood. In this endeavour, their own relationships and activities, meagre as they are, must be ignored as meaningless variables that obstruct the search for the inherent, a search itself meaningless because the inherent, the Original, is already present in its absence in the clones themselves.

The Originals the clones seek are in fact a kind of absent parent; ideologically always present in their total identification with those from whom they were cloned, but always absent in the sense of missing physical and emotional closeness that preoccupies the novel. The child abuse that results is so profoundly disturbing because it is not committed directly against the child – only when the clones grow up does the harvest of their organs begin – but it nevertheless governs these children from their earliest education, oddly making real, with bleak irony, the myth of the childhood idyll constructed through opposition to the ‘real’ (that is, adult) world. This is a perverse distortion of the conventional sense that the adult world’s destructive tendencies require moral protection of the childhood environment; here that environment is rather being protected precisely in order that the children can be destroyed upon entering adulthood. The worst child abuse turns out to be not the cliché of being “denied a childhood” but rather the denial of an adulthood, a denial permitted by technology and maintained through the calculated administration of violence.

Mirroring its collapse in time, this society is also (like that in *The Line of Beauty*), based around a curious flatness in space, a faith in the two-dimensional image only. The clones are, of course, denied the moral ‘depth’ that constitutes the imagined location of subjecthood and of human worth. In a sense, the clones are themselves imagined as two-dimensional; they have to be, in order to act as perfect copies of their Originals, and this demand is made physical when their bodies are deconstructed. This adoration of the flat image is a way of both figuratively and, in this case, literally excluding “the disposition to decay of our bodies” that Freud



identified as fundamentally conditioning the regulatory authority of the state. This resonates with the iconography of twentieth-century dictatorships, their reliance on images (both of the projected Leader and the abjected Jew) becoming indistinguishable from reality. Something of the latter sense is preserved in the representations of Thatcher considered in the previous chapter, most obviously in Hollinghurst. Yet in *Never Let Me Go*, there is no Leader; her sovereignty has been transferred to the Original Human. The idea that a two-dimensional image can contain humanity in the dual sense – that is, both incorporating it (but only from the external source of the author) and limiting it, framing it – is conveyed through the novel's persistent interest in paintings and drawings.

Both this theme and the reversal of the child's ordinary entrance into authority are spectacularly condensed in the image of Kathy H, as an adolescent, quietly searching porn magazines in the hope of seeing her Original. This image – indirectly reported, as is typical in Ishiguro – derives its tragedy from the reversal of the normal use of porn as a mundane function of entrance into sexual activity:

“Are you looking for something, Kath?”

“What do you mean? I'm just looking at dirty pictures.” [...]

“Kath, you don't...Well, if it's for kicks, you don't do it like that. You've got to look at the pictures much more carefully. It doesn't really work if you go that fast.”

“How do you know what works for girls?” [...]

“You weren't doing it for kicks [...] you had a strange face. Like you were sad, maybe. And a bit scared.” (*Never Let Me Go*, 134)

As Freud showed, the entrance into sexuality is irrecoverably bound with the child's entrance into authority - or as Kathy puts it in describing the 'sex education' at Hailsham, “We'd be focusing on sex, and then the other stuff would creep in” (82). Hence Tommy's awkward but astute perception that the proper use of porn is

predicated on a particular practice (and speed) of reading, one he tries awkwardly to teach Kathy.

This is suggestive of how the valorisation of Originality generates violence towards the clones as adolescents - that is, as children in the process of becoming children no longer. Adolescence, the period of the 'coming of age' where age doesn't quite come, is the part of a life within which 'normal' adult society has to fix the assignment of those rights it grants to the adult: When can a person marry? When can they legally have sex? When can they vote? When are they old enough to take the risks involved in joining the military, or just in leaving education to get a job? When can they drive, and drink? It's suggestive that during their adolescence the clones go through a period of being obsessed with the notion of being "gay", even without properly understanding what it means; they have gathered, though, that it's something to do with the relation between sex, reproduction, recognition and rights in which they themselves are caught up. This is less a dystopia than recent history, seen through an only slightly distorted mirror.

A bitterly comical travesty of the process of assigning rights to the adolescent famously appears at the beginning of Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958), when the narrator discusses the wide variety of ages at which a girl has supposedly been considered 'legal' for sex within the history of various societies, evidence he marshals to demonstrate the relativism of such judgements and so justify his own sex with Lolita. *Lolita* not only effectively erodes the moral barrier between the moralising paternalistic gaze, legally privileged through parenthood and guardianship, and Humbert's sexually possessive gaze; it also audaciously suggests that the assignment of rights is itself also a matter of the gaze, of the scrutiny of the child and the meaning found within her. In our terms, it suggests that representation depends on recognition, but it also exposes, through black comedy, just how arbitrary recognition can be.

Ishiguro takes the same slippage between the protective and the violent gaze and relentlessly, uncomfortably locates it within his uncanny re-working of post-war British politics. Yet it loses both the seduction theme found in *Lolita*, and

indeed any quality of sexual fascination. The gaze on the child in *Never Let Me Go* has become aimed at anticipation for its own sake, devoid even of pleasure, producing a guarantee of the future but oddly one lacking content or even interest.

*Never Let Me Go* is profoundly concerned with the right to recognition of personhood, and about the rights – particularly to reproduce, to be recognised as being in a marriage or equivalent relationship, and ultimately simply to be allowed to live – that accrue from that recognition of personhood, of humanity. By making his novel into both the *Bildungsroman* and the memoir of Kathy H, Ishiguro emphasises that those questions of personhood that usually centre on the child (when they might appear to us in relation to the rights of the foetus or the disabled child, or the child at risk of sexual abuse, for example), can only in fact be genuinely addressed when one considers the child's entanglement within the adult, and the mutual contamination that takes place between childhood and adulthood, a contamination that psychoanalysis essentially identifies as the basis of the private life.

In both acknowledging the centrality of the child to culture *and* making that centrality uncanny by giving us the child inside the adult woman (a woman complicit in the deaths of her own childhood friends), Ishiguro's novel emphasises the dependence of political representation, on a biopolitical and also curiously aesthetic investment in reproduction.

This appears with particular clarity at one moment when Kathy listens to a favourite song from a cassette tape, the song that shares a title with the novel itself, "Never Let Me Go." This seems to signal that here we'll find an episode with application to the purpose of the novel as a whole; and indeed here is an uncanny trope for adolescent entanglement of the adult and child in the confusion between the singer's repeated address of the word "baby" to an adult lover, in the conventional pop usage of the word, and Kathy's own mental direction of the lines towards an imagined actual baby. This is a fantasy she knows she will never be able to actually make real – paradoxically, precisely because of her own status as a reproduction, as a clone who will in a sense always be a child and no more than a

child. Yet even though the culture in which Kathy is living takes the status of the child as the defining factor for the recognition of personhood, Kathy's status does not permit this recognition of her own personhood – quite the opposite.

Similarly, when Kathy searches porn magazines for a face that matches hers, for her 'original', another myth is made ironically real though in distorted form: the trope of the child as mirror-image. Kathy knows that she is someone's mirror, but being the image herself, she has neither the prerogative nor the ability to see the Original she reflects, a darkly ironic reversal of the Lacanian scenario. This produces a major paradox: total identification with the image of the self is to be alone and unloved. The absence of sexual interest in Kathy's searching through the porn magazines reflects the conditions of her infancy; the clones did not experience the sense of loss in the separation from the mother that plays a crucial part in sexual development; they never had the affective, mirroring relation to the mother in the first place, and it is this relation, which precedes the trauma of oedipal sexuality, which they primarily try to establish.

Even though *Never Let Me Go* occasionally seems to draw the child into the heart of adult sexuality, rather than this resulting in vulnerable children being exploited by manipulative adults (as in *Lolita*), here the children are made vulnerable again precisely at the moment when they are nearly most 'adult' in every sense, the moment when they symbolically become lovers and sexually aware, sexually active individuals. Paradoxically, it is at this moment that Kathy becomes a child again – not in any sentimental offer of a moral resolution, but in the sense of the child being the incomplete, contaminated reproduction of someone else. The society of *Never Let Me Go* is based on a fantasy of original completeness, which exists precisely to enable its opposite, the enforced deconstruction, of the clones, whose imagined moral incompleteness is thus made real in their bodies. The great irony of Kathy's song, and what perhaps makes Madame so uncomfortable in gazing upon her, is that it hints at reproduction not as providing completeness, but rather its opposite.

There is an absolute value placed upon the child in the world of *Never Let Me Go*, where what matters is to be an original, and what is original inside a human is

imagined to be the child, as the essential self before its contamination by society (and by sexuality). There is a sign, though, of how much human rights depend on this essential image of the child in the fact that the clones' childhoods are still to a degree protected in the Edenic space of Hailsham, and by the fact that their childhood art, the fantasy of innocent expression of the soul within, is collected by Madame and imagined to be a source of salvation. At least, this is the case in the earlier period of the novel; by the end it is reported that the new generations of clones are being raised in farms, their condition changed so that they visually match their imagined essential nature; representation is forcibly aligned with recognition.

The "original" bodies that are sustained at the expense of the clones' lives are imagined here as two-dimensional, as images. They carry meaning without content, their "original" status existing purely in the abstract, a vision that confounds the visual. The scrutinising gaze the adults direct towards the clones is an attempt to get inside these children, making real the wilful non-recognition of their human voices (the final irony here is that the children's visual resemblance of the originals is itself taken as the proof that they do not fulfil the vision of value that governs this society).

Even in the attempt, represented by Hailsham, to reach a humane compromise in this grotesque situation, the assertion that the clones' appearance really does match their humanity is still achieved through the gaze, through a reading that ultimately turns out to be contiguous with the violent reading of the clones in the broader society. Prefiguring how the surgeon's tools will eventually cut into the living bodies of Kathy, and Tommy, and Ruth, and extract their organs, Madame's collection of their childhood art is, of course, a liberal-idealist form of the same extractive process. As Shameem Black says of Madame and Miss Emily –

[...] Concealed within their Romantic logic lies a far more dystopian goal that colludes with the exploitation of the students they claim to protect. When Miss Emily says that "your art will reveal your inner selves" (254), her choice of phrase suggests that making such art

actually prefigures the process of organ donation. (Black, "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics", 794)

In *Never Let Me Go*, the belief in art as redemptive (explored by Black in "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics" as a key target of the novel's parody) has been perverted, the promise of immortality through Arendt's "common objects" confused with a mere cure for mortality. The belief in a "common nature", though, has never been stronger. In practice, this "common nature" has become the justification for the indefinite maintenance of life for the permanently ageing. Theirs is apparently life for its own sake, not for any particular purpose; just on-going life, biological and banal (located, incidentally, in the British seaside towns that have traditionally acted as places for the retired to live out their final years). It is a life without *jouissance*, because no pleasure can ever be excessive in this environment, and it is a society without privacy insofar as everything is imagined as identical to its own image.

When Kathy and Tommy ask for a political representation on the basis of Tommy's aesthetic representations, his drawings, this creates disturbing evidence of the existence of privacy, implying the possibility of change, of difference: of the passage of time meaning something more than the *passing* of time that it has become.

Like the classic adolescent, the clones want not to be looked at, but to be listened to; yet for any society, listening to those to whom the dominant logic denies rights is a traumatic thing; as Kathy and Tommy find, there is finally no proof they can offer of the interior value, no document that will be accepted for dispensation. They are unable to prove their originality, and such proof is in any case no longer wanted. In this society, the empty image of the original rules all, but even images can be refused recognition, and no identity documents are provided to Kathy and Tommy.

## **5. Authority and Originality**

Paradoxically, the clones' search for their Originals is actually the search for the differentiation of the self, for gaining the status of a unique individual. Kathy's

desire to see her Original amongst the porn images – and Ruth's searching gaze for her Original through an office window – are attempts at this; because once one can see the Original, one can no longer be (just) her; neither the pages of the porn magazines nor the office window constitute a mirror. Instead, they promise to frame the Original in circumstances different to those of the clone – thereby confirming the difference of the clone from the Original, a difference ultimately constituted as their different futures, confounding their biological identification and giving access to agency.

Such agency, as the children themselves recognise in planning their careers before the full truth is revealed to them by Miss Lucy, is authority over the future. Their subsequent awareness that they lack such authority induces a shared obsession with the phantasmagoric, imagined futures of their Originals, which remain unreachable, as they find when they engage in a futile search for Ruth's Original. Yet differentiation and agency are treated by the society of Normals/Originals as trivial, ultimately meaningless – finally, as Miss Emily and Madame's behaviour shows, they just want to keep on living (and they have given up on the project that was Hailsham.) That differentiation is conceived by the clones, however, in terms of small but deeply desired differences – such as the quotidian office furniture they imagine the Originals to enjoy in their jobs – gives an anti-utopian emphasis to the unrealised desire of these children for agency, whilst they are surrounded by a utopian state founded on the banishment of death.

It is worth referring again here to Arendt -

A complete victory of society will always produce some sort of "communistic fiction", whose outstanding political characteristic is that it is indeed ruled by an "invisible hand," namely, by nobody. What we traditionally call state and government gives place here to pure administration – a state of affairs which Marx rightly predicted as the "withering away of the state," though he was wrong in assuming that only a revolution could bring it about, and even more wrong when he believed that this complete victory of society would

mean the eventual emergence of the “realm of freedom.” (*The Human Condition*, 44-45)

Rule by nobody in particular, where everyone is so invested in the system, as Miss Emily informs Kathy, that “they’ll simply say no” to any prospect of a change that might risk their own privilege (however cannibalistic), is exactly what appears to have been created by the end (which is also the beginning) of *Never Let Me Go*.

Of course, though, *Never Let Me Go* is structured in large part around Kathy's learning to love, a learning derived from witnessing the adolescent and adult Tommy's simultaneous identity and non-identity with his childhood self over the passage of time. The delayed articulation of Kathy's love for Tommy is not the result of repression so much as of its actual gradual emergence during the course of their shared lives; love does not exist in a single originary moment that can be reified as art and temporally located in a childhood that, through the art, is never past but always literally present - but rather in the passage of time and the growth of experience alongside the development of linguistic capacity to articulate that experience. Tellingly, Tommy's drawings are in fact examples of the latter, rather than the former, and so he and Kathy worry over whether they will be eligible as evidence for a dispensation, a worry that turns out to be misplaced. This, Ishiguro suggests, is the cruelty of a system that demands an aesthetic image for recognition as the condition for access to political representation – a demand that the authorities can always amend on their own terms.

## **6. *When We Were Orphans: The Abandoned Child and the Politics of Representation***

If *Never Let Me Go* is concerned with children who constitute representations to be ultimately discarded, this theme already emerges in Ishiguro's preceding novel, *When We Were Orphans* (2000). The image of an abandoned child is peculiarly effective in compelling international action. In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro dramatises how the authorities restrict representation temporally; *Orphans*



reflects this theme, but also introduces a spatial dynamic to the issue. In fact, the refusal or extension of recognition as the basis for access to political representation turns out to apply both to the child and to the foreign Other. The abandoned child embodies both categories simultaneously.

In an international crisis, the image of an abandoned child makes things happen; it even transgresses, or transcends, the most powerful modern boundaries of affective concern and acknowledged responsibility, the limits of ethnicity and nationality. An aesthetic representation of a crisis, this child nevertheless has political effects.

A recent example, at the time of writing, comes from the circulation of images of a deceased three-year-old, Alan Kurdi, which generated affect towards exactly such political effects. Kurdi died in September 2015 during his family's escape from the Syrian civil war, when the craft in which he was travelling foundered at sea. A photograph of his body lying apparently abandoned on a beach, reproduced widely in the media, provoked a significant acceleration in attempts to provide safe channels for refugees, with British Prime Minister David Cameron directly citing Kurdi's image: "Anyone who saw those pictures [...] could not help but be moved and, as a father, I felt deeply moved by the sight of that young boy [...] Britain is a moral nation and we will fulfil our moral responsibilities" (Dathan 1). The abandoned child makes international action possible – though curiously here in the name of a national identity he does not himself share. He visually represents a global responsibility, based on his recognition as a deserving object for affective identification.<sup>17</sup>

Such images of the abandoned child have a long genealogy. As early as the Second Boer War (1899-1902), images of dying children were used by anti-war campaigners to elicit outrage (Hasian 68-89). Much later, images of 12-year-old Ali Ismail Abbas, who lost both limbs and most of his family in a botched US bombing during the 2003 Iraq invasion, intensified public concern over civilian casualties and led to Abbas' treatment in Britain, where he later gained citizenship; for him at least,

the affective identification produced by his own image really could enable the crossing of otherwise rigid national borders.

Similar deployment of the child's image appears in all kinds of global crisis. Birhan Woldu's near-death during the 1984 Ethiopian famine was recorded on film, the footage shown at 'Live Aid' in 1985 and again at 'Live 8' in 2005, where Bob Geldof declared, "Don't let them tell you that this doesn't work" (Sebsibe 1). The abandoned child does indeed work – summoning *affect*, generating *effect*. An image of global crisis, an aesthetic representation implicitly redressing the inequity in *political* representation that caused (or at least exacerbated) that crisis, she transcends ethnic and national affinities.

This visual trope also works through historic failures of the international order. Anne Frank's *Diary* is almost always published with a cover image of the author, as though the face of a child were necessary to render the horror of Nazi persecution. W.G. Sebald's novel of the Holocaust and memory, *Austerlitz* (2001) is structured around a child's photograph (reproduced inside the book, often also on the cover), as though only the unbearable image of an abandoned child provides an aesthetic representation for political failures of a scale that otherwise threaten to frustrate all representation.

Yet he has a Doppelgänger on the 'wrong side' of historical memory. The abandoned child served the Nazis well, for example: their film *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933), depicted the murder of 16-year-old Hitler Youth member Herbert Norkus by a Communist gang, after neglect by his own pro-Communist father; here the 'voice of a murdered child' readily became a "ventriloquised address to Germany" (Lebeau 175). We might console ourselves by thinking that whereas Norkus produced *affect* through identification with an imagined German nation (mobilised precisely against a supposedly international Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy), today's abandoned children replace the racial nation with the 'international community' as the site of affective identification. Yet matters are both more complicated and more compromised than this. In fact, I argue, in allowing a transgression of ethno-national boundaries, the use of the abandoned child's image also limits that transgression,

turning it from an act of political significance to an *aesthetic* recognition, the recognition of an ethic that is imagined as actually belonging to the viewer's own identity.

Edelman's identification of the dominant use of the child's image in contemporary culture as imposing "an ideological limit on political discourse as such" (2) certainly appears again here: Cameron "as a father" finds that the child demands an international action which, paradoxically, re-asserts the inner character of a nation. It's worth exploring this apparently paradoxical move from the universal (or global) ethnical imperative to national identity.

Perhaps the explanation lies in how it's only the child, precisely as child, who is automatically recognised as deserving survival (literally, in the prioritisation of children for assistance in the refugee support opened up by Kurdi's image (see Wintour in *The Guardian* of 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015). The assumption is that (unlike an adult migrant) there is nothing private about the child, and so nothing to fear; a universal child to whom any father could relate, his status as a global responsibility actually works to enable his retrieval by a particular nation. Through 'saving' him, those nations simultaneously re-assert their own essential identities and apparently restore a rupture in the international order.

This child generates some extension of political responsibility, but as its object only; to become a subject would be to lose his innocence, implying the privacy he cannot be admitted to possess. This child thus does not truly extend political representation, for there is in a sense nothing to represent other than the (presumed) western viewer's capacity for affect.

For Arendt, 'politics' implicitly acknowledges the need to negotiate and thus potentially revise the arrangements for the future; politics is therefore fundamentally historical, implying the permanent need for and possibility of change. As we saw, for Arendt under modernity politics in this sense is actually a rare thing, replaced by the desire for Marx's "withering away of the state" and its equivalents in other dominant ideologies, which use an aesthetic vision to imagine the end of a need for politics (*The Human Condition*, 44-45).

‘Aesthetic representation’ refers not to the speech but to the image of the individual, which is typically (as with the abandoned child) spoken for by others. The histories of the abandoned child’s image record the replacement of a potential claim for expanded political representation with just such an aesthetic representation. The circulation of the abandoned child’s image has effects, of course, as noted – sometimes critically important effects for those who live rather than die as a result – but crucially not the extension of political representation, nor the revision of the basis on which political representation might be extended.

The viewer of Kurdi’s image is, implicitly, invited to become the child’s rescuer, who thereby contributes to the restoration of an international order reassuringly asserting national identities and eliminating the ‘global’ as disruption to that order. This is how I use the term ‘global’ here: to indicate a disturbance to the territorial arrangements of nations, often exposing an extension of responsibility beyond ethno-national limits. This is precisely the terminology demanded by Ishiguro, who, as Black observes, responds to a sense of ‘the failure of representation to encourage action on others’ behalf’ (“Ishiguro’s Inhuman Aesthetics”, 790). For Ishiguro, this failure reflects a fear of the seemingly infinitely expanding extent of ethical responsibility through the global reach of political and economic networks and systems (Walkowitz, “Unimaginable Largeness”).

The image of the abandoned child seems to embody this fear; but it also contains its own resolution. This resolution is provided by recognition itself, the recognition of the child as deserving affective identification; any actions to follow depend on this recognition, indeed are sometimes subsumed by it: when Anne Frank’s image moves the viewer to think ‘never again’, nothing more than the thought is immediately required. The key imperative is for recognition itself. None of this, of course, disputes that images of children suffering rightly compel attention; however, there are reasons to wonder why the reaction is limited by the very image that provokes it.

The child at the centre of Ishiguro’s fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans* (2000), is not only abandoned, but made to play a peculiar part in the representation

of a global crisis – where he ultimately acts as the abandoned child *and* as that child's European saviour. Following Bain, I read *Orphans* as concerned not only with the period in which it is ostensibly set, but as responding to ethical and political arguments over the extension of global responsibilities (and apparently of global power) in the late 1990s, the period of its composition. Beyond this, though, Ishiguro's persistent contamination of one period and place by another, and his location of the causes of political failure in the repetition of fundamentally aesthetic modes of representation, demands that we also consider the novel's implications for current and continuing international crises.

Ishiguro's novel works as a parody to both dramatise and undermine the collapse of political and aesthetic representation into one another, particularly as evident in the figure of the abandoned child. It queries the provision of such an image as the prerequisite for international action, (a requirement with, as observed, both an extensive history and an acute contemporary relevance). *Orphans* does not dramatise a particular piece of history (indeed, Ishiguro consistently eschews historical realism (Walkowitz, "Ishiguro's Floating Worlds", 1052), but rather exposes how structures that base political representation on aesthetic recognition work against history as implying the potential for political change). Ishiguro audaciously insists that we read this resistance to history and politics as grounded in the psychological condition of his characters.

The novel's principal orphan and protagonist, Christopher Banks, is the son of two British residents of the Shanghai International Settlement, a businessman father and a politically active mother. After his parents' mysterious disappearance, Banks is moved to England, where, after education, he eventually becomes a private detective. Years later, he is prompted to return to Shanghai to attempt the recovery of his parents, but finds that this search is both obstructed by, and yet curiously merges into, a developing conflict, where the international 'settlement' (in every sense) is coming undone.

Banks is uniquely required to be both abandoned child *and* European rescuer. As critical readers have to varying degrees acknowledged (Luo; Sim; Bain),

Ishiguro uses this paradox to parody and critique the idea of the global as a problem to be resolved through representational figures, above all Banks himself. Banks' function in returning to Shanghai (appropriately for the detective he has grown up to be) is to bring the potential otherness of the global, which threatens to evade identification by national authorities, into the light, and thereby eliminate its capacity to disrupt the international order. In this way, he also addresses the traumatically exposed extent of ethical responsibility for the 'western' observer of Shanghai's 'global' crisis.

Rather than endorsing his protagonist's representational function, Ishiguro exponentially intensifies the evidence for its perversity - daring to suggest that the abandoned child does not make things happen, or at least not well. In an ironic reversal of the structural purpose of the classic *Bildungsroman* as described by Moretti in *The Way of the World*, Ishiguro uses the *Bildungsroman* form and hero figure to dramatise the failure of aesthetic representation as a basis for political representation.

Christopher's mother Diana, upper-middle-class British wife and campaigner against the normally (and hypocritically) ignored source of the Settlement's wealth, the opium trade, creates a kind of international community within her house. Her angry rebuke to a representative of her husband's employer, as he attempts to prevent her retaining servants from an opium-ruined region, is overheard by the infant Christopher: "You wish me to drive out these friends of ours!" (58-60). In their argument, Diana and the company official each compete to claim greater recognition of the nature of the 'globalised' situation in which both they and the servants are caught up.

In the Settlement, an individual's political status remains dangerously unresolved until some process of identification has taken place, which in turn determines (as with the servants) the extension or withdrawal of affect. This process of representation depends on the aesthetic imagination, or actual creation, of some essential 'interior'.

Arendt's claim that political participation depends on a private zone located not only in the body but also spatially, in the home, initially bears some resemblance to the importance of 'home' spaces in the Settlement; yet there is a curious paradox here, because the Settlement's political order simultaneously identifies the private or interior space with something always to be strategically read: the ethno-national essence, the British-ness or Japanese-ness, of the occupants. The exclusion of others from the private space of the home (as the company man demands), does not keep that space unknown, but rather more perfectly *known*; a vision of identity provided by its removal from visibility.

Hence the parents of Christopher's friend Akira maintain a hidden core within their house, where behind "the outer, 'western' side" with oak-panelling, lies an inner, "Japanese" room of "delicate paper with lacquer inlays" (72). In the Settlement, then, private spaces are not truly 'private' at all; they are always imagined as visible, and it is this that determines the inhabitants' political representation (the opposite of Arendt's formulation of the dependency of political participation on access to private spaces).

Yet although these 'private' spaces actually work to eliminate genuine privacy, elements of an unpoliced interior life nevertheless still manage to occur within and around them – notably the relationship between Christopher and Akira, who play in the gap between the physical institutions in which they live (their ethnicised homes, and the Settlement itself) and the identities those institutions are made to embody. It's a gap always under threat of elimination, first temporarily when Akira goes to Japan, and then permanently when Christopher is taken to England. It does however imply that forms of living can (even unintentionally) produce 'global' encounters that evade representation (indeed the pressure to represent an ethno-national essence is the only thing that seriously disrupts the friendship).

This friendship, with its traces of a pre-representational interior life that Banks finds hard to replicate in adult and heterosexual relationships (such as that with Sarah Hemmings), actually causes a miniature global crisis, decades later, when

Banks diverts his own attention and the military resources of others to the recovery of someone he calls (but who probably isn't) Akira.

The friendship between Christopher and Akira, the remembrance of which is deeply felt by Banks years later, slips between the Settlement's normal political logic, where the maintenance of the home constitutes a process of aesthetic representation that operates to control the expansion of affect. The interior does not even necessarily need to be seen in order for this to work; it simply needs to be recognised as existing, and its content can be imagined. This use of the image to manage affective identification can be usefully explained with reference to Lacan, whose pertinence for Ishiguro is already critically recognised (see Lewis, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 136-7).

[For Lacan] the ego that apprehends itself in the world does so only through a strictly theoretical knowledge, since all 'feeling of Self' is immediately captured, captivated, by the 'image of the other' (1961, 181). Out, then, with the feeling of 'self,' since now it is seen in the other, instead of being *felt* in him, as him; and theorised or reflected affect, as everyone knows, is no longer lived affect. (Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, 59)

As with the abandoned child, the location of affect in an aesthetic image contains that affect in a dual sense: embodying it, but also immediately limiting it. This limits, in fact, the potential expansion of ethical responsibility that constitutes, as observed earlier, the key trauma of the 'global'. When affect is 'theorised' in this way, not only is responsibility contained, but its acknowledgement is made dependent on the availability of the image. The burden therefore subtly shifts to the other, who is expected to provide the image deserving of affective identification. The image is expected to immediately produce meaning, to be available for reading within the order or 'theory' by which the world functions.

Ishiguro's audacious move is to take this demand and place it squarely as constituting the requirement for political representation too. Hence for the official, the Chinese have to be both seen and read as dangerous, as the objects of abjection,



in order to exclude them from the domestic (ethnic) space. Christopher, by contrast, is permitted to act as the repository for affect, but only as a contained or 'theorised' affect that demands he himself acts as an aesthetic representation.

This makes the question of who has the right to be here, inside 'our' territory, and the question of who has an 'interiority' of her own, a subjecthood deserving of recognition - and by extension, political representation - one and the same issue. Such interrogation of 'interiority' reappears throughout Ishiguro's work (see Black, "Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics"). The delusion and paranoia behind the function of interiority in this double sense is exposed in *Orphans* by one episode in particular.

When Christopher and Akira dare each other to enter the room of Akira's Chinese family servant Ling Tien, whom they imagine practises dark magic, they finally enter only to find the room clearly empty of anything untoward; the boys nevertheless subsequently maintain that they braved some great danger in entering. Their play mirrors the Settlement's structural logic: the potential political question raised by the presence of the Chinese and their simultaneous absence from political representation is resolved by their aesthetic representation as dark and dangerous. A political question posed by the 'global' space, with its disturbing exposure to other 'races' normally denied representation, is aesthetically re-imagined as a darkness at that space's heart.

This movement between the political and the aesthetic appears with a clarity and directness in *Orphans* that makes its absurdity unusually obvious. Yet, as a parody, the novel exposes this absurdity only by excessive pursuit of a logic that is actually all too real, grounded in the real history of racial paranoia.

In this context, it's fruitful to read *Orphans* alongside recent historical work that has argued for the centrality of such aesthetic notions, and of the paranoia lying behind them, to real international crises. In *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (2015), Timothy Snyder notes that because most Germans "were not particularly good at distinguishing Jews from non-Jews", a "new racial optic" had to be created (42). Here politics began in the aesthetic imagination, turned into

aesthetic 'reality', which in turn radically constrained political representation, before producing its ultimate genocidal effects. This emerged alongside a conception of the global as the problem disrupting the proper identity between the political status of individuals and their imagined interior nature.

As Snyder argues, for the Nazis the Jews embodied a globalisation perceived as threatening because it was not aligned with what Nazism considered to be essential ethnic realities. The Jews only thrived, they considered, because state institutions, and the access to political representation they conferred, had wrongly been separated from the recognition of racial truth. In this paranoid vision, the 'global' arises precisely as this gap between representation and recognition. Hence, in the Settlement, where the racist trope of the 'wandering Jew' is replaced by the Chinese migrating from Shantung, even when the ethnic interior is found to be essentially empty, it is still compulsively imagined as meaningful. Identity is based on paranoia. However, if this is true of such abject identities as the Jews and the 'Chinamen', is it also true of the apparently positive identity recognised in the abandoned child? I will go on to argue that it is.

Freud defined paranoia as purposed to "ward off an idea that is incompatible with the ego, by projecting its substance into the external world" (*The Complete Letters*, 106), "projection" here therefore encompassing a potential abjection. This is suggestive of how when the global emerges as something recalcitrant to the ethno-national order, the abandoned child, as the consequence of this global disruption, shares in the same ambivalence. That this applies to Banks himself is clear when he is 'rescued' by Colonel Chamberlain, following the disappearance of his parents:

Shanghai's not a bad place. But [...] *you've* had about as much as you need. Much more, you'll be turning into a Chinaman. [...] You really ought to cheer up. After all, you're going to England. You're going home. (*Orphans*, 28)

Evidently, Banks as the abandoned child presents both a risk of otherness and the possibility of redemption. This ambiguity behind Banks' representational status

persists much later on, after he has become an adult and developed a successful career as a private detective:

Mr Banks. Of course, *you* know the truth. You know that the real heart of our present crisis lies further afield [...] you do have, shall we say, a special relationship to what is, in truth, the source of all our current anxieties. [...] You know better than anyone the eye of the storm is to be found not in Europe at all, but in the Far East. In Shanghai, to be exact. (*Orphans*, 137-138)

Under this speaker, Canon Moorly's, gaze, seeing turns into reading (ironically reflecting Banks' own role as detective, tasked to see that which is recalcitrant to the gaze). Moorly refuses to let Banks speak, even when expressing his frustration over Banks' supposed failure to speak; rather, he uses him as an image, almost as another metaphor, like the 'eye of the storm'. Tellingly, this is entirely dependent on Banks as child; whatever 'special relationship' Banks gained from being in Shanghai must have been achieved before the age of ten.

Following Freud, we could observe that Moorly's reading of Banks is poised between projection and abjection. Moorly's comment follows a rancorous debate over the recent German invasion of the Rhineland (136), where arguments about the cause of the crisis use a discourse of conspiracy evoking the racial scapegoating of both the Jews in Europe and the Chinese in Shanghai. Banks is the projected figure of the European rescuer who will resolve the global crisis; yet, as the abandoned child from the dangerously unresolved global space himself, he is also uncomfortably close to being imagined as the abject, foreign, and dangerously migratory cause of the crisis.

In order to avoid this, Banks is expected to demonstrate his fulfilment of the former identity by undertaking a particular task: a return to Shanghai. (That Banks internalises the implicit threat behind this demand is obvious later on, when he shouts: "You believe this is all my fault, all this, all of it, all this terrible suffering, this destruction here" (262)). He delivers this line in the war-torn Warren, when his delusions become increasingly extreme as he helps the Japanese soldier he identifies

(almost certainly wrongly) as Akira and makes his way through the warzone in search of his parents (almost certainly not there). This later echo of Moorly indicates how Banks' delusions have arisen precisely from the representational status accorded to him; he is irrationally expected to resolve an international political crisis because he is first taken to aesthetically resolve the problem of the global, to bring its disruptive otherness under control and thus prevent the further spread of 'anxieties'.

Fundamentally, this resolution, Moorly imagines, is merely a matter of correct recognition – of Banks recognising his own status and then applying to the political and military crisis his own skill, as a detective, in recognising and exposing the truth. This will prevent Moorly doubting his own recognition, and from turning to the alternative identification of Banks not with the solution, but with the cause, of the crisis.

The context of this in the Rhineland debate introduces particular historical echoes. As Snyder notes, a similar prioritisation of aesthetic forms of representation has historically been the basis of very real totalitarian projects: 'Hitler's worldview did not bring about the Holocaust by itself, but its hidden coherence generated new sorts of destructive politics' (Snyder, *Black Earth*, xiii). Moorly, likewise, is a believer in hidden coherence; in narrative, allegory, and affective images.

Importantly, though, Ishiguro suggests that this collapse of aesthetic and political representation does not exclusively appear in obvious totalitarian thought. On the contrary, it makes appearances even in utopian visions of the global – something that suggests that reading the novel as a simple indictment of racism and imperialism would itself miss the full extent of its political implications. Thus even when the 'global' appears not as a problem but apparently as a celebratory, even euphoric, vision of the future, the collapse of political and aesthetic representation still persists, as with the vision of Banks' 'Uncle' Philip:

I think it would be no bad thing if boys like you *all* grew up with a little bit of everything [...] one day, all these conflicts will end, and it won't be because of great statesmen or churches or organisations [...] It'll

be because people have changed. They'll be like you, Puffin.  
(*Orphans*, 76)

At first glance, this apparently benevolent ideal sounds entirely different to Moorly's paranoid demands; yet, of course, they share a dependence on Christopher Banks having a special relationship to the global. As with the "theorised affect" of Lacan, this begins with the supposed felt experiences of Christopher (though as they are imagined, yet again, by someone else) but makes no distinction between those experiences and the political order. The imagined 'interior' is once again to be the basis of political representation.

This is reflected, too, in how Philip imagines institutions will fade away before the messianic child. In return for the status this vision confers on Banks, though, he will be expected to perform the representation he is considered to embody. Similarly, whilst space will be opened up to everyone in principle, there is a condition: everyone must, in turn, be like Banks. Ishiguro hints, then, that the collapse of political and aesthetic representation is dangerous across both racist and totalitarian political projects and in utopian versions of the 'global'. This initially startling implication takes on greater resonance when read alongside Ishiguro's own reception.

As Walkowitz ("*Ishiguro's Floating Worlds*", 1055) notes, Ishiguro's earlier critical readers tended to attribute an essential Japanese quality to him, even 'while they remain otherwise self-conscious about the use of ethnographic language'; although some later criticism has challenged this, the tendency persists. As the child of parents who migrated to Britain from post-war Japan, Ishiguro has himself been read as the abandoned child, signifying a disruption to the international order that must be resolved through the recognition of some essential identity. That this identity is repeatedly imagined as Japanese does not, however, preclude the recognition of Ishiguro as himself a figure for the 'global'; rather the two repeatedly merge, often around an assumption that his childhood experiences were traumatic (a suggestion he denies (Ishiguro and Moore 1)) and even through symbolic reversal of his childhood migration:

In several reviews [of *An Artist of the Floating World*], the artist Ono and the artist Ishiguro are metaphorically interchangeable. Critics associate the novelist's technique with an authentic Japaneseness, and they propose this affiliation as a natural rather than a cultivated element of Ishiguro's craft. [...] Ishiguro has lived in England since the age of six, was educated in England, writes in English, but he is regularly compared with 'modern Japanese novelists' all the same. (Walkowitz, "Ishiguro's Floating Worlds", 1053-1054)

Even though this trend has been increasingly challenged over time (for example, by Beedham, *The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*), it persisted well after the publication of *Orphans*; for example, even when acknowledging that 'it is an open question where Ishiguro's style came from,' Ben Howard nevertheless resorts immediately to the child supposedly inside the man:

Evocative, by turns, of British reserve and Buddhist equanimity, [the novel] reflects the experience of a writer who, at the age of six, was brought from Nagasaki to England by his parents and reared in their Japanese home. (Howard, "A Civil Tongue", 400)

Significantly, Howard refers to a subjectivity not entirely knowable 'from the outside', but then immediately implies his own knowledge of it, in part through the imagined interior space of a home, ironically echoing *Orphans*. In thus symbolically reversing Ishiguro's migration (and recovering an image of him as child), the critics are also symbolically resolving the international crisis they presume caused that migration (the Second World War, and specifically the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, which injured Ishiguro's mother (Wroe, "Living Memories", 1)). Moorly's irritated assertion that Banks has "a special relationship to what is, in truth, the source" of global problems echoes the attitude of Ishiguro's critics.

We should, therefore, read *Orphans* in part as Ishiguro writing back to his critics, as his diagnosing their compulsion for recognition and imagined affective images as the basis for representation. This follows Sim's arguments about how Ishiguro, notably in *Remains*, tends to write back to undermine the latent (or

explicit) essentialism in the reception of his novels. *Orphans*, in this trend, both figures and disfigures the narratives behind Ishiguro's own reception.

For two days after our arrival in Hong Kong [...] I suppose I did appreciate here and there [...] some vague echo of Shanghai. [...] It was as though I had come upon [...] a distant cousin of a woman I once loved; whose gestures, facial expressions, little shrugs nudge the memory, but who remains, overall, an awkward, even grotesque parody of a much-cherished image. (*Orphans*, 299)

Ishiguro's desire to frustrate expectations for recognition is played out above all in Christopher Banks' final 'reunion' with his 'mother', which takes place in 1958 in the globalised and 'post-war' city of Hong Kong. This reunion scene can be usefully read alongside Ishiguro's own comment on globalisation, in interview. Countering some of the critical attitudes directed towards him, he replaced a desire to read the Other's 'internal' life with a rather externalised form of dialogue:

I should talk to people in a way that they understand. If you're talking to someone who just flew in from China or Rome you will talk to them in a slightly different way than to someone who has grown up alongside you [...] It's just good manners, really. (Qtd. in Groes and Lewis, "Kazuo Ishiguro and the Ethics of Empathy, 2)

Ishiguro indicates a higher ethical imperative towards the Other than affective identification; and the imperative is, in fact, for a certain kind of dialogue, for an attention to form as 'good manners', gesturing towards the formality in Ishiguro's style (itself firmly attributed by his early critics to his Japanese origins (Walkowitz, "Ishiguro's Floating Worlds", 1053). This 'formality', unlike both Ishiguro's critics and his characters, allows representation – the right and opportunity for speech – to the Other without attempting to read her.

A similar formality is required from Banks when he finds a woman he claims to recognise as his mother, but who certainly fails to recognise him as her son. Banks lives a parody of Oedipal narrative: Loving his mother and resenting his father during

infancy, he is 'orphaned' and exiled. He becomes a detective – like Oedipus, a solver of deadly riddles – before eventually returning to his parents' city. Yet when apparently he finally rediscovers his mother, in an uncanny and ironic reversal of the Oedipus story, Banks cannot know that it is her. Banks ironically gains what Freud's Oedipal subject is usually denied – the return of the mother – but nevertheless retains what that subject struggles to escape: the traumatic failure of recognition.

The centrality of the 'reunion' scene has already been critically recognised. Bain discusses it in the context of situating *Orphans* as an ironic exploration of the demands for intervention in a global crisis from the liberal western actor (242-5), exposing the grotesque inequality of representation evident in such demands. This is conclusively demonstrated, Bain argues, by the novel's ultimate revelation of Banks' true situation (his economic support from an unholy self-sacrifice by his mother to the combined forces of the corrupt warlord Wang-Ku and the amoral corporation employing Banks' father, with the deal brokered by "Uncle" Philip).

Whilst this accurately identifies *Orphans'* concerns, Bain replicates a representational mode the novel actually parodies rather than, as he suggests, finally affirms:

The introduction of Diana Banks and Wang Ku as the joint financial spectre of Christopher's life is more than an eruptive moment [...] Diana's past comes to us and to Christopher, rather, as a story about accumulation through invisible labour. What's in the darkness behind Banks is a process – an ongoing, unending history – that has made a product. The product is, of course, him. (Bain, "International Settlements", 256)

Here, Bain concludes, Banks has discovered "the never-ending and unpalatable condition that will always underwrite his intentions and his resources" (258): According to this, Banks was indeed what he was repeatedly said to be, a special representation of the global – but as the heart of a global darkness rather than its saviour. When Banks finds his mother unable to recognise him, this scene confirms, Bain argues, his representational function; this Diana, herself the



representative victim of the system that has benefitted him, may not recognise him, but we now do so.

This crucially fails to acknowledge that Ishiguro parodies the idea of revealing the causal heart of global crises through Banks as representational figure. The way Banks' status is apparently revealed in the novel itself parodies both Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Dickens' *Great Expectations* - in addition to Oedipus, and Golden Age detective fiction. The effect of these references is to increase the sense that he is living a pre-existing narrative derived from elsewhere, one that is fundamentally aesthetic and which repeatedly conflicts with reality. (This indicates that those who criticised *Orphans* for its rather unconvincing presentation of Banks' detective career (see Hensher, "It's the Way He Tells It") missed the point; the narrative, rooted in the *Bildungsroman* and detective genres, *is* the delusion, and vice-versa). Rather than confirming Banks' role as representation, these references draw attention to the gaps and failures in how he enacts that role.

Bain claims that Banks' representational condition wholly encompasses not only his resources, but his intentions too. This is partially true; the representational relationship to the global ascribed to Banks has overwhelming effects on his sense of self and ultimately his actions, as we've seen. Yet even whilst acting out his representational status, Banks repeatedly disrupts it – making 'slips' akin to the Freudian sense. Why, after all, does he get distracted with searching for the adult Akira – presumably now an enemy citizen, possibly a combatant - rather than for his parents? Why does he take so long to return to Shanghai in the first place? Why was Banks' detective career apparently determined as much by the gift of a dead childhood friend (9) as by the imperative to resolve the case of his parents' disappearance? Why does his relationship with Sarah Hemmings fluctuate wildly? These elements imply a private life – a set of desires or, in Bain's term, "intentions" – that don't fit Banks' role as representation of a global system.

This is not, of course, to deny that such systems operate to terrible effect, or that the novel is interested in dramatising such effects. However, the novel parodies and undermines any expectation of revelation of a coherent and total system where

the only imperative left is to recognise this previously hidden, now revealed, coherence through a representational aesthetic figure. This is because the emphasis on recognition (and denial of the incoherent elements of the representational system) itself leads to endless deferral of extension to political representation in favour of an attempt for perfect aesthetic representation, matched by a perfect reading.

Ishiguro's interest in thoroughly disrupting such an attempt emerges most sharply, in fact, in the 'reunion' scene. The true identity of the woman Banks calls his mother, which Bain does not question,<sup>18</sup> is in fact subject to a terrible (and yet, for Ishiguro, typical) ambiguity. Banks has made several irrational identifications already by this point; he sees 'Akira' first as a businessman and then a wounded soldier, ignoring the sightings' mutual incompatibility; he thinks he remembers seeing Wang-Ku, but this is probably the power of suggestion (117); he expects to find his (presumably long deceased) childhood *amah* still living (195). Though Banks never acknowledges it, logically his parents may well have died too between their disappearance (given that he studied at Cambridge in 1923 (3), this occurred c.1908-1912) and his 1937 return to Shanghai.

This renders his identification of Diana (whom he last saw 48 years ago, at age ten)<sup>19</sup> deeply suspect. This woman does not recognise the man before her as her son; she appears to recognise "Puffin" as Banks' childhood nickname, but this is hardly unambiguous from an author best known for his concern with unreliable memory. Banks' own repressed doubt about the woman's identity is betrayed in his metaphor about "the distant cousin of a woman I once loved" in describing Hong Kong.

Following these hints that the woman Banks meets in Hong Kong may not be his mother at all, the whole episode turns the revelation it initially appears to provide on its head. This denies the consoling effect found in the scene's claimed revelation of Banks' true representational status, as a "'liberal and humanitarian actor' who, standing amid the wreckage of a particular political crisis, is orphaned and paralysed by revelations about a system operating in the name of his welfare" (Bain, "International Settlements", 245). This revelation, whilst exposing a horrifying

sequence of exploitation, and refusing the possibility of action, is consoling insofar as it appears to establish a secure identity for Banks as the aesthetic representation of that exploitation, available to us as a figure through which we can recognise and describe it.

For Bain, this recognition of the system, provided through its aesthetic representation in Banks himself, is the key imperative offered by *Orphans*. Here, Banks – and through him, the reader – has become the modern hero described by Moretti, tasked less “to put *an end* to the ‘futility and anarchy that is contemporary history’”, but to give them “a shape and a significance. To create a *perceptual* order, not a real order” (Moretti, *The Modern Epic*, 112). However, if we accept my claim that Bain has misread the implications of the scene, the consolation offered by this perceptual order is no longer available.

In fact, the ethical imperative of the scene is very different to what Bain suggests. It is not to undertake the affective identification he proposes, (What if this woman were “your own [parent]?”), but instead, to represent someone precisely *outside* the terms of affective identification. Whilst we began with the abandoned child providing a blank surface for the aesthetic resolution of a global political crisis, this woman is a wholly opposite figure for the global, a figure of irreducible private history who cannot be securely identified. This privacy is ultimately guaranteed by the inability to know whether Diana Banks is living or dead.

The scene peculiarly collapses the still-possible *death* of Diana Banks with the distance between Banks’ life in England and the ‘Diana’ he finds in Hong Kong. Curiously, here the possible (even likely) death of Diana Banks makes her loss all the more real because it cannot be known: We cannot be sure that Banks is right in identifying his mother; yet we cannot be sure he is wrong; the person before him could be his mother, or anyone else in the world.

This ‘Diana’ brings the politics of representation into crisis at the very moment they ‘ought’ to be affirmed, as the abandoned child retrieves his mother, and as the *Bildungsroman* concludes with territory being symbolically brought under the identifying vision of the protagonist, the affirmation of his own representational status (Moretti, *The Way of the World*). Ishiguro disrupts all this, re-establishing the global as the site of a *difference* that refuses to fulfil prior identities or limit ethical

responsibility, expressed through its refusal to match Banks' *representation* of himself to a *recognition* by his 'mother'. Yet, strangely, Banks is nevertheless actually consoled by the encounter.

Banks describes the scene later to his niece:

"Do you really suppose,' Jennifer asked, 'she had no inkling at all who you were?"

"I'm sure she didn't. But she meant what she said, and she knew what she was saying. [...] If you'd seen her face, when I first said that name, you'd have no doubt about it either." (*Orphans*, 306)

Although Banks says "Diana" had "no inkling" of who he was, she showed what Lacan would call the *vouloir-dire*, the "intention to signify", that marks the subject as such more than the content signified (Lacan, *Écrits*, 83). Banks finds he was able to speak with this woman without fully 'reading' her history, her own 'content', and certainly without her successfully reading him. If a human 'interior' is known to exist, but cannot be read, how then does the encounter leave Banks confident that she 'meant what she said?' It does so, I suggest, because the formal and spatial conditions for the dialogue, where words show an intention to signify even if not a transparent significance, exist – they consist of the institution where "Diana" is housed and which Banks visits, and of the 'good manners', or formality, with which he pursues their conversation.

'Formality' characterises one's mode of speech when entering into dialogue with someone whose equal right to the space and the conversation is acknowledged, but of whom one does not claim personal, affective or 'interior' knowledge. In other words, 'formality' itself constitutes a form of representation, one that tends to take place only when the institutional conditions governing access to a given space makes it possible, as here. This attention to form and the formal, so pronounced in the reunion scene and so resonant with the critical debates over Ishiguro's style, indicates the novel's overall imperative for political representation to take priority over affective identification and over recognition. It implies that access to forms and

spaces providing such political representation should not be conditional on the provision of an affective image for recognition.

Snyder, quoted earlier, gives historical reference for the violence caused by such conditions in practice, noting that in the Holocaust “the people who had the power to rescue others were those who could dispense identity documents” (255). Those who get identified (and thus saved from death) are those who can provide some affective image – generally of their ethnic or national affiliation, but in other circumstances also perhaps of some imagined universal and essential qualities – to provide for this recognition. Ishiguro, through his ironic and uncanny parody of this situation, hints both at how it is paradigmatic in modern structures for political representation (even when these are called into question by international crises) and how its consequences are profoundly inhumane. Ishiguro also suggests, as we’ve found, that both this inhumane imperative and its consequences are intensified for the child.

Snyder refers to this in the Europe of the 1940s. We might also recognise it in the Europe of today, presented in dominant media narratives as besieged by the victims or embodiments of global crises (again, the distinction between these categories is ambivalent and viciously contended), and where repeated calls are made for those seeking access to demonstrate either their emptiness of political capacity (as in the case of children), or their ethnic or quasi-ethnic allegiance, or their adherence to supposedly universal values. Any and all of this, the cruder but dominant voices in contemporary European political culture suggest, can be demonstrated visually; the child who is really suffering will not look like a fit or healthy adolescent; the woman who is really capable of political agency will not appear with her hair or face covered up. There are, no doubt, many other contemporary examples where affective identification, aesthetically mediated, is the prerequisite for political representation.

Ishiguro shows both the absurdity and the hidden violence in all this. It is a violence not only to the ‘global’ as the imperative for national and supra-national polities to engage in Arendt’s real politics, politics as a negotiation for the future. It is

also a violence towards the privacy of the subject, her right not to represent on demand, which Arendt rightly saw as the necessary basis for her agency, that is for her right to represent in any worthwhile sense. It should be read alongside the demands to represent oneself in aesthetic and affective terms that appear again for Kathy and Tommy in *Never Let Me Go* and for Axl and Beatrice in *The Buried Giant* (2015).

History is produced, *Orphans* suggests, through forms of engagement, which are only possible, in practice, when the institutional conditions exist to allow access to space for such engagement, even if the encounters themselves are contrary to what the authorities governing those institutions expect (as with Christopher and Akira). The asylum housing “Diana” at the novel’s end is a bleakly ironic version of the sorts of institutions where such relationships might take place. The ‘global’ space thereby opened up is not a utopian realm where institutions have fallen away before the messianic child (for this, as Ishiguro suggests, still relies upon a prioritisation of aesthetic recognition). Rather, it indicates the point when states and other institutions become conscious of themselves *as institutions*, subject to politics as a negotiation for the future, rather than as rehearsing pre-existing identities and essential qualities or ‘European values’. Ishiguro’s cross-contamination between different histories of paranoia, racism, and utopianism itself provides a model for this, in its resistance to the reduction of history to essential identity.

Such institutions might be concerned with revising the current political arrangements to avoid repetition of the past (as institutions referenced in *Orphans*, like the League of Nations, once tried and failed to do); Ishiguro powerfully suggests that as long as we remain attached to images of identity as the basis for our political order, past crises will indeed repeat themselves.

There is, then, both an urgency and a pragmatism in the imperative remaining at the end of *Orphans*. In this respect, it echoes an episode in *Remains* where Stevens is complicit in the dismissal of two Jewish servants from Darlington Hall. Stevens defends his complicity on the basis that he cannot counter the insight into world systems possessed by Lord Darlington, with his supposed knowledge of

the “nature of Jewry” (158). Miss Kenton argues back (rather like Diana for the servants from Shantung), pointing out that the Jewish women have undertaken their work perfectly well and that there is no justification for their dismissal. Her pragmatism, with its basis in an assumption of respect for the women, a ‘formality’ of sorts, would have saved their places in the institutional space and possibly their lives too, had she been successful. Lord Darlington’s demand for recognition of the supposed essential nature of the women, which Stevens accepts as part of his general adherence to the political order as it stands, is responsible for the violence here.

This has implications, too, for literary criticism as an institutionalised practice of reading, where political and aesthetic forms of representation are mediated. My reading of *Orphans* could be assumed to align with the recent movement (as advanced by Best and Marcus (“Surface Reading”), whose argument’s significance for Ishiguro is recognised by Walkowitz (“Unimaginable Largeness”, 234)) challenging the dominance of textual interpretation seeking revelation of the ‘interior’ of a text or figure. Ishiguro, however, continues to insist on the importance of interiority – whilst denying his reader the possibility of its revelation. He insists on representation before recognition.

In a reversal, therefore, of the basic demand on literary scholars to read what we cannot immediately see, and to locate those images that make themselves available for such reading, we are compelled rather to disturb the relationship between political forms and aesthetic figures. It is only through this willingness to allow for what we cannot recognise that we can pursue a better politics and practice of representation.

Even those who cannot be read or seen by the ‘west’ urgently demand and deserve representation (as continuing global crises themselves show); and the global as the site of a gap between institutions and identities, the site of private lives and unlicensed encounters, provides the basis for a potential, but still hardly realised, practice of real politics (in something approaching Arendt’s terms). *Orphans*, too, demands re-reading for its supremely humane parody of an inhumane politics of

representation, one still relevant to contemporary global crises and to our inadequate responses. Reading Ishiguro's use of the abandoned child, whom we find still at work in those on-going crises, helps us to realise the full, tragic significance of his parody.

As discussed earlier, in *The Private Life* (2013), Cohen argues that both totalitarian regimes and authoritarian cultures tend to seek the violent erasure of any distinction between public and private. As a frame for reading Ishiguro, this suggests that a specific relation of the child to the adult is at threat in such cultures – the relation of ambiguous proximity that *Never Let Me Go* shows both as contamination and as loving. The essentialist conception of the child is highly accommodating towards, perhaps even necessary for, authoritarianism (as Edelman has argued), but the real, often recalcitrant child, and the relation of that child to the adult, are its enemies. The attempted abolition of this relation constitutes an attack on the content of real life (which, as Cohen has claimed, depends on a private life that is in a sense insignificant, existing before representation), as we have seen throughout this chapter and the last. This is a serious issue for the practice of critical reading; for example, although Edelman's critique of the function of the essentialist child is highly effective, its elevation of the death drive, *jouissance* and the queer itself becomes dismissive of real politics, as I shall argue further shortly.

We have seen that the authoritarian violence in Ishiguro's work aligns with the paranoid search for a secure and permanent present that evades death, time and change. The cost of such a present, though, is of meaningful difference between the public and private selves; the disappearance of the real child is an attempt to eliminate this difference. Ishiguro powerfully suggests that an attention to the institutional and to the formal is required to counter this. As noted, by the end of *Never Let Me Go*, institutions – not only Hailsham but others of its type – are reported to have failed and have been abandoned. The perfectly unitary, perfectly 'present' society established has no need of them, nor of their educative mediation between the private and the public, the child and the adult.



It is here that Ishiguro's pronounced concern with institutions becomes particularly important, then – a concern including Darlington Hall and Hailsham, but also institutions more broadly defined: the pre-war Japanese education system led by Ono; the Shanghai International Settlement where Christopher Banks grows up; the ideal England sought by Stevens; even the café orchestras in which Janeck plays. Institutions, even in such cases, are of course designed to reproduce themselves, and therefore to educate the child, even when they lie outside or beyond the actual education system. They also manage the relation between public and private, as Stevens perceives in his initial celebration of precisely this function at Darlington Hall, which gives the Lord whose name it bears both a public face (or, literally, façade)<sup>20</sup> and a private realm.

## Chapter 5: The Child, Authority, and Institutions

In this thesis I have read certain literary scenarios involving the child and authority in order to explore the political implications they raise. I've also suggested that these implications are significant for the practice of reading (and that the practice of literary interpretation is itself, amongst other things, an attempt to exercise authority over the future and thus over the future's embodiment, the child). In reading Ishiguro, I have further proposed that institutions are key to all this; that not only are institutions the site of the authorities enacting violence upon the future through the child, but that institutions might nevertheless be necessary for an alternative to that violence. This includes, of course, the institutions of literary interpretation themselves, which, as Ishiguro's case suggests, (re)produce critical cultures that also deserve scrutiny and critique.

These conclusions have emerged from observing the tendency of education and violence to coincide as means of responding to the challenge that the child poses for authority. In these scenarios, which we've repeatedly seen played out in novels, films and other forms, two particular characteristics emerge: The first is the gaze, the violent reading that replaces the visual with the vision, or to put it another way, that we read what we see, and then believe that reading, often on pain of death. This gaze demands something for us to recognise – above all, the positive identification of the child as embodiment of a recognisable future – as the prerequisite for the political representation of the Other, and of the child specifically. The second characteristic is the private life of the child, which I have associated with the child's capacities for creativity, ambition and desire, and which – following Arendt and other theorists, and indeed the prompting of the literary authors discussed here – we have identified as the necessary basis for political participation.

These two characteristics of the problem of the child and authority are closely linked. The gaze demands that the child produce or perform some value for recognition; this must be done on demand in a temporal sense, it must be available for anticipation. The private life suggests that this demand cannot be met, at least not in the terms the adult intends, and not on demand – and if it appears to be met on demand, the precocious and therefore dangerous child, like Miles or Edward III (who are both ‘ahead of time’ in their own ways), may actually be manipulating adult authority. This has significant consequences, though, because meeting this demand for recognition is the basis for access to political, educational and other institutions – not only in these fictional scenarios but in history, and in the contemporary world. This is ironic, because it is within institutions that, in historical rather than utopian terms, the private life that is the necessary basis of political difference – even, according to Arendt, of politics at all – is given the space it needs to exist.

Given that all this is played out, as I have argued, around a violent reading of the child, what this also implies for our practices of reading as literary critics, often with some role in controlling access to institutions of various kinds. In doing so, I shall begin by briefly returning to two images from the preceding chapters. They emerge from very different, and ostensibly quite unrelated places, yet visually and thematically, they echo one another. These are Edward III at the end of Marlowe’s *Edward II*, and Miles performing a poem in *The Innocents*: two boys, each wearing a crown, apparently contemplating the image of a dead man, two children who have ambiguously come into authority before their time.

As literary critics or cultural historians working today, we might identify these boys as embodying the queer child. It’s worth considering whether the queer child, as the most consistent term we currently have for the child who represents the possibility of political difference, who demands representation but frustrates recognition, is adequate to the children we’ve considered in this thesis. I’ll do so by returning to what is perhaps the most influential formulation to date of the queer as the answer to the problem of the child and authority, Edelman’s *No Future*.

At the end of *Edward II*, the young Edward III has gained power through a collapse of institutional authority over time, a collapse that has arisen from very suggestive conditions for contemporary queer readers. Had Edward's father not been excessively attracted to Gaveston, had his father not been murdered in a grotesque parody of anal sex, and had Mortimer and Isabella not been distracted by their own equally excessive desire, this child would not have yet had the opportunity to come into authority. But is this child himself queer? Perhaps so, if we consider his premature seizure of power, relying as it does on his capacity to think secretly and therefore constitute a potentially queer, disruptive difference between interior thought and external presentation. Yet this child's first act, as we saw, was to abolish that difference in others, starting with Mortimer, through acts of authoritarian violence. When Jarman remade the play as a celebration of the queer on film and put the child at its centre, he eliminated this element from the ending. There is something about the relationship between queerness and power in Marlowe, as we found, that didn't suit Jarman's ultimately affirmative political purpose.

When Edward III contemplates Mortimer's severed head at the end of *Edward II*, he fantasises about abolishing death, or rather making it one and the same as life. This, he indicates, is his desired basis for his own authority over his subjects. It is also a fantasy about abolishing an institution, insofar as the monarchy has been exposed in the play as an institution founded not upon a natural self-perpetuating legitimate order, but as maintained by the exercise of power through violence. In other words, the monarchy (more broadly, the authorities claiming the right to rule) has been exposed as an institution precisely insofar as it is unnatural. The monarchy has fallen out of joint because it is based, as written by Marlowe, on a fantasy of natural union between the public and the private, a fantasy of itself as a perfectly natural institution and therefore, in a sense, no institution at all.

The supreme irony, of course, is that this Edward – who is in different senses the product of at least three queer relationships (Edward II/Isabella, Edward II/Gaveston, Isabella/Mortimer) immediately announces his intention to erase the distinction between public and private and make real again the fantasy of the monarchy as an essential and natural authority – and thus hardly an institution at all.

The child who imagined his own disruption of adult authority, and then carried out that disruption by taking advantage of the queering of monarchical authority represented by Mortimer and Isabella, plans the eradication of all future potential for further disruption. A fundamentally queer and private imagination located in the child creates a fantasy of power, quickly used to deny and destroy the possibility of the same capacity in others. The disturbance posed by Edward III is that he answers the adult gaze on the child with a gaze of his own – the one he turns upon Mortimer's head.

Similarly, in *The Innocents*, in his recital from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Miles is also frustrating the adult gaze just when it expects consolation through the child's embodiment of the future. This particular 'performance' is just one occasion in Miles' general tendency to performativity – his presentation of Miss Giddens with flowers, his kissing her and his other flirtations, his dressing in a gentleman's clothes, his formality at afternoon tea. These are performances of adulthood; the usual consolation of such performances, their charm for the adult gaze, is that they convey the necessity of initiation into adult practices and simultaneously the child's innocent incapability to perform those practices as an adult really would. The 'problem' with Miles, of course, is that he is too successful in these performances, far too much really like an adult, even whilst he remains physically a child. Miles does, in fact, exactly what he is explicitly accused of doing: he contaminates the child with desires for adulthood, which is to say simply to be other than he now is. Thus his performance of the poem, which is a particular culmination of this tendency, frustrates a moment of identification of the child when it is most expected, when it is most anticipated by the adult gaze. Miles replaces this with his own apparent gaze upon the dead Quint.

In both *Edward II* and *The Innocents*, then, despite their very different contexts, a similar moment occurs, one that denies the anticipation of the child from adult authority and which instead creates a new act, a deviation from what is anticipated. Edward III orders Mortimer's execution and announces his desire for a form of rule that will negate the possibility of anyone seizing power from himself; Miles (perhaps) invites Quint in to replace the moral rule of Miss Giddens with

something else. This politics places the child in time – and thus in the position of simultaneously remaining and becoming other than the child – reminding the current authorities of the mortality with which, as Freud pointed out, they struggle.

If we can recognise both Edward III and Miles as queer children, but their queerness does necessarily resist, nor indicate a better alternative to, authority, is a ‘queer reading’ of the child and authority sufficient here? Noting how the child is consistently used in conservative discourse to limit the possibilities of politics, Edelman dares to wonder –

What [...] would it signify not to be “fighting for the children”? How could one take the *other* “side,” when taking any side at all necessarily constrains one to take the side *of*, by virtue of taking a side *within*, a political order that returns to the Child as the image of the future it intends? (*No Future*, 3)

Edelman identifies queerness and the death drive as acting to negate this order (queerness figures “the place of the social order’s death drive” (3)). However, he struggles with, even as he persistently returns to, the issue of how this negation functions, as he believes it does, from within the order. His solution is that –

Queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place [of abjection and stigma], accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure. (*No Future*, 3)

This suggests that the queer exists as a kind of permanent resistance within the institutions through which authority operates. Edelman is keen to emphasise this as a negation; any affirmative role would destroy its function. His formulation of the queer here draws upon Lacan and, behind him, on Hegel. Queerness as negation has, Edelman argues, drastic consequences for the political use of the future:

[The queer] suggests a refusal – the appropriately perverse refusal that characterises queer theory – of every substantialization

of identity, which is always oppositionally defined, and, by extension, of history as linear narrative (the poor man's teleology) in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself – *as itself* – through time. Far from partaking of this narrative movement towards a viable political future, far from perpetuating the fantasy of meaning's eventual realization, the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form.

Rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, this ascription of negativity to the queer, we might, as I argue, do better to consider accepting and even embracing it. (*No Future*, 4)

Edelman emphasises that the queer needs to be understood as negativity, not as affirmation of identity; and yet it's a negativity that needs to be "accepted" and "embraced". His critique of teleological history sets up the queer as the site of resistance to this history, and as a negation of futurity. The problem with this is that it exclusively considers history as teleology, as the revelation of latent meaning. If the queer resists this tendency to "substantialization of identity", it ironically nevertheless ends up here, despite Edelman's efforts, as a rather substantial, and indeed identifiable, thing itself. Whilst this may oppose the future as teleological, it also opposes the emergence of any particular or different future in relation to the child, who in embracing the queer appears to become just as permanent and unchanging as the conservative image of the child.

This explains why Edelman is incoherent in insisting that the queer is a radical "bar" to the social order, yet nevertheless necessarily functions within it; he identifies the queer with a kind of atemporal permanence (the permanence of submission to the death drive) that is only explicable by making it intrinsic to the social order, even as it is claimed to act in resistance to that order. This perhaps would not be a problem, except that Edelman's hostility to the institutions of civil society (undoubtedly justified, insofar as those institutions are organised to oppress)

is actually a hostility to the difference between the private self and the social order, which Edelman describes in terms of “figurality”:

[...] Politics, construed as oppositional or not, never rests on essential identities. It centers, instead, on the figurality that is always essential to identity, and thus on the figural relations in which social identities are always inscribed. (*No Future*, 17)

In Edelman’s thought, “politics” describes the symbolic order to which we are compelled to acquiesce, but with which we never can, despite our efforts, wholly identify. Queerness indicates the refusal of such efforts, of “figuring” the self, in response to their constant demand through the figure of the Child. Yet both Ishiguro and Arendt suggest that this process of figuring – the relationship between a private self and a political and/or aesthetic representation – need not only take place in such authoritarian circumstances, even if they both also imply that such authoritarianism currently prevails.

Edelman’s demand is essentially for recognition of the queer, leading to its rhetorical affirmation (despite the queer’s alleged negativity), which will dispel or at least disrupt the demand for representation. This recognition is, in a new form, the desired encounter with the Other that reduces both self and other to a single present, and Edelman explicitly suggests that this must be prioritised over concern with the politics of institutions. This does not stand up to the two queer children described above, Edward III and Miles, whose queerness *is* a desire for institutional authority. Edelman’s determination to reject “reproductive futurism” leads him to insist on the value of the present, ignoring the fact that (as these children show) the present contaminated with the future can be the queerest thing of all.

Jarman’s desire to affirm – through first recognising - the queer, through the queer child, led him to fail to recognise the “dusty” Marlowe’s writing of a much more uneasily queer child at the play’s conclusion. The model proposed by Edelman, with its emphasis on recognition of the queer as a precise, recognisable and permanent force of resistance, is adequate for viewing Jarman’s child but not for reading Marlowe’s. Jarman’s vision of an ecstatic, atemporal moment of



identification between father and son at the ending of his film, one that does away with death, is a version of the death drive that would fit with Edelman's reading. However, we have to be cautious about making such a display of affective identification the prerequisite for our interest in a particular text, for our willingness to institutionalise the reading of that text through critical authority, given that Marlowe frustrates precisely such an interest and refuses an affirmative ending. This is why I bring up an early modern text for an exploration of contemporary literature and critical culture: because the failure to read that text that Jarman represents (and which the Edelman model would likely perpetuate) is indicative of the difficulties we still face in constructing an adequate reading of the child.

This suggests, also, that we need to turn to institutions as determining the conditions within which the child grows up and where the difference between public and private life is mediated. Marlowe's Edward III does not only structurally draw our attention to the importance of institutions (because of his role in restoring the 'legitimate' institution of monarchy, a legitimacy the play's events have thoroughly undermined) the content of his speech also, in his desire to abolish the institutional as distinct from his personal rule based on total recognition and the refusal of privacy, does this too.

It might be objected that we are already living with institutions, and that institutions are in fact themselves the problem insofar as they constitute the practical mechanisms of the conservative, oppressive social order Edelman sets out to critique. After all, too, the educational institutions in Ishiguro's novels are almost all authoritarian in nature and destructive in their consequences, even the initially liberal-seeming institution at Hailsham, with its emphasis on the clone-children's welfare. Of course, in practice those in authority virtually always work through institutions in some form, even if only for pragmatic reasons. Yet it is possible for institutions to be based upon the fantasy of their own destruction; as Arendt points out, Marx's predicted "withering away of the state" encouraged precisely this fantasy, which turned out to be inimical to real politics (*The Human Condition*, 45). More immediately under our purview here, we've also noted how Thatcherism based itself on a fantasy of union between the political, economic and natural

orders. Reading Ishiguro through Arendt, then, one senses that institutions become most dangerous when they fail to recognise their own nature as social constructions; when they turn from creating representation to providing recognition.

In Ishiguro, the failure of institutions comes from the same desire for an impossible union and a consequent rejection of institutions as institutions, which are replaced by institutions based on the fantasy of their own destruction (as ironically reflected in the actual final abandonment of Hailsham). Using Arendt as a frame to critique Edelman, and noting the literary examples from Ishiguro's characters, we can observe that if the death drive and the queer function to create the space for politics by rejecting the union of the political and the natural, then this space as a physical and temporal reality - rather than as a theoretical conceit - can only be created by attending to institutions. This depends, however, on accepting the future as unknown and unrecognisable but nevertheless at present in the form of the child, demanding representation even where recognition is necessarily refused.

One implication of this is that the visual display of affective content can no longer be the precondition for access to the form of institutions and of representation. There is an example of the absurdity of this precondition when in *The Unconsold*, where Ryder enters a city over-saturated with institutions – and, through a single performance, he is expected to transform them, to redeem them in fact. This is a utopian vision, an expectation that a single representative and a single representation can redeem the diverse whole (much as Tommy thought that his artwork might represent, and thereby temporarily preserve, his life). The city authorities who have engaged Ryder to perform refuse to allow him any rehearsal time, but rather continually expect him to appear at events where he is asked to reveal some sort of salvation through meaning. The absurdity of this scenario is that content is always demanded before form, and as the precondition for the access to civic institutions and a political platform that Ryder is so readily granted. Of course, no content is ever actually revealed or generated (the performance does not even take place), and the real child is repeatedly displaced in favour of the representational child within.

Ishiguro radically proposes that we should instead allow content to follow form, that is for the full lives of individuals to follow their access to institutional protections rather than for that access to depend on them putting their lives on display. In *Orphans*, he draws a parallel between this expectation in literary criticism and in broader political culture, exposing a 'politics of reading' at work across both.

The final problem with Edelman's formulation of the queer and the death drive is that in their emphasis on the affirmation of the queer, they make its political potential depend on a prior display of a certain experience or quality (the experience he, following Lacan, terms *jouissance*). He insists on prioritising content before form; for him, the only form that matters is a symbolic order that will reliably and regularly produce content. What, though, if *jouissance* itself only occurs within certain physical and historical preconditions, and cannot be retrieved through revelation or affirmation? What if form must precede content? Then we no longer gain authority merely by reading to recognise it, but rather only by reading to create it, that is, to expand access to it.

*The Line of Beauty* is so compelling in part because of the analogy it draws between political action and seduction, between Thatcher and her devotees on one side, and the world of unbounded sexuality amongst the gays. Both forms of desire hint at the death drive in their emphasis on repetition, on reproduction without meaningful change. Yet, of course, the repeated life thus established (in the cult of Thatcher and in the endless sex-and-coke sessions, respectively) ultimately works against its own containment. It is in this context that another aspect of Edelman's argument becomes telling for what it omits. He aligns Lacanian *jouissance* with the death drive, and both with the queer. Yet *jouissance*, as marked by what is *excessive* in desire, appears in *The Line of Beauty* as ultimately constrained by Nick's lifestyle and by its High Thatcherite context; in seeking to contain excess within an *image of excess*, as part of an anti-political politics, Thatcherism ultimately works against *jouissance*, which is implicated in creativity as much as in the death drive.

This version of *jouissance* derives from the pleasurable suffering provoked by the Other who throws the self out of alignment with its own identity, but which

requires not the permanent submission of the self to the death drive, but rather makes demands on the subject's capacity for imagination, which itself derives inextricably from the death drive.<sup>21</sup> This demand is itself for figuration, in fact. A submission to the death drive (such as that which Edelman proposes) would treat the death drive as a permanent retreat from the excessive demands of the Real, which it finally cannot provide, except (as Edelman recognises) as a point in the structure of the social order. Ishiguro's novels indicate, though, that this point cannot be realised as an actual place to live, in any meaningful sense; attempts to realise it produce authoritarian and violent attempts at social control. Precisely because the death drive arises in response to an excess of the Real and to the creation of *jouissance*, it must attempt to overcome that excess, which it cannot do (see Borch-Jacobsen's discussions of the contradictions of the Lacanian death drive, 103-104, 134-135). This is manifested in Ishiguro's novels through the farcical failures of characters to live at a fixed representational point in the world, despite their often earnest desire to do so.

Mr Stevens, for example, tries to live in total submission to Lord Darlington, projecting both his capacities for pleasure and his political agency on to the aristocrat. The isolation this provides is only temporary, not only because of the Second World War but also because of the arrival of Miss Kenton as a disruptive element at Darlington Hall, long before the war. Yet Miss Kenton's attempted seduction of Stevens is perhaps itself prompted by his very privacy. Ultimately, then, the relation between *jouissance* and the death drive, and between the private life and politics, is too mutually contaminated for the death drive to provide the kind of refuge into the queer that Edelman proposes, in any meaningful sense. We have to understand the death drive as inextricably bound up in creativity, I propose, and thus in the child's becoming other than the child.

This confusion between the political and the aesthetic, between pleasurable excess and democratic participation, also hints at something circular in the relation between politics and the private. For if political (and aesthetic) representation emerges from the private life, the effect of that representation, if successfully realised, is often to expand the time and space for the private life in turn. This is a

notion literalised in Kathy and Tommy's attempt to gain a "deferral" in *Never Let Me Go*; they claim a right to political recognition through putting their private lives on display, in order to extend the time available to them to live those lives. Similarly, in *The Line of Beauty*, the ability to appreciate aesthetic objects is made into a justification for the political dominance of the rich who own those objects, in order that they can continue to own them.

This circularity draws attention to the absurdity of expecting someone to display or perform the value of their private life in order to gain political participation; as one constitutes the other, this kind of desired recognition does not, properly, make sense. To demand a performance for recognition will, like the abandoned child behind *Orphans*, lead to affective identification through and by a dominant Original who sets the terms of political representation and grants it only on the basis of recognition.

The demand for the child, and for the subject more broadly, to perform and be recognised as the basis for entrance into authority is, of course, an attempt to control time. It seeks to assuage the adult's awareness of time passing, and thus of his own mortality, with a performance on demand, at a time of his choosing. It is this demand which both Edward III and Miles disrupt so perfectly. They introduce a different kind of time; a time that is always premature or out of joint, that does not manifest itself on demand. A time that implies genuine difference between past and future.

In Ishiguro's texts, this time emerges from and within the difference between recognition and representation. Its tendency towards chaos – the absurd, yet often banal and bathetic, situations in which his characters frequently find themselves – itself implies an equality, a potential expansion of political participation, given the fragility of all existing representations, which gradually collapse (as with Mr Stevens) under their own contradictions and unreality.

I am describing, evidently, an imperative to expand institutions, to open them both literally and intellectually, so that more people might access the time and space needed for (often banal) private life and thus, as Arendt argued, for political

freedom. The expectation of the hermeneutic and ecstatic encounter, the moment of revealing the self for affective identification, cannot work as a prior requirement for access. Rather we are in the world of images in *The Line of Beauty* – every one of them potentially creating the future, none guaranteed to do so, but simultaneously functioning as sites of pleasure precisely because they attract the child’s creativity, ambition and desire. It is from such private pleasures that political representation is created, but not on the terms or in the time of those currently in authority. The texts we’ve explored here suggest that the time and space to access such pleasures is worthy of both protection and expansion. Real politics might be the politics not of identity, but of pleasure - extended to the child, its consequences never wholly visible to the adult.

Rather than allowing this fantasy of an atemporal and essential identity to govern our political life, and thus limit the possibilities of the future, Ishiguro and others discussed here indicative that we might better seek to act in history - which means operating in, through and upon institutions, not on the fantasy of their destruction in favour of a natural order. Whereas Edelman proposes that the ethical imperative of the authoritarian politics of our time is to affirm a principle, the principle of queerness, I propose rather that the imperative is to create space and time for the private life and thus for politics.

As I indicate in quoting Freud early in the last chapter, our responsibility here may be most effectively realised through acceptance of its lack of effectiveness (at least, if effectiveness is considered in terms of predictability), and thus of the time and space needed for and by the child. As Adam Phillips argues (and as I noted in my introduction), Lacanian psychoanalysis (on which Edelman bases his own theoretical framework) may have underplayed the pleasure of creation and discovery in which the child is engaged. Certainly, at least, a real politics of pleasure would be one that works against authoritarianism, as Thatcherism’s conflicted attitude to pleasure so clearly demonstrates. As *The Line of Beauty* suggests, the pleasurable imagination, which ultimately derives from childhood and is expressed through the child’s ambition to be other than a child, works against its own containment. A politics of *jouissance* is one that refuses the demand to perform for others, for adults, but

which creates the possibility of acting for the Other, and for the future; because whilst doing so is (as the adult fears) traumatic, it is also (as the child perhaps knows) highly pleasurable.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Arnott, whose work is cited in the Library of Congress entry on “Children’s Rights: International Laws”, describes a debate from the late nineteenth century onwards between traditionalists (who emphasised the rights of individual families in childrearing) and progressives (who advocated an enhanced role of the state in child protection). The Thatcher government’s policies on children can be read as an attempt to reconcile this conflict; whilst Thatcherism generally emphasised ‘the family’ and rhetorically deplored government overreach, in practice, in the ways discussed here, it significantly expanded the state’s role in the child’s upbringing (and notably introduced the first National Curriculum, in 1988). The reconciliation was achieved through total identification of the interests of legitimate families with those of the state, hence Clause 28’s assertion of a right to non-recognition of certain types of family. In this sense Thatcherism, despite its ‘privatisation’ agenda, was wholly opposed to any distinction between the public and the private, a point I develop further in Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Jacqueline Rose describes (xi) how the fear of the unknown presented by evidence of child sexual abuse was displaced on to the bogeyman figure of the paedophile, as a way of evading the possibility of more general and structural social responsibility for the abuse. I suggest that one of the most traumatic aspects of the Savile exposure was that he now functioned as just such a bogeyman individual, but one who, ironically, simultaneously exposed the general, structural and political responsibility for his crimes.

<sup>3</sup> The joint MPS/NSPCC report into Savile’s crimes, *Giving Victims a Voice*, states that “of reported offending by Savile, 73% is against those aged under 18 years [...] the majority was in the 13 to 16 age group. [...] Within the recorded crimes there are 126 indecent acts and 34 rape / penetration offences.” (12)

<sup>4</sup> Davies’ opening chapter is entitled, “Apocalypse Now Then”, punning on both one of Savile’s catchphrases and the movie *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola’s 1979 adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*. In interview, Davies said: “I saw myself going up the river of [Savile’s] life and hopefully finding out everything on the way and then having a climactic final confrontation with him” (Cadwalladr, 1).

<sup>5</sup> As Cadwalladr comments, “The man who dressed like a paedophile was a paedophile” (1).

<sup>6</sup> At least some critics reacted with misgivings to the programme at the time. Davies quotes Catherine Storr’s comment that *Jim’ll Fix It* was “intolerably patronising [...] an insult to the dignity possessed by a child in his natural environment” (qtd. 312).

<sup>7</sup> The newborn child is a central image in the closing scene of *Streetcar*, but its treatment varied between play and film. In the playtext, Williams has the rapist Stanley caress his wife Stella whilst Blanche is removed to an asylum and the child cries; in the film, a more moralistic Stella picks up the baby to leave her husband behind.

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<sup>8</sup> This is based on “Why should you love him whom the world hate so?”, spoken by Mortimer at 4.76 in the Marlowe playtext.

<sup>9</sup> The whole novel is structured, much like *Hawksmoor* (1985), as a series of ironic juxtapositions and echoes between the Thatcherite and Elizabethan periods.

<sup>10</sup> Ishiguro has written screenplays for *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* (Channel 4, 1984); *The Gourmet* (BBC, 1987); *The Saddest Music in the World* (IFC Films, 2004); *The White Countess* (Sony, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> This was an ‘end’ which the Korean War, for example, made a highly uncertain at the time.

<sup>12</sup> Given that the alien film genre was not well established by 1960, the resonance with the bomb may be more historically plausible than the reference to aliens.

<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting how the blocking of the climatic scene of John’s murder itself particularly creates the revelation of evil as a latent reality that was already known but repressed. It follows the formula Schneider identifies in discussing the similar denouements in *Psycho*, *Don’t Look Now*, and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999):

[...] the protagonist slowly and tentatively approaches a seemingly familiar being with his or her back turned toward the camera, only to be shocked by a unanticipated revelation [...] this sheds valuable light on the horror that results from creatively combining suspense (following Hitchcock, and at the most basic level, when the viewer is forewarned about the danger facing the person or people being watched onscreen) and surprise (where such forewarning is lacking) in cinematic narratives. [...] Despite what may seem to be their mutual exclusivity, surprise can actually be mixed with suspense to produce horror if the forewarning given the viewer is too brief and/or too unspecific to prepare one adequately for the violent spectacle that follows.

(145)

<sup>14</sup> “Loadsamoney” was a character created by comedian Harry Enfield as a cockney plasterer who boasted about his earnings. The character was explicitly used by Neil Kinnock and other leading Labour politicians as an example of the greedy and philistine culture allegedly promoted by Thatcherism (McSmith, 188).

<sup>15</sup> This Marlovian link is proposed by Ackroyd in several references to *Faustus* in the novel, including the child Dyer’s choice of *Faustus* as his own name.

<sup>16</sup> Historically, this might owe something to the significance of western pop music, particularly as transmitted by the American Forces Network, in providing illicitly accessed content for Eastern bloc citizens. Ishiguro is consistently interested in how the banal outputs of mass production can attain meaning and value in other contexts, as with the junk possessions of the clones in *Never Let Me Go*. Shameem Black discusses this point, in “Ishiguro’s Inhuman Aesthetics”, in terms of Ishiguro locating humane values in the

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“inhuman” rather than in conventional sites of humanist aesthetics such as Romantic or neo-Romantic artworks.

<sup>17</sup> See also Borch-Jacobsen’s discussion of “affective identification” in a Lacanian context, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Bain does describe “the simultaneous absurdity and morbidity of [the] supposition that Diana is still alive” (258) at another moment in the novel, but does not question that Banks ultimately finds her in Hong Kong.

<sup>19</sup> Based on Christopher being at Cambridge in 1923 (3), the Banks’ disappearance occurred c.1908-1912. Banks travels to Hong Kong in 1958 (297).

<sup>20</sup> Suggestively, the 1993 film version of *Remains* opened with a shot panning across an architectural drawing of Darlington Hall’s façade, dwelling on the blank windows and doors and thus using the architecture as a visual metaphor for the film’s concern with public responsibilities and the enigma of the private.

<sup>21</sup> It will be apparent that I am using the Lacanian formulation of the death drive, which lies behind Edelman’s work, but am also attending to its contradictions. I agree with Borch-Jacobsen that the relation between the death drive and creativity, between submission and imagination, is never finally convincingly worked through by Lacan.