

**IDENTITY, IDENTIFICATION AND NARCISSISTIC
PHANTASY
IN THE NOVELS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO**

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Abstract

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This thesis explores Ishiguro's novels in the light of his preoccupation with emotional upheaval: the psychological devastations of trauma, persisting in memory from childhood into middle and old age. He demonstrates how the first person narrators maintain human dignity and self-esteem unknowingly, through specific, psychic defence mechanisms and the related behaviours, typical of narcissism.

Ishiguro's vision has affinities with the post-Kleinian Object-Relations psychoanalytic literature on borderline states of mind and narcissism. I propose a hybrid, critical framework which takes account of this, along with the key aspects of the traditional humanist novel, held in tension with certain deconstructive tactics from postmodernist writing. Post-Kleinian theory and practice sit within the humanist approach in any case, with both the ethical and the reality-seeking imperatives, paramount. Ishiguro presents humanism in the 'deficit' model and this framework helps to bring it into view.

The argument is supported by close readings of the six novels in which the trauma concerns different forms of fragmentation from wars, socio-historic upheaval, geographical dislocation, and emotional disconnection. All involve psychic fragmentation of the ego in the central character, through splitting and projection. Ishiguro, himself, perceives some sorts of object-relations, psychic mechanisms, operating at the unconscious level, which he calls 'appropriation' and which the post-Kleinians have theorised. They have found a range of variants of projective identification into the 'other' with the re-introjection of a distorted self, suffused with narcissistic phantasy.

While these defences are protective, Ishiguro seems aware that excessive projection comes at a cost: depletion of affect, weak identity, limited symbol formation, thinking and self-knowledge, and a diminished capacity to give meaning to relationships. These factors are all borne out in his narrators' omnipotent behaviours – in re-enaction. Ishiguro's narrative methods produce figurative representations of the narrators' internal worlds through his external worlds of settings, while other conventions of the novel, such as plot, character, genre and so on, are reconfigured in their deficit versions.

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Abbreviations

Kazuo Ishiguro – Novels

(1982) A Pale View of Hills	PVH
(1986) An Artist of the Floating World	AFW
(1989) The Remains of the Day	RD
(1995) The Unconsoled	U
(2000) When We Were Orphans	WO
(2005) Never Let Me Go	NLG

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In memory of
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Introduction

Identity, Identification and Narcissistic Phantasy in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro

‘Just below the understatement of the novel’s surface is a turbulence as immense as it is slow.’ (Rushdie, 1989:53).

Ishiguro: ‘...I’m not interested in the solid facts [of history] ... the focus ...is elsewhere, in the emotional upheaval.’ (Mason, 1989:334-47).

Ishiguro’s narratives intersect with troubled times in history: times of war or social upheaval, and the weakening of stable institutions that provided authority and containment. What arrested me in each novel was the gap between the trauma and emotional pain which the subject had suffered in childhood at such times, and the calm, deliberate tone of the text. There was a surprising range of controlled and controlling behaviours from each narrating character in the aftermath of loss and desolation. Ishiguro defines these behaviours as protective and self-deceiving, in the sense of self-idealising. They seem to be unconscious.

They, in my view, are enacted, psychological defences of which the narrators are largely unaware, as they struggle to preserve their own sense of dignity and self-worth. The pathos lies, it seems to me, in the dramatic irony of the fact that they do not know the true nature of their actions and cannot know that they do not. The ways of managing psychic pain, which Ishiguro shows in the texts, alerted me to those behaviours and attitudes found in the terrain of narcissism.

This work is an inter-disciplinary study – psychoanalytic thought and English literature – on six novels. I see the novels as representations of a particular range of human behaviours, re-enacting states of mind which are of special interest to Ishiguro. I had become aware that clinical presentations in psychoanalysis over the last thirty to forty years are considered to be increasingly dominated by narcissistic, personality disorders, (Steiner, 1993, and Britton, 2003), and that an impressive body of psychoanalytic literature has emerged on narcissistic and borderline states of mind. It occurred to me that the current social and cultural fragmentation reflected in the post-modernist mood, might link to the fragmentation of the ego from excessive splitting and projection in narcissism of the borderline type, identified by the post-Kleinians. Ishiguro, publishing

novels from 1982, shows insight into human vulnerability and protective defences in circumstances of disturbance and displacement, and although his stories are set in the turmoils of the past, he views them from a perspective that has affinities with current, post-Kleinian thought.¹

Many critics mention the ‘psychology’, the ‘interiority’, the ‘internal’, and ‘identity’ in the novels and several have made pertinent links with Freud. But it is Object Relations psychoanalytic theory on narcissism, with its solid body of research and clinical experience that provided the tool with which I could best explore the states of mind and behaviours of Ishiguro’s characters. The post-Kleinians in particular, address the extremes of painful, emotional upheaval and catastrophic change, such as those traumas of war and social upheaval represented in the novels, and they theorise the defences which are activated in the mind to protect the subject from psychic disintegration.

I decided also to explore the conventions of the novel form and the narrative strategies that embody Ishiguro’s themes of fragmentation, expectation and disappointment so potently. Given the childhood traumas of his narrators, how does Ishiguro, shape in words, their states of mind, personal relationships, plot trajectories, language idioms and their enactments? How are these rendered in the elliptical style of his prose?

Ishiguro’s books are best sellers and have won many prizes (Booker prize, RD, 1989) and three have been variously adapted for films. He enjoys an enormous reach, with a readership both sophisticated and popular, and is translated currently into about thirty-six languages. He says:

‘I don’t share the cynicism about the dumbed-down audience. There’s an audience out there that’s literate in many kinds of ways...hungry for new adventures.’ (Groes, 2011:261).

Ishiguro produces responses by the way he evokes the extreme states of mind and feeling of ordinary people and their need for self-respect and dignity. He explores, especially, their hopes and expectations in love and work, and the pain that comes of disappointment (if recognised), the sense of partly wasted lives and of time as finite. His writing can also offer the pleasures of irony, word-play, imagery, inter-textual allusion,

¹ Post-Kleinian thought is also known as contemporary Klein or the Kleinian development.

subversion of genre, and the humour of incongruity. With both pathos and detachment for the reader, the huge response to his work suggests that it penetrates a substantial area of contemporary, psychological experience.

This thesis, as inter-disciplinary, sits between literary criticism and an application of psychoanalytic theory, making contributions to both. The narrators in the novels are, however, not analysands or case studies. They are representations – verbal constructions – which become imaginatively alive during the reading process. Their behaviours are a vehicle for Ishiguro's particular vision of human life, especially psychological life.

Lane and Tew (2003:194), discussing novels since 1979, classify Ishiguro's work under 'Pathological Subjects', showing estrangement and 'the ego under threat'. They also refer to 'pathological reflexes' which can offer a 'truth-revealing quality.' These suggest the unconscious mechanisms driving human behaviours, as found in Object Relations psychoanalytic thinking on narcissism.

Within each novel, Ishiguro provides something of the narrator's childhood trauma and failures of dependency, and in so doing, points to the emotional origin of the psychic defences. He shows the psychic mechanisms at work which produce the defensive, psychic structures, and the ensuing behaviours, idiom, and personal relationships, peculiar to each narrator. As a way of understanding this writing, I propose the psychoanalytic dynamic of trauma, identity, identification and narcissistic phantasy, arguing that the authentic self becomes invisible through excessive projective identification and the re-introjection of a distorted self. I also show how Ishiguro figuratively represents such states of mind, using the aesthetic resources of language, and 'expands' the conventions of the novel to embody his themes.

As I embarked on analysing the novels, however, it became clear that projective identification, first formulated by Klein and then taken further by the post-Kleinians, could be found in several variant models, including a more restorative mode. I found this in the sixth novel, in which identity formation develops through the interchange of physical artefacts, talk and thinking. It was illuminating later to find that Ishiguro, in interviews, for example, Krider (1998:132-3) had coined his own term for the psychoanalytic process of 'projective identification' – 'appropriation.' He describes the

inhering process of psychically taking another person for oneself: to expel one's unbearable experiences and feelings attributively *into*, or to acquire or extract the desirable *from* another, as outlined in the Theory chapter.

Different emphases in the narcissistic behaviours emerged in each novel, although repetition or re-enactments of past trauma behaviours in different contexts was, as might be expected, a constant factor. Ishiguro tended to highlight certain aspects of the behaviours within the narcissistic spectrum, such as the 'silence' and 'emptiness' of Etsuko (PVH) or the 'blindness' of Banks (WO).

The question of a critical template was a challenge in view of I.A. Richards's tenet (Richards, 1924, 1938:25) that criticism requires both an account of value and an account of communication. Hitherto, most psychoanalytic, literary critics have focused on the values in the content of the work, as suited their interests.² However, as Ishiguro is a considerable stylist, and embodies narcissistic states of mind in his prose, I resolved to include both dimensions in this study.

Firstly, I briefly identified the continuities of the traditional, English, humanist novel and its concerns with reality, self-knowledge, and moral and psychological consciousness, and found them to be consistent with the psychoanalytic approaches of Klein – approaches rooted in but developing from Freud. This then linked to the post-Kleinian development and its focus on severe trauma and borderline cases. These preoccupations complement Ishiguro's own psychological and ethical interests. His writing methods, he views as simply 'expanding' the traditional, humanist territory of the novel to encompass the sense of depletion, from a late 20th-21st century perspective.

Ishiguro, in his interviews, sees himself as using an 'in-between' version of the traditional humanist model by adopting some deconstructive tactics in his writing.

² Post-Kleinian psychoanalytic literary criticism has usually focused on the psychological themes in works of literature and by-passed matters of communication. Psychoanalytic critics such as Bell, D., Britton, R., Hyatt-Williams, A., Miller, L., Rustin, M.E. and M. J., Segal, H., Sodr , I., Steiner, J. and Waddell, M., for example, are part of this tradition, using theory developed by Bion and Rosenfeld in the 1960s to the present day. There is a significant literature relating earlier Kleinian psychoanalytic ideas to fiction, some of it contemporary with the Kleinian development, for example, Stonebridge, L. (1998, 2007) who writes on anxiety in mid-20th century, British fiction.

I noted that Eagleton (1983, 1995:133-4) points out that deconstructive approaches to language allow for the fact that, ‘one term of an antithesis secretly inheres with the other’, and that words might be defined in terms of their opposites and derivations. The idea of porous boundaries like this in language struck me as a literary analogue of the narcissist’s dissolution of personal boundaries of the ‘other’, by regarding him as an extension of the self, through projective identification. Sodr e’s (2004: 5-68) clinical commentary entitled *Who’s who?* illustrates this action of the mind. Curiously, an early working title for this study had been, *Who do you think you are?* Ishiguro frequently uses words of ‘merging’, such as *foggy* and *floating*, to suggest this. His expressions of fluidity and drifting, likewise, embody the way the memory slides in and out of time past and present, often distorting events and relationships in the process.

Ishiguro, with the post-Kleinians, also perceives that with trauma, there is a loss of affect, and since *meaning* is rooted in feelings and inter-subjectivity, a diminished capacity for symbolisation and therefore thinking, results. His narrators speak in subtly limited idioms. He ironically subverts the humanist, realist novel – the novel of consciousness and progress to self-knowledge – by showing it in its *failed* form. I came to call this the ‘deficit’ model and devised a framework for discussing the novels, derived from three complementary sources: the humanist, the ironic (deconstructive), and the post-Kleinian models of human development, with the ethical and reality imperatives constant. The self-knowledge and plot resolution, typical of the traditional novel, for example, are undercut by the weak self-knowledge and indeterminacy of the ironic model. It is informed by schemas of Rustin (1991:161) and Barry (2002:72).

I shall briefly outline how this thesis is organised. In the interests of clarity, I have presented the novels chronologically, with the main theme, narcissism, evolving in its different manifestations. In Chapter 1, *The Review of the Literature*, I provide an appraisal of the books on, or including Ishiguro’s work, to set the novels in context. Then, I bring into view a cluster of psychological and psychoanalytic commentaries more resonant with this thesis, placing the wide range of other, detailed criticism on individual novels in the Appendix.

In Chapter 2, using other relevant literature, I set out a critical framework with a post-Kleinian component, responsive to the central theme of my study – Ishiguro’s view of

‘emotional upheaval’ and the defensive mind in action as it deals with trauma. The novels demand a framework that draws together three strands of knowledge: the implied background of the values and writing conventions of the novel in the traditional, humanist mode, then its subtle subversion in the ironic, deconstructive register – my ‘deficit’ model – to convey the emotional depletions of narcissism, and thirdly, a coherent, psychoanalytic theory – post-Kleinian Object Relations theory. The Kleinian ethical and reality-seeking imperatives and the notion of counter-transference are retained, with the focus now on catastrophic change, trauma, borderline states of mind and narcissism. I summarise these models in a two-column Table, underlining Ishiguro’s ‘in-between’ writing stance.

In Chapter 3, Theory, I present the main aspects of post-Kleinian Object Relations theory informing my study, particularly its model of identity formation and the defensive resources of narcissism. This chapter explicates the way in which unbearable experiences of trauma are managed by the protective, manic defences of narcissism, including its restorative possibilities. I outline the emotional origin of narcissistic psychic structures, and the psychic mechanisms of projective identification in their variant forms. I show the typical human behaviours that result, such as delusory omnipotence and self-enclosure, where the boundary between self and other is obliterated. I take in its corrosive effect on object relationships, symbol formation, thinking and truth-seeking. I offer two summaries of clinical sessions on narcissism, involving different forms of projective identification, and then outline the variants of projective identification in the novels.

My analyses of the novels began with organising the data from systematic reading into a cluster of categories which clarified their similarities and differences: the external, historical situation, genre, theme, narcissistic behaviours in both the present, and in past memories, noting re-enactment, repetition and misremembering, and so on, as set out in the Contents section. Although this study is inter-disciplinary, the primary focus is on narcissistic, psychic organisations and behaviours in ordinary people, and then, how these dimensions are embodied in the crafted medium of prose fiction.

Chapter 4, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), is Ishiguro’s first novel and a Japanese mother’s fragmented memoir of a painful period during the atomic war from which she, as a child

was the sole, family survivor. Now, alone in England, after two marriages and in middle-age, she is assimilating the fact that her elder 'Japanese' daughter has just committed suicide. The theme is 'silence', as Etsuko, in attributive projective identification, unconsciously expels the horrific events and cruelties, both experienced and perpetrated by her in Nagasaki, into another woman. Her protective, distancing from reality is underlined by her way of seeing – with binoculars. Despite her assumptions, she sees only the *rebuilt* harbour, which, like the child's drawing, 'lacks perspective'. She shows herself to be isolated, haunted by the past, and depleted of her liveliness and agency in the present. Her identity has been diminished by prolonged projection of her utterly unbearable experiences into another, and she survives only through this form of defensive narcissism.

In Chapter 5, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), I show that the second novel, set in Japan, is a full-life memoir of a putative, 'famous' artist who, in old age, implies that perhaps he was less so. He has suffered a double loss during the atomic war, and this pain is suppressed in favour of asserting his self-worth as a painter, a gift which had been cruelly undermined by his ego-destructive father. Ono, in turn, becomes an omnipotent father and leader, needing his narcissism in the form of artistic 'prestige'. The 'floating' external world – the shifting political climate – has caused him to keep adjusting his values in art in order to preserve his reputation. His internal 'floating world' projects his less admirable qualities attributively into others. He smugly declares that a truthful self-portrait is not possible but the implication is that his own, verbal self-portrait might also be delusional. Not until his grown children refuse to accept his tyranny, does he begin to accept his limitations and reach a state of disavowal, in which his limits are superficially accepted but their deeper significance is not.

Chapter 6, the third novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), features Stevens, the butler's retrospective account of his English Country House life between the wars. He has an aged, overworked father, (no mention of a mother), a brother killed in the Boer War, and has a shadowy identity. An acquisitive, defensive, psychic mechanism is in play. Although Stevens respects his father's standards, he believes that his own self-worth indeed, his indispensability, lies in the suppression of emotion, the appropriate clothing, and impeccable service at the hub of international affairs with Lord Darlington. Darlington, a single man, becomes valued like an idealised, second father, with whom

he acquisitively identifies and projects into, becoming omnipotent, narcissistic, unseeing and uncritical. Stevens has not recognised Darlington's now-discredited collusion with the Nazis between the wars, and has no notion of a separate identity for himself until a new, American employer arrives in the 1950s. With advancing age, he recalls a possible love but time has barely moved in Stevens's rigid, psychic structure, and his disguised attempt to reclaim time and love fails. He begins to recognise his isolation and loss, glimpsing the human possibilities of banter, with its dialogic, humorous exchanges.

In Chapter 7, *The Unconsoled* (1995), I show that Ishiguro moves into the territory of the excess and extremes of the life of the touring, 'global', celebrity artist, and writes in a correspondingly exaggerated, experimental style. The narrative takes the form of a three-day celebrity journal and Ryder, the pianist, recounts his experiences in an unboundaried Central Europe, as they occur. He does recall, however, his profoundly disturbing childhood, as he drives himself almost to the point of borderline, psychotic collapse, in the delusional belief that he, as one of the 'greatest pianists' of the century, has brought the consolation of music to his audiences, hope to a young pianist, and salvation to the city's various cultural and personal problems. The projective identifications are two-way. He disperses his attributive projections of frustration into others generally, and imitates celebrity charm adhesively. At the same time, four sets of characters variously make acquisitive identifications into *him*, the celebrity. In the end, he does not see that he has failed to perform, either as a musician or an understanding partner or a step-father. Ishiguro, to show extreme narcissistic, projective behaviours, deploys extreme and bizarre distortions through his narrative technique, involving the plasticity of space and time. He takes up the musical metaphor of 'verticality' in modern music (the repetitions of minimalism) to parallel Ryder's repetitious behaviours, to show how both time and reality have become almost meaningless. This novel is more satirical and grotesquely comic than the first three.

In Chapter 8, *When we were Orphans* (2000), the fifth novel, I show how Ishiguro subverts the popular genre of the English detective novel, also shadowing it with Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Christopher Banks's expectations are met with disillusion, and the Conan Doyle, detective, plot trajectory is played out in a 'failed', tragi-comic form. Banks, an orphaned child of nine, has been 'abandoned' separately, in Shanghai, three times, and then sent to England, 'alone'. Again, time has psychically

stood still. He functions defensively in narcissistic, adhesive identification, blind to much of reality, with a weak sense of his own identity. The rational deduction of the traditional detective eludes him, as he resolves to ‘detect’ his parents’ whereabouts – but about twenty years after their disappearance. The climax – the rescue – is driven by delusional phantasy and fails. He disintegrates in psychic collapse, ironically becoming the one to be rescued. His magnifying glass ‘sees’ nothing of relevance, for what he is unconsciously seeking is his missing emotional life, with the capacity to symbolise and create meaningful relationships. Only decades later, possibly in retirement and through mourning, does he reach self-recognition.

In Chapter 9, I show how Ishiguro, in *Never Let Me Go* (2005), the sixth novel, reconfigures the genres of the boarding school story, the autobiographical memoir and science fiction. He has Kathy H., the youthful narrator, drawing upon another variant of the protecting mechanisms of narcissism; a restorative, more introjective model. As one of the emotionally deprived, human clones, raised for four organ donations, she projects her failed dependency into others and deals with it there, as the one to be depended upon. In the clone community, the exchanges of their artwork must carry the emotional freight of ‘normal’, loving, ‘containing’ object relationships. She pursues truthfulness; to know just what she and her friends are for. Their time-spans have been collapsed but through dialogic exchanges with two friends, she reaches self-knowledge and accepts her destiny, with death certain and time not to be wasted. The clones, too, have the need for human dignity and self-worth through work and love. The motif of ‘holding’ emerges in several ways but they, of course, are to be ‘let go’.

In Chapter 10, the Conclusion, I summarise and comment on what I believe I have contributed to the understanding of Ishiguro’s novels.

The Appendix contains, The Detailed Literature Review.

Sim (2010:134) has written that *The Unconsoled* is Ishiguro’s:

‘most openly experimental novel and most of the commentary on it is inflected with psychoanalytic concepts, although a, so to speak, full-fledged treatment has yet to be tabled.’

I aim to bring these concepts into view in relation to the six novels to date.

Chapter 1

A Review of the Literature on the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro

‘Literature and psychoanalysis may be seen as different media for exploring the world of the mind, related through congruence and a common drive towards self-knowledge.’ (Harris-Williams and Waddell, 1991:1).

Introduction

Ishiguro’s novels have attracted extensive, critical responses, from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. I outline the main fields of published discussion in English, aware that the examples sometimes overlap and interrelate. I have written a detailed commentary on the existing literature but placing all of it at the beginning of the thesis does not allow space to introduce my argument, applying post-Kleinian psychoanalytic thought to the reading of the novels. I have therefore selected the material most resonant for this purpose and located the remaining review of the literature in the Appendix.

Ishiguro says that he tries to explore:

‘...the suppression of emotion ...perhaps the scariest arena in life ...the emotional arena.’ (Vorda and Herzinger, 1991, 2008:77).

Ishiguro’s expressed preoccupations are ‘emotional upheaval’ in the traumas of history, mentioned in the Introduction, and the ‘suppression’ of intolerably disturbing, emotional experience. His themes and narrative methods have both received critical attention.

Critical Positions in the Published Commentaries

I have identified twelve fields of commentary: three general books of criticism on novels since 1979, noting Ishiguro’s interests as ‘psychological’; seven specialist books, appraising the novels in more detail; and criticism devoted to psychological-psychoanalytical mechanisms. Other critical themes on selected novels, including several drawing on Lacan, have been placed in the Appendix, and organised as shown in the Table of Contents

1. General Critical Works

Several works on the late twentieth century novel classify Ishiguro as essentially a psychological writer. Lane, Mengham and Tew (2003: 193-4) argue that over the last thirty years, the trend has been towards different engagements with past history, and

map the significant writers who have taken this direction. They locate Ishiguro among several writers who explore 'Pathological subjects'.³ I see the 'pathological' in Ishiguro's novels as states of mind in extreme positions of dislocation, trauma, dissociation, and difficulty with identity and relationships. Ishiguro, with others in the last thirty years of British fiction writing, is concerned with reworking the past through a late twentieth century lens. For Ishiguro, the past in memory is part of the present and the future. The ruptures of history are the crises and traumas of change, and the losses and fragmentation caused by past wars. They also include the weakening of the social institutions that formally and formerly provided authority and containment. This provides the context in which Ishiguro's central characters try to negotiate meaning and identity in their ordinary lives.

Holmes's chapter on realism (2005: 11-22) is the first on five writers and the contemporary British novel.⁴ It argues for a more complex contemporary realism beyond the traditional since Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (1900). Holmes contends that in *The Unconsoled* and *When We Were Orphans*, the imagery of disturbance in space and time is the prose vehicle through which the unconscious is communicated and he uses the terms 'expressionism' and 'surrealism' from art criticism. Childs (2005:139-140) signals Ishiguro's interest in mental functioning and the weight of the past on the unconscious mind, describing *The Unconsoled* as his 'most explicit treatment of creative misremembering and the anxiety' of trying to come to terms with the past.

2. Seven Critical Appraisals

The first three books were written just after the complex fourth novel, *The Unconsoled* (1995).

³ Myth and History: Pat Barker, Jim Crace, Graham Swift, Iain Sinclair; Urban Thematics: Will Self, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, A.L. Kennedy; Cultural Hybridity: Salman Rushdie, James Kalman and Irvine Welsh, Caryl Phillips; Pathological Subjects: Angela Carter, Jeannette Winterson, Kazuo Ishiguro, Martin Amis.

⁴ Realism, Dream and the Unconscious, and the remaining four are entitled: Contemporary Realism and the Novel of Ideas, Ian McEwan; The Unnatural Scene: The Fiction of Irvine Welsh; Angela Carter's Magic Realism; Facticity, or Something Like That: The Novels of James Kelman.

2.1 Shaffer (1998:4), on the first four novels, regards both the narration and the narrators as ‘psychological portraits’, with ‘issues of memory, desire, and self-deception’ of central concern. The characters, he believes, ‘all have something to hide from themselves yet reconstruct their past failures and misplaced loyalties.’ He refers to the terrain mapped out by Freud on repression, denial, defence, projection, and the uncanny which help to open up Ishiguro’s ‘psychologically charged works.’ This, he contends, allows for the sense of helplessness but most of all, the return of the repressed in the ‘après coup’ – ‘what is known of old and long familiar.’ His insights are pertinent but do not take account of the substantial developments in psychoanalytic thinking since Freud.

2.2 Lewis (2002: 19-22; 60-71) frames his entire study within the idea of ‘home’ and of ‘dignity’ – in one’s rightful place – and the opposites, homelessness and ‘homeless minds’. He explores the different meanings of displacement as in geographical displacement, involving changes of country, culture and language; cognitive displacement, induced by memories; and Freud’s psychic ‘displacement’ in dream-work: displacement, condensation and representation, where disturbing material in the unconscious is recast through ‘censorship’ and symbolism, and made more tolerable.

He also sees displacement as an indispensable part of literary deconstruction: it de-centres the surface meaning of the text to open up the unconscious, latent one – ‘the sub-strata of meaning’ – by including all the denials, unconscious avoidances, ambiguities and re-figurations of content. Lewis finds that displacement also de-centres the core of the character to reveal aspects of Freud’s ‘uncanny’ in the ghosts and silences, with their painful presences from the past. The ‘frisson’ between the frightening and the familiar, Lewis argues, produces the characters’ sense of psychic dissociation and of not being ‘at home’ in the world.

2.3 Wong (2005:24) believes that Ishiguro’s characters are revealed to be ‘carrying complicated states of being.’ She goes so far as to say that they, in their human crises, have ‘an important didactic function for understanding human emotion’ as they respond to historical and personal forces in their lives. (16-17). She includes her earlier insight that Etsuko’s narrative (PVH) is a form of ‘dispossession of anguish.’ (2005 n.6, 108).

She does not use the language of psychology but highlights the significance of the narrators' fraught subjectivities and defensive behaviours:

'... Their social suffering may arise from a personal situation but their stories do not emphasise somatic or physical pain so much as ... the fragmentation caused by psychological and physical forms of suffering.' ... 'If their narratives are riddled with inconsistencies or awkward insistence, this may be the result of a memory that is also struggling to bring to the surface painful events and to find a language that can adequately express the unending trauma of their affliction.'

2.4 Sim (2010) presents a synoptic overview of the six novels, positioning Ishiguro in an international context, surveying his life, his work in prose, drama, and film, and much of the criticism to date. A little space is made for brief psychoanalytic comments based on Freud, Lacan and two Object Relations readings, indicating that narrative methods such as verbal gaps and slippages in the text reveal latent meanings, such as the Freudian defence mechanisms of the ego: denial, projection and repression.

2.5 Beedham (2010) offers a chronological overview of the diverse readings of all the works, concluding that further questions should be addressed such as ethics, prose style, the emotional isolation and psychology in the novels. He suggests cognitive studies of narrative and poetics but dismisses Freudian readings, which 'attempt to explain some aspect of a character's motivation.' (150).

2.6 Mathews and Groes (2009), as editors, trace the main genres and themes which have interested Ishiguro so far, paying attention to the earlier short stories, TV plays, film scripts and several novels. They cover ethnicity, social class, gender, nationhood, place and questions of artistic representation in individual works. Several essays refer to notions of the 'strange' worlds of PVH and AFW and U and the 'something' beneath the surface of things, although this collection does not directly address the psychological questions.

2.7 Groes and Lewis (2011) edit thoughtful essays devoted to the novels, (2011:1-10) starting with the 'waning of affect', Jameson (1991:41), Ishiguro's ethics of empathy, the protagonists' emotional inability to connect with one another, and the 'bleak, haunting images drawn from a distinctly modernist legacy'. The critical overviews just touch on the territory of the unconscious, with disturbed liminality, discourse and

identity in the narrators. Each novel is given several essays on the main themes listed in 2.6 above, including one on Japanese translation.

Psychological Insights

3. Towards Psychic Mechanisms: patterns of doubles -- projections

3:1 Shaffer (1998:93-4) first recognised a particular psychic linkage with and ‘use’ of other characters as a distinct narrative strategy in the novels, calling them ‘variations’, ‘mirrors’, ‘doubles’ or ‘conduits’. In *U*, he argues, Ryder devises three sets of characters who are real but also ‘reflections’ of himself, each ‘living a pathologically self-destructive personal life that significantly mirrors Ryder’s own.’ Each one is not a mere fabrication of Ryder but an individual, ‘through whom he *projects* his own story.’ They are as ‘conduits for Ryder to remember and forget.’ (my emphasis).

3:2 Adelman, (2001: 173-8) takes up Shaffer’s ‘doubles’ as ‘psychological’ complexity, and cites Ishiguro’s comments from an interview with Steinberg (1995:105-6):

‘He [Ryder] would meet people who are not literally parts of himself but are echoes of his past, harbingers of his future and projections of his fears about what he might become. ... I wanted to show that sort of hopeless slightly pathetic kind of optimism ... we resort to in order to keep going.’

Adelman argues that Ishiguro’s aim is to ‘externalise the central character’s interior life by means of ‘doubles’ but, I think, uses the term ‘project’ reductively, claiming that Ryder *is*⁵ all the other characters, rather than their being independent figures into whom Ryder relocates some intolerable emotional experience. He also sees another type of ‘doubling’:

‘[Ryder’s] idealised self, the self applauded by the public ... is doubled, with the private self living in the perpetual anxiety of the public man, found out and disgraced.’

⁵ Ryder seems to *be* both his own father and himself as a child in Boris. Additionally, he *is* Stephan in early-career, Hoffman in mid-career and Brodsky at end-career. Ryder’s dissociated ‘relationships’ with his mother and Sophie (wife) are matched by the cold, masochistic need in each male of the couples to have to prove his worth to save the relationship.

Adelman further extends his idea of doubles and mirrors by detecting Ishiguro's intertextual allusions, and provides another layer of character parallels, derived from Kafka, Dostoevsky and Beckett, right down to near matching quotations.⁶

3:3 Villar Flor (2000: 159-169) sees U as 'a further step in the representation of consciousness'. He expands Shaffer's 'family' pattern of two parents and child from three sets⁷ to five, adding Ryder and Sophie as parents of Boris, and Ryder as a child and *his* parents, loosely calling the five clusters 'multiple projections' from Ryder. He identifies childhood trauma, finds the emotional damage to be trans-generational, and explores each triple-character cluster, foregrounding Ryder's childhood neglect and loneliness. In U, Ryder is:

'...not just looking at the past through a 'biased filter' but is in an oneiric [dreamlike] state where the past of memory merges with the present where spatial, temporal, and inter-psyche oddities occur. ...Ryder enters the world of uncanniness and absurdity of Kafka and Beckett.' (160).

And he argues (166) that this indicates an unstable, unreliable, global condition and is the framework for the whole novel.⁸

3:4 Sim (2010: 65-79) also notes an aspect of this strategy in two novels: in PVH, with its secret-sharers, echoes and hauntings in Etsuko, and the ghost women in Mariko. In U, he finds the 'replications' of Ryder as narrative patterning and a 'stylistic innovation', rather than a move towards projective identification.

⁶ Adelman over-determines the cumulative effect of Ryder's selfish, sadistic moments to have him as a predator, a drunk, seeing events through an alcoholic haze, and a likely 'pedophile'. (178).

⁷ Gustav (grandfather to Boris), Sophie, Boris; Hoffman, Christine, Stephan; Brodsky, Miss Collins, Bruno (dog).

⁸ Villar Flor (166) later takes up the Freudian psychoanalytic insight from Shaffer (1998, 105) to explain Ryder's coping as 'defence mechanisms of denial, fantasy, sublimation through music-making'. All the small favours and commitments demanded of Ryder, he contends, divert him from finding his 'true vocation and true self (161). Ryder is consumed by 'vanity and workaholicism', adopting the discourse of the egotist who had been diverted from his own concerns.' (168). The sad reality for each of the five family-clusters is their 'non-communication... lovelessness, moral decay and lack of understanding.' (163).

4. Depth, the Unconscious, Modernism

Wagh (2011:13-30) argues that Ishiguro draws on the first wave of internationalism in both the British and European strands of modernism and their concern with ‘depth’ – the unconscious, non-rational part of the self. She cites Eliot’s preoccupation with the unnamed feelings at the ‘substratum of our being’ (Eliot, 1933:155); Woolf’s tuning in to psychological ‘consciousness’; Conrad’s interest in the ‘hidden double’ misleading the self; and Forster’s concern for the undeveloped heart, and the way art can refine feelings ‘essential to moral development.’ Ishiguro’s writing has affinities with the Europeans, (typically Kafka, Beckett, Camus and Robbe-Grillet), who wrote introspective landscapes which *collapse the boundaries* between the internal and the external space (which I see as Ishiguro’s internal and external worlds). They favoured that which was more surreal, exaggerated and dissociated, and created odd plots. (my emphasis).

5. Values

5.1 Kelman (1989, 2008:45-48) notes Ishiguro’s interest in the psychic evasion of intolerable, turbulent, emotional experience as part of his vision of the human need for dignity, calm and personal self-respect, and the respect of others, despite what personal catastrophes might have happened.

‘...I was interested in the justification process that takes place in peoples’ minds ...[how] they fool ...or hide from themselves... one side of the person demanding a certain honesty and the other side demanding some kind of preservation from the truth...’.

5.2 Swift (2008:36; 38-9, in an interview with Ishiguro, notes how the characters lack that self-knowledge compatible with the traditional novel, and, I argue, the Kleinian ethical imperative of truth-seeking and moral responsibility:

‘...I’m interested in this business of [people’s] values and ideals being tested and facing up to the fact that they could not live up to them.’

On the dignity that goes with the recognition of loss and failure, he adds that:

‘...there is something heroic about coming to terms with very painful truths about yourself.’

Ishiguro continues, describing a typical narrator, Stevens (RD), with his conscious and unconscious evasions of self-knowledge. This, I see as a form of dissociation, overlapping with the key mechanism involved, projective identification:

‘...somewhere deep down he knows which things he has to avoid. [the narrative] is ‘controlled by the things he doesn’t say. He is in this painful condition where at some level he does know what’s happening, but hasn’t quite brought it to the front. And he has a certain amount of skill in trying to persuade himself that it’s not there. At some *level they have to know what they have to avoid and that determines the route they take through memory...memory is this terribly treacherous terrain, the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception.*’ (my emphasis).

6. Implicit Psychic Mechanisms

6.1 Wood (1998: 177) sees the narrator’s ‘unreliable’, revised versions of events in their stories as psychological defensiveness:

‘Ishiguro’s deepest subject [is]: not the risks of repression but the comedy and the pathos and the sorrow of the stories we tell ourselves to keep other stories away.’

6:2 Scanlan (1993:145) regards Ono’s identity (AFW) as somehow ‘de-centred’. His defence, if in an awkward situation, is to ‘use’ someone else, as if there were fundamental, psychological structures at work:

‘...the personal identity with which first person narrative is usually identified is far from solid. ... when he [Ono] talks about other people, he frequently appears to be talking about himself. ... a familiar psychological defence, but in Ono’s case, it seems to point to a more fundamental confusion of himself with the people he discusses.’

6:3 Wong (2005), on PVH, argues that the idea of the unreliable narrator is insufficient in itself to do justice to the internal processes going on within the narrator. I find that she identifies five significant features of Ishiguro’s technique, all of which are compatible in varying degrees with psychoanalytic thinking.

a) There is a *link* with another which triggers Etsuko’s ‘memory’: the suicide of her ‘Japanese’ daughter leads to the link with her friend, Sachiko and *her* daughter. I read this as the post-Kleinian psychoanalytic idea of a valency for and identification *with* another.

b) The fact that the text is silent on the bombing confirms how unspeakable such experience must have been. Wong (1995:127-45) calls it ‘pain and shame in the memory’, invoking Blanchot’s concept of self-dispossession. She takes Etsuko’s dual roles in her narrative as both participant in and teller of her story, and argues that in the very act of retelling, Etsuko ‘dispossesses’ herself of the earlier anguish and horror,’ to reconstruct the past in an effort to obliterate it.’ Wong points towards but does not

articulate the psychoanalytic concept of splitting and projecting intolerable experience *into* another.

c) Etsuko, Wong claims, as part of her determination to maintain the ‘primacy of the self’, manages to be calm and self-possessed but this self, she argues, is a false one. I see it as the delusory aspect of the defences of narcissism.

d) Wong perceives a drive, a ‘*compulsion* to “unwork” and dissociate from the memories of the past.’ (my emphasis, to suggest that it is an unconscious drive).

e) Wong (2005:34) notes that following the bombing trauma, Etsuko’s interiority ‘is revealed *in interactions*’ (my emphasis) – a two-person phenomenon. The narrator’s attitudes towards society, family and friends may be discerned from their words, gestures or habits with one another. In terms of consciousness, ‘people allow imagination and illusion to hold off their grasp of the truth, which emerges inevitably.’

f) Wong⁹ sees the concept of ‘splitting off and projecting into’ as an intellectual activity – ‘reflect in order to deflect’. But in *The Unconsoled* she sees what Ishiguro has the narrator do: remember his ‘own painful past in the context of another person’s’, and calls the book ‘a deep psychological investigation.’ (Wong (2005: 74).

6:4 Lane and Tew (2003:193-4), on authors dealing with ‘pathological themes’, write of the instability of subjectivity, disorder of body and/or mind, in relation to the society from which they feel strangely detached. The characters are often ‘...marginalized, peculiar, and yet oddly and perversely comic,’ with ‘pathological reflexes.’ In this respect, they cite Bourdieu (1990:127) on observable human interactions which hide or ‘... conceal the structures that are realised in them...the visible, conceals the invisible which determines it.’ These, I suggest, are unconscious, psychic drive-structures, derived from the need to repeat certain mechanisms such as projective identification.

6:5 Ishiguro’s Character ‘appropriation’

Ishiguro’s ‘innovative appropriation technique’ is simply mentioned by Beedham (2010:147), for further discussion. Ishiguro invented the term ‘appropriation’ with his acute insight into the way people unconsciously ‘revise’ their stories by expelling that

⁹ Wong (2005:28-36) declares that Ishiguro ‘goes beyond the idea of interiority as split selves, with ‘doppelgangers, spectral doubles,’ and ‘alternate selves’; and Berman’s ‘shadow self, alter-ego, second self, anti-self, opposing self, and secret self.’ (Wong 2005: n11, 108). She does not propose a theory of psychic projective identification.

which is psychically unbearable into others or taking from others, that which is desired, as a way of managing and maintaining their self-respect. Ishiguro says (Mason, 1986, 2008:5):

‘I was interested in the various strategies someone would employ to salvage some sort of dignity. Whatever the facts are about Sachiko, Etsuko can use them to talk about herself.’

In discussing U with Walton (1995: AB4), Ishiguro continues:

‘...they [the other characters] aren’t literally him [Ryder]...but he appropriates them. This has always appealed to me, partly because it’s an exaggeration of the way people relate anyway. We use others to orchestrate the things we’re talking to ourselves about.’

Then, with Krider (1998, 2008:132), he refers to ‘dream-like’ processes implying the work of the unconscious:

‘...here’s a world that is seen so much from the point of view of one consciousness that it very boldly appropriated things...to serve its needs. Mr. Ryder can turn certain characters into people from his past and twist the whole world around into being some big expression of his feelings and emotions.’

Similarly, to Jaggi (1995, 2008:114), he says:

‘It’s how we use dream...Our view of other people is often shaped by our need to work certain things out about ourselves. We tend to *appropriate other people* (my emphasis) – more than we perhaps care to admit. We perhaps don’t see them for what *they* are; (original emphasis), they become useful tools.’

I argue that ‘appropriation’ is his own coinage – his umbrella term – for forms of projective identification in his characters, activated to maintain psychic equilibrium, (his ‘dignity’), and is the controlling, psychic mechanism alive within each narrating character.

7. Psychoanalytic Perspectives: Klein, Winnicott, Freud and Bollas

British Object Relations school – Klein and Winnicott

Personal identity in the Object Relations model is premised on the biological and emotional need for relatedness. With Klein, internal object relationships are innately alive in unconscious phantasy, along with both loving, reparative, and destructive, sadistic impulses. The self gradually develops through introjective and projective inter-psychic exchanges with the other, essentially the mother figure. These exchanges are loving, creative and enable symbol formation (language) and a grasp of reality to

develop. Emphasis is placed on the states of mind, as demonstrated through actions, words, and play. For Winnicott, this model of identity formation is weighted in favour of a practical nurturing environment, enabling the maternal function to flourish.

7.1 Drawing on Klein

Britzman (2006: 307-18) views NLG as an allegory of psychic development in the child, holding Klein's relationship of mother-child in parallel with that of text-reader. She uses Freud's concept of transference for the way the text slows down the reader with anxiety and anticipation, as Kathy H. similarly, slowly comes to understand her origins and function. The reader experiences the textual deceptions as she and the other 'students' slowly perceive their reality as 'organ donors'.

The motherless, clone-copy 'students', she argues, 'never let go' of their emotional life and seem to have real feelings that lead them to imagine finding their lost objects. She takes up Klein's idea of a powerful, unconscious phantasy of parents,¹⁰ as inherent in the clones, protecting them from trauma. The 'students' *do* seek a doppelganger, an imaginary twin or a 'second chance self', and look to find their 'models' (parents) and a future life among the 'normals'. Kathy and the students slowly work out the unknown – 'unreal reality' (Klein 1930, 1992:221). Britzman also claims a Kleinian destructive, sadistic impulse alive in the text, and an anxiety of reading, but their given, limited symbolisation cannot reach the heights of tragedy.

7.2 Drawing on Winnicott

Winsworth (1999: 259-66), on RD, invokes Winnicott's object relationship concept of 'true and false self' in the social environment. Stevens's 'true self', he argues, has been split off from the social, relational world for so long, that he functions only in a state of 'false self' or in 'compliance' with it, discovering only in late middle age, that his emotional life is without substance. Acknowledging the social conditioning that defined the traditional English butler, Winsworth notes that there is no mention of a mother, arguing that Stevens is unable to engage in playful exchanges with another, at both the

¹⁰ Klein (1957:180 n.) – 'pre-verbal primitive emotions and phantasies' or 'memories in feelings.'

verbal and emotional level.¹¹ Winsworth sees both Ishiguro's text and psychoanalysis as exploring the same field: the verbal, and the non-verbal space of silences and behaviours. He tracks the ways that Stevens insists on acting impeccably, wearing the correct costume and using formal language so as not to communicate anything personal or spontaneous to reinforce his definition of dignity as being emotionally distant from self and others. His unreliable memory, with his shifting interpretations of Miss Kenton's letter, can, like banter, be read ambiguously. Although Stevens has avoided any imaginative involvement of his 'true self', he, by the end, older, alone and understanding his empty life, observes and hopes for exchanges of human warmth through banter.

7.3 Drawing on Freud and Bollas

Jacqueline Rose (1996: 3-5; 59-68), in *States of Fantasy*, regards a 'state' both as a nation and a state of mind. She cites Freud's '*protective fictions*', 'psychical façades which bar the way to memories' (5).¹² She applies Freud's early ideas of fantasies which are linked with morality, in the sense of 'crimes not committed, unconscious wishes, [and] troubled identifications.' Fantasy, unlike dream which travels inward, moves outward, socially, and fuels the collective will, functioning like a 'psychic glue' for a nation, a race and a social class. It makes group identifications possible by providing the emotive binding for social groups and their collective behaviours. Fantasy, she argues, is a vital part of political identities, destinies and nation states. She refers to Israel, Palestine, England and South Africa, and their historical, trans-generational 'fictions' and myths about themselves.

Given the importance of group, social belonging, she takes Stevens (RD) as one who is caught in the 'fantasies' or norms of the prevailing 'culture of Englishness.' For a servant, dignity means being silent. He internalises the current, class attitudes, including Lord Darlington's Nazi sympathies, and is silent on the ethical question of anti-Semitism, dismissing two maids because they are Jewish. Rose enlists the term 'violent

¹¹ Winnicott (1965:146) sees the role of the mother as accommodating her child's omnipotence by responding to it with imagination and 'illusion' through play, until the illusory element is recognised for what it is. Failure to do this results in a 'false self' which is compliant and reacts, rather than creates.

¹² Freud (1892-9).

innocence' from Bollas to explain the unconscious, defensive morality of denial, when a real or imagined crime is ascribed to another group. The mind is:

‘a never mind’, since ‘it never recognises its own psychic activity, its compliance with what it abhors...never sees as part of its own psychic landscape, the contents it deposits and punishes elsewhere.’ (Bollas, 1992:168).

Rose is describing the process of projective identification into others to hide from or escape guilt, and form a silent solidarity and authority by ‘belonging’. Rose (1996:59-60) is the first to use the term, projective identification, also defining it as ‘a specific form of mind in action.’ The blindness of narcissism is implied in Bollas’s words.

Rose’s writing provides a link with my own work on Ishiguro’s central preoccupations. Ishiguro, too, with his ‘appropriations’, seeks to expose the ‘protective fictions’ or myths of morally superior Englishness, (RD and WO). As indicated earlier:

‘...this whole business about the suppression of emotion. ...*hiding* from what is perhaps the scariest arena in life ...the emotional arena.’ (my emphasis, Vorda and Herzinger, 2008:77).

Critical Summary

My main focus is on the psychoanalytical dimension of Ishiguro’s writing, and these readings, selected from a wide range of commentaries, (see also Appendix), capture something of Ishiguro’s thematic and psychological reach. Many critics perceive questions of geographical, emotional and psychic dislocation arising from the chaotic, transitional moments of history: traumatic, emotional damage and its disturbing persistence in the memory, and weak personal identity and human relationships. Others see ‘psychological’, excessive self-centredness (U), emotional pain, foundational trauma, and forms of internal, psychic evasion from anguish, suppressed by a diffuse idea of doubles or projection. Wong makes an untheorised link with the protagonists’ surface calm, where some dignity of self is recovered through forms of *dispossession* with an illusory result for the self. Several examine narrative methods.

While the psychological element in the novels is continually emphasised in the literature, the comments are limited because of their insufficient, theoretical framework and language. They fall short because the critics use Freud,¹³ fundamental as his work

¹³ See Likierman (2001: 65-6) for a detailed account of Klein’s innovations, departures from Freud and influence of other analysts: exploration of projection, which invests ‘the

has been to psychoanalysis. His terms and concepts such as repression, denial, identification, projection, and the uncanny, for example, do not adequately account for the particular psychic phenomena that Ishiguro is showing us now, in the corpus of his novels so far. Similarly, Lacan's focus on the word or text (see Appendix), relies on the logic of the 'signifier' alone to reveal the unconscious, without any underpinning of a theory of psychic structuring through Object Relationships by object-seeking minds. Lacan's idea of identity formation, the mirror stage and alienation, is more like Freud's primary narcissism, which is not dialogic but solipsistic and not part of a two-person psychology.

Ishiguro's main preoccupation is with the 'emotional upheaval' in the aftermath of traumatic times in history, and the resulting difficulties with personal relatedness giving meaning to life over a life-span. What is missing in the literature – where it falls short – is the critique *appropriate to Ishiguro's psychological territory* – the post-Kleinian body of knowledge, with its extensive work on trauma and borderline states of mind.

Ishiguro's 'appropriations', Rose's 'protective fictions' and group obliviousness, and Klein's projective identification link with my own study, in which projective identification is the crucial mechanism in the post-Kleinian work on delusory phantasy in narcissism. Ishiguro's novels demand the particular, post-Kleinian dynamic set out in the next chapter.

The Method, or the Framework which follows, is informed by other, relevant literature, and its three-dimensional aspect synthesises during the reading process. The approach is summarised in a two-columned Table.

world with a qualitative variety of affect'; of projective and introjective identification, which produce an 'internal world' through a two-way dialogue between the world and the psyche, an innate moral sense; and a knowledge-seeking, reality sense.

Chapter 2

Method – A Framework and Table: writing trauma – reading narcissism

Borderline, 'in-between' states of mind and Ishiguro's 'in-between' writing

Introduction

Ishiguro's novels demand a hybrid, critical framework, responsive to his aesthetic, which synthesises three dimensions alive in the cultural climate today.

1. The traditional humanist framework of the social-realist novel as the implied background, with its pattern of development in the central character towards self-knowledge and moral responsibility, and the drive of the author towards aesthetic order.
2. A subtle subversion of this model by showing it in its 'deficit' and ironic register to convey the depletion, peculiar to narcissism: emotional suppression and affective emptiness; thin personal relationships; weak identity, symbol-formation and thinking; limited or no development towards self-knowledge and moral responsibility; and indeterminate plot resolution. Language is open to ironic and contradictory understandings by the judicious use of some deconstructive narrative tactics.
3. Post-Kleinian Object Relations theory, rooted in clinical work, which retains Klein's ethical and reality-seeking principles but focuses on catastrophic change, trauma, loss, borderline states of mind and the defences of narcissism. Ishiguro's novels demand attention to the following dynamic:
 - internal objects – object relationships between self and other as the emotional base for connectedness and meaningful existence, held in the timeless, internal world, especially that of childhood;
 - identity construction;
 - trauma which destroys it;
 - but protected by the defences of self-idealisation, 'splitting off' and projective identification in its variant forms to rid the ego of psychic pain;
 - the subsequent damage to symbol-formation;
 - the resulting rigidity of the extreme, defence structures (narcissistic organisations), currently known as borderline states of mind;

- and the omnipotent behaviours (re-enactments), typical of narcissism, which follow.

1. The Traditional, Humanist Novel¹⁴

It is worth pointing out that the 18th century novel, for example, those of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, ‘had to be brought into contact with the whole tradition of civilised values and supplement its realism of presentation with a realism of assessment’ – *moral* evaluation (Watt, 1957, 1963: 300-01). Fielding, he adds, had a ‘responsible wisdom about human affairs which plays upon the deeds and the characters of his novels.’

The reality principle and ethical imperatives

Ishiguro holds the humanist values at the core of his literary vision, in a way that is compatible with Kleinian and post-Kleinian thought, namely, the centrality of the reality principle, self-knowledge, and ethical responsibility. However, in his novels, these principles are presented in their ‘deficit’ models as symptomatic of the depletions of the trauma, narcissism and self-enclosure, with which he is concerned.

Francois Gallix (2000:152) finds that Ishiguro sees his characters as wanting to do some good, to be decent, but cannot easily find self-awareness. Ishiguro:

‘...we want to fulfil some idea of having done good...I think all my characters suffer from this peculiarly human thing...rather than guilt...if only they had the ability to see better the context in which they lived...had perspective. Of course we’d still be to some extent enslaved to deterministic forces.... [Perspective] is what we all need, a kind of *moral helicopter* every now and again.’ (my emphasis).

¹⁴ (After Barry, 2002:17-21). The core, humanist assumptions, traceable from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, emphasise personal morality and responsibility.

1. The purpose of literature is to give pleasure and spread humane values. 2. Human nature is essentially unchanging. 3. There is a canon of good literature – timeless because it speaks to the constant in human nature. 4. A character has a secure, ‘unique essence’; it can change, develop and mature with understanding but not radically shift. 5. Language is stable and its role is to embody meaning – form and content are best fused organically – to show. 6. Value is given to a firsthand, personal language style, truth-to-experience and psychological reality. 7. The job of the critic is to mediate the text as itself – English empiricism.

There are affinities between literary humanism¹⁵ and Kleinian Object Relations psychoanalytic practice and thought, especially in the humanist approach of Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group in the early and mid 20th century. Both groups believed this to be the capacity of the text to register qualities of feeling and ethical commitments in relation to an idea of development towards psychic integration. I note that Hinshelwood (1991:329) points out that this ‘psychic integration’ involves the *developmental task* of cohering impulses, sensations, split-off projected fragments in the ego, all working towards their retrieval through understanding, maturity and a sound reality sense, (original emphasis).

A Leavis supporter, Thompson (1943:127-8), making a point on consumer greed, cites Klein and Riviere (1937) on the cost of this for psychic and emotional health:

‘It seems, however, that we may now be nearing the point at which external goodness – prosperity and material gains – ...will have taken the place of internal goodness as an ideal. Prosperity ... is a great aid [towards this, but] is not a substitute for it. ...there is now a considerable *dissociation and denial* of the part played...by our *inner emotional needs*.

“Our need to love, ...[is] our strongest security against the anxiety of hate and destructiveness, together with the problems of guilt which are inseparable from love, and the standards of conscience and morality that spring from our guilt”...’ (my emphases).

Thompson finds that a central psychoanalytic principle, reality, is in danger, with the de-differentiation and stereotyping of humanity by advertisements ‘which touch reality at so few points.’

¹⁵ Literary humanism: see: Eagleton (1983: 11), Barry (2002:13-14, Baldick (1983:105), (Mulhern (1979: 26-7). I.A. Richards saw literary criticism as practical and ‘scientific’, enhanced by awareness of psychology. While the sciences would rule in the domain of knowledge, ‘existential assurance’ and ‘affect’ would now come from poetry, thus ‘maintaining the psychological coherence of existence’ and, quoting Arnold (1880), “overcoming chaos.” It would be a social and national unifier. Mulhern, (1979: 328) finds the legacy of Leavis and his *Scrutiny* group to be deeply entrenched in English culture with: 1. a critical-historical canon, defining the major ‘traditions’ of English Literature; 2. a loose method of critical practice, absorbing the Practical Criticism of I. A. Richards and the American New Criticism, ‘naturalising’ it in line with the philosophical empiricist tradition of scrutinising the textual detail; 3. literature and its place in social life are seen to be concerned with moral, social and educational values: self-knowledge, maturity and social responsibility, with the primary focus on the moral position taken in the writing. This is compatible with the Kleinian concept of the integration of the ego, ‘containment’, Bion (1962, 1984: 90-1), and Winnicott’s ‘continuity of being’ (1965: 47-9).

Freud

Lukács (1957, 1972: 487), concerned with ‘depth’, emphasises the influence of Freud,¹⁶ psychopathology and the dominance of subjectivity. Writing more generally, Lukács notes a shift, arguing that the developmental time-line of the traditional novel is in decline, while space – stuck in a space – predominates. He cites European writers and characters such as Beckett’s Molloy, *The Unnameable* (1953) and Kafka’s Joseph K., *The Trial* (1925), who lack the ‘humanist’ agency to develop an identity, and to be politically and socially active. He concludes that ‘Kafka’s *angst* – of man trapped in an incomprehensible world, is the experience par excellence of modernism.’

And this is the point from which Ishiguro departs, albeit in a more ironic, tragi-comic, post-modernist cast but focusing on psychic life; of knowing and not knowing or Freud’s duality of the rational and the irrational forces which *co-exist* in the mind. Illusion had to be recognised as not consistent with the ‘reality principle’ (Freud, S.E.18: 69). Without a conception of truthfulness, there would be no place for those of self-deception, idealisation, delusion, and forms of narcissistic phantasy, so important in the work of Ishiguro, where some truth or reality is being misrepresented or denied.

I argue that instead of Kafka’s characters’ *knowing angst*, there is Ishiguro’s characters’ *unknowing* and *partly-knowing*, confident narcissism. Instead of Beckett’s Molloy’s despairing, ‘I can’t go on...I can’t go on...I’ll go on’, Ishiguro’s characters calmly and omnipotently *do* go on, protected by their unconscious, defensive, psychic structures of narcissism.

2. The ‘Deficit’ Model of the Traditional Novel

Stevenson (2004:55-56) positions Ishiguro within the literature of the late 20th-21st century which responded to the ‘gradual seepage’ of dark, moral and political implications of the world wars, and the return to a strong, moral sense, for example, in the fiction of Golding. It was three generations later, in the 1980s and 1990s that

¹⁶ As Sulloway (1979:276) points out, Freud (1917a:139-43) found that that the dynamic, instinctual and non-rational forces are the more powerful ones in human behaviour, and noted three blows to mankind’s universal narcissism from science: the *cosmological*, when Copernicus declared that the earth was not the centre of the universe; the *biological*, when Darwin showed that with evolution and the place of the human being in it, man was not separate from the lower animals; and from this, the *psychological*, in that, ‘the ego is not master in its own house’ (original emphases).

novelists found the worst shadows of the war manageable.¹⁷ While the writers frequently address the past, they incorporate the trauma in their work *'obliquely'*. For Stevenson (2004: 492-3), Ishiguro's work explores these lasting traumas and their devastating consequences, but *'using complex webs of irony, evasion, and implication'* (my emphases). This is Ishiguro's implicative writing style, in which there is little description or explanation. The reader must perceive the ironies, contradictions and evasions for themselves.

Narrative strategy – 'in-between writing', 'in-between', borderline states of mind

With Vorda and Herzinger (2008:72-6), Ishiguro says:

'... you start moving away from straight realism...looking for other ways in which to work not so much into out and out fantasy but ...[to] create a slightly more fabulous world ...use the landscape that you do know in a metaphorical way'... '...I'm trying to find some territory, somewhere *between* straight realism and out-and-out fabulism. ...I'm asking you to look at this world as a reflection of a world that all kinds of people live in. ...it's almost impossible now to write a kind of traditional British novel without being aware of the various ironies.' [and]... 'in my case, there is an *ironic distance*.' (my emphases).

Ishiguro's writing method lies variably between the traditional humanist-realist mode and a more distanced, ironic, experimental, deconstructive mode. This is consonant with the borderline state of mind, which is *in-between*¹⁸ but distinct from the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. It allows reality to be *known and not known*

¹⁷ Sebald's Zurich Lectures (2004:10-32) were not publishable in Germany until 1999 and provide detailed, documentary accounts of the psychic paralysis from trauma in the German people, as both perpetrators and victims of the air raids on their own cities in WW2: 'There was tacit agreement ... that the true state of material and moral ruin... was not to be described ... like a shameful family secret.' Reck's account of Hamburg in all its frank horror, was a 'rarity': 'a burst open suitcase reveals the roasted corpse of a child, shrunk like a mummy, which its half-deranged mother has been carrying about with her.' Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946), a counter-exemplar, is an explicit, contemporary documentary from survivors of the atomic bomb (1945): the overwhelming 'electric smell' or the woman who clutched a dead baby for four days.

¹⁸ The post-Kleinian borderline state is manic state of mind 'in between' but distinct from Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. The paranoid-schizoid is a persecutory state of mind in which splitting occurs to separate the good and bad emotional experiences, causing a loss of integrity in the ego and difficulty with introjection. The depressive position is a sad and poignant state of mind in which awareness of both love and hate towards the object causes anxiety but ambivalence is tolerated.

at the same time. The fact that the narrators do not know that they do not know – their failure to *see* themselves as others might – creates the conditions for dramatic irony, where the reader perceives the gap between a character's assumptions and the reality but the character does not.

Furthermore, Ishiguro has no interest in novels whose entire purpose is to say something about literary form or the nature of fiction, (Mason, 1989, 2008:13-4):

‘I'm only interested in literary experiment insofar as it serves a purpose of exploring certain themes with an emotional dimension.’

His is a style, I argue, which stretches traditional methods to convey *extreme*, distorting psychic disconnection in narcissism, especially those in *U* and in part of *WO*, with their discontinuities, short-circuits and contradictions, (see Lodge 1977: 220-245):

‘... post-modernism provides a critique of traditional, mimetic writing, and shares its commitment to innovation but by methods of its own, such as contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess and short circuit.’

With Ishiguro, post-modernism works *with* and not instead of traditional conventions, as Hutcheon (1989:18) elaborates:

‘... It installs yet subverts conventions by the use of parody, pastiche or irony. It parodically subverts but inscribes the conventions of realism. ... it is both critical of and complicit with mimetic representation and the idea of *the human at its centre*.’ (my emphasis).

The reader thus has a view of surface and obverse meanings, available at the same time, as with: the inconsistency of character development or that between a traditional genre and its subversion; or an inter-textual allusion which is at variance with what is known and expected. There are the ironies of discrepancy as shown between the expected ethical and reality-seeking behaviours and their failures. This way, the reader sees the unconscious self-deception of Ishiguro's narcissistically ‘oblivious’ narrators in the ‘deficit’ mode. Verbal irony functions similarly, (Hailsham/hale-sham). Ishiguro's ‘in-between’, infiltrating writing mode can function as a literary analogue for borderline states of mind.

Narrative tactics – deconstruction – an analogue

Eagleton's (1983: 133) comments are applicable to Ishiguro's rendering of projective identification in his writing, because of the way his words can be open to multiple

meanings in word-play, such as puns and multiple, semantic derivations.¹⁹ He argues that the binary opposites, identified in the structuralist analyses of texts; ‘light/dark’, nature/culture, and so on, ‘obscure the web-like complexity of things’ and might be reversed in deconstructive readings to prioritise the subordinate term: dark/light, or unconscious/conscious. He shows that such reversals and collapses of structured differences demonstrate how each oppositional element defines aspects of the other: ‘...one term of the antithesis secretly inheres within the other’, and sharp boundaries are felt to collapse. I argue that this can be seen as an analogue of the psychic, ‘inhering’ process in projective identification between two (or more) people, where personal boundaries are made to collapse. As Britton (2003:154, 164) elaborates on projective identification:

‘...the separate existence and particular qualities of the internal object are denied and an internal narcissistic relationship is created by projective identification.’
... ‘the word *narcissism*... [is used] to denote this urge to annihilate otherness.’

Ishiguro’s traumatised narrators mobilise excessive projective identification *into* another person and re-introject – *inhere* – a different, distorted self, which may in turn be re-projected. With such porous, psychic boundaries between one person and another, just who is who in such relationships is, in extreme cases, hard to unravel. Boundaries between self and other *dissolve* since the ‘other’ now only exists to serve the interests of the self or even be felt as an extension of the self. Sodr e’s clinical example, *Who’s Who?* in the consulting room, illustrates this well, (see Theory).

Most of the traditional conventions of the novel below are to be found in their distanced, ironic registers, and render in words, something of the porous, inhering nature of projective identification itself. The ironic or contradictory versions represent the way that the more extreme defences of narcissism infiltrate, deplete, distort, and erode the very human qualities which give meaning to relationships.

¹⁹ Lane and Tew (2003:260) note Derrida, J. on deconstruction, pointing to the subtle interrelationships between words: ‘play of meaning, with difference and contradiction, generating further meaning.’

3. Post-Kleinian Thought

The disturbed states of mind can be articulated in the language and concepts of the post-Kleinian body of knowledge on borderline states of mind, as outlined in the dynamic in the introduction to this chapter. They are: trauma, psychic fragmentation from excessive projection, ego-depletion, rigid defences, loss of affect, diminished object relationships, fragile identity, stunted symbolisation, poor reality sense and cognitive (thinking) capacities, and omnipotence, discussed more fully in Chapter 3, Theory.

Summary

Ishiguro's novels sit within the continuities, conventions and values of the traditional humanist novel but Ishiguro's vision of humanity – 'the ego under threat' – demands the use of some deconstructive, writing tactics to reconfigure it as a 'deficit' model to convey the depletions of narcissism. While his characters *want* self-regard and that of others, their composed, controlled, surface demeanours are maintained only by: the self-deceptive, unseeing, self-enclosed narcissistic organisations, annihilating the 'other'.

Critical Framework

Although the examples given below might anticipate my readings, full explorations of the novels are found in the chapters following.

Central Themes

1. Trauma and the universal struggle between narcissism and object relatedness

Ishiguro's controlling idea is disappointment, failed expectations in love and work and the waiting, and waiting for something momentous to change or clarify things. He shows the central characters' bewildered attempts to understand their own lack of fulfilment in middle and later life. They are permanently marked by their early experiences of trauma damage from wars or social dislocation, emotional deprivation, cruelty, neglect or loss, as they struggle with the precarious human task of negotiating identity. Ryder and Etsuko are caught in their timeless worlds of repetition; Ono is in disavowal; Stevens and Banks have each arrived at self-recognition but too late to change a life; and Kathy H. learns that she is programmed to have no middle years and accepts her finitude.

2. The psychic mechanisms and the spectrum of narcissistic organisations

Questions of self-knowledge, explorations into the mind and memory are part of the

material of the traditional novel but Ishiguro has made certain specific, self-protective actions of the mind his special area of interest: our ‘...less rational emotional logic’, and ‘dream grammar’ (Wong and Crummett, 2008:209) or, as one unnamed critic puts it:

‘The maze of human memory – the ways in which we accommodate and alter it, deceive and deliver ourselves with it – is a territory that Ishiguro has made his own.’ (in Frumkes, 2001: 2008:90).

Ishiguro gives his central characters blurry memories which conflate events and attitudes, as they mis-ascribe to others that which should be acknowledged as their own. ‘Appropriation’ is, as I have argued, his own term for projective identification. This, in its variant forms, is the critical action of the mind for reality evasion in post-Kleinian thinking. I explore these mechanisms as part of the ‘drive-structure’ which underpins each central character’s narcissistic enactments. Their borderline narcissism ranges from the severe, (PVH, U), the modified, (AFW, RD, WO), to the adolescent and developmental (NLG).

Writing Approaches - Textual Organisation

Ishiguro comments to Hogan (2000, 2008:159):

‘I don’t entertain the notion...that there is something outmoded about realism or naturalism or that there is no point in doing it because cinema does it better....I’ve simply *expanded* the territory...’ (my emphasis).

The reader is positioned, through dramatic irony, to read implicitly where the action is at variance with the norm. This is comparable with the ‘total transference situation’ in post-Kleinian analysis. What is professed by a character is often inconsistent with what is done and said, later. There are shifts of time (past and present; compressions and extensions), marginalisation, avoidances or omissions; and contradiction, paradox, verbal irony, shifts of grammar in person, or tense; and parody and pastiche, as I show in subsequent chapters.

3. Genre

Ishiguro believes that it is one of the important jobs of the novelist to rework outmoded genres and myths by subverting the conventional sub-genres of the novel: memoirs, the country house comedy, the celebrity journal, detective, and science fiction. The action in his novels is then at variance with the reader’s expectations in the deconstructive sense of ironic reversal or in ‘deficit’. Autobiographical memoirs purport to be ‘truthful’

but Etsuko's (PVH) is very far from this. So persecutory is her trauma from the loss of her entire family from the atomic bombing, and Keiko's recent suicide, that she unconsciously attributes her sadistic behaviour to Satchiko, a fellow-sufferer. Ono (AFW), who has lost two loved ones from the atom bombing, styles himself, in his memoir, as the 'famous' artist but is unknown, and has currently hidden his work away as ideologically embarrassing. RD, instead of a country house comedy, is a sad, ironic tale of failure and loss. Stevens, the butler, is the focus, rather than the Lord of the Manor, and the novel critiques a genteel, feudal England of rural charm and unshakeable, moral rectitude. Ryder (U), the 'celebrity' concert-pianist on the international circuit, gives an 'account' which shows that he has now lost his way professionally, domestically and psychically. Banks (WO) is a parody of the detective, traditionally operating by rational deduction to find the criminal. But he, driven by unconscious adhesiveness, 'accidentally' uncovers the truth, in which reason is negligible. Kathy H., the clone (NLG) in the science fiction world of biotechnology, is a youthful, human being, with all the expectations of love and work but is *helpless* in her pre-determined life.

4. Situation – geographical and personal

Ishiguro's novels are haunted by a kind of radical, external de-territorialisation and homelessness from the historic traumas with which they intersect. The locations represent the internal worlds of the narrating characters: the post-atomic destruction of the houses and lives (PVH and AFW); the domestically, socially and emotionally marooned butler (RD); the implied destruction of national borders and communities in mainland Europe after WW2, with the unspeakable shadow of the holocaust (U); the child, orphaned and deliberately 'lost' in the 'international zone', during the Sino-Japanese wars (WO); and the cultural and psychic disturbance of the organ donors' in their isolated 'camps', with their de-humanised and truncated lives (NLG).

The characters' personal, catastrophic experiences are de-centralised by having them psychoanalytically 'split off' to the periphery of consciousness, where the reader perceives the facts obliquely. The personal isolation and bleakness of trauma are not dwelt on but emerge only as memory fragments, some way into the stories, contrary to the conventional expectation of explicitly being told the source of the conflict. The

extermination of Etsuko's family (PVH) is expressed elliptically in a brief passing word with Ogata, while the accidental death of Ono's wife in the bombing, and that of his only son, in a senseless army manoeuvre, are mentioned once, in a humorous aside.

5. Structure

Ishiguro organises breaks in the continuity of the action to reinforce the broad theme of historic, social and psychic fragmentation. These novels do not have the conventional beginning, middle and end, since these characters have had an unrealised middle to their lives and are not telling a story of development, understanding and change, as in traditional novels. Framing, for Ishiguro, is an organising structural device which brings pattern and order to subject matter which is about internal and external disorder. The outer frame story (not the 'main' story) is the wider context of their current life-situation, such as Stevens's car journey or Ryder's three-day stop-over to perform in the 'home' city concert, or the broad phases of a life-time, albeit, with significant gaps, in AFW, and WO, for example. The outer frame contains the embedded inner story (the *main* story), 'remembered' in fragments from the past and in some sense, psychologically 'explaining' the outer one to the reader – how the narrators have come to be the way they are now.

The outer frame story begins in *medias res*²⁰ in the present and in four novels, ends there, (PVH, RD, U, NLG), partly reinforcing the circularity of the narrators' internal worlds. Most tell their story retrospectively, from the standpoint of middle to old age but still partly-marooned in their childhood years, as the memory flashbacks – selective, blurry and fragmented – reveal. The external journey is punctuated by excursions into memories and evokes the characters' fragmented subjectivities, as if the teller were trying to come to terms with it. With some (AFW, RD, WO, NLG), important 'detours' occur along the way and lead to an accommodation with reality and disappointment.

Rather than the usual factual flashbacks, conveying accurate information, Ishiguro uses these time shifts to convey psychic disturbance, inflected with the narrator's emotional needs of the moment. He varies the frequency of the time shifts or intercuts between

²⁰ In mid-action; here, at the point in middle-age when the narrator's life, now past its prime, is being reviewed at a crucial point in the chain of life-events, with death closer and a sense of life having passed 'him' by.

past and present in each novel, calling it ‘the less rational emotional logic that we often carry within us.’ (Hogan, 2000; 2008:157). The time shifts for Banks (WO) are spaced more evenly over his whole life and convey his stolid, methodical, ‘detective’s’ mind, while Etsuko’s (PVH) are in concentrated blocks, since she is still in shock from the suicide of her Japanese elder daughter, on top of her private nightmare of the atomic war. In the episodes from the past, there are silences and gaps, especially the long silence after Etsuko left her Japanese husband, or after the collapse of Banks in the war zone experience, before the epilogue (WO).

This re-membering of the past allows it to be mobile; to be re-worked or split off from consciousness, according to the narrators’ unconscious, protective needs. The reader holds together this counterpoint of past and present and colludes with the author, as the narrators reveal the discrepancies, such as Ono’s assertions of his ‘distinction’ or Stevens’s revisions of Mrs Benn’s/Miss Kenton’s letter – and cast doubt on their respective stabilities of identity.

6. Plot

The traditional plot is a chain of actions generated by conflict, evolving over time in a linear trajectory of cause and effect, with the central character progressing towards self-knowledge and conflict resolution. It is developmental and suspense is given a primary value. Ishiguro, however, avoids intricate plots and the suspense element becomes increasingly subdued as the action proceeds. He explores the narrators’ internal worlds, with the past, mobile in the memory but susceptible to revisions through defensive, psychic activity. Time has been arrested in the past of childhood where the early traumas still persist in the present, as indelible, disturbing, repeated, emotional experiences. These are re-enacted in some form, until a glimmer of reality, understanding and self-knowledge emerge, and the cycle is broken – or not. The plot trajectories, except for NLG, are variously circular and indeterminate, rather than linear. Ogden’s (1992:67-99) ‘historical’ self or taking full responsibility for one’s past actions and the making of one’s own meaning, is not easily achievable. By the end, some characters retain a little ‘necessary’ narcissism to sustain whatever dignity in achievement and object relationships might remain, even in memory.

Etsuko and Ryder fail to develop, with Etsuko rigidly remaining the ‘concerned mother’, and Ryder disintegrating into delusory phantasy. Ono survives in disavowal but no longer omnipotent. Stevens, however, sees banter as a two-way exchange, Banks, after a gap of two decades, finds some capacity for ‘guilt’ and concern for his mother and Jennifer, and a self-aware, wry, ironic humour. Young Kathy, having experienced love, friendship, and work, understands and accepts the inevitability of death.

7. Character and motivation

Ishiguro’s first person narrators have slid some way from traditional characters with their ‘unique essence’. Such characters share stable relationships with others, develop consistently in a trajectory that moves through the narrative, epistemologically (progress towards self-knowledge). With Ishiguro, the ontological (modes of being) is his focus of interest. As Ishiguro says, ‘I wanted a certain consciousness, a certain state of mind,’ (Mason, 1989, 2008:12). The reflexive, detached reader notes, as a type of counter-transference, the irony when the central characters do not act in accordance with the norms of this plot type or within the genre ascribed to them. What they say and think is often at variance with what they do, or is just not consistent with the reality they are part of. Ryder, the celebrity, or Banks, the detective, for example, are delusory and implausible, omnipotent and oblivious to others, while Etsuko is excessively reasonable.

Their real motivations are their unconscious ones, often at odds with their conscious, professed intentions. The detached but aware reader sees what behaviours are projected in some way into or on to another: Ono into the Tortoise or Banks on to Osbourne at the Club, for example. Stevens’s assumptions (RD) that Mrs Benn is lonely and wanting to return to the Hall are really about his own loneliness. Only to themselves (apart from the older Kathy H. (NLG)), do these narrators appear to be in rational control of their actions.

8.1 Narrative viewpoint and voice

Ishiguro does not have the third person, omniscient author or a conventional first person narrator telling the story. He devises reliably ‘unreliable’ first person narrators who construe the world through their own special perspectives, or as I have argued, through their own shifting currents of narcissistic phantasy. Ishiguro has tapped into the

Kleinian concept that a narcissistic disorder is reflected in a communicative disorder, and has given each narrator a characteristic, restricted ‘idiolect’, (Lodge 1966: 50).

These characters have suffered trauma and impairments to symbol formation with the consequent damage to their thinking capacities and grasp of reality. Each speaks in his own limited idiom, having the tone and rhythm of free, indirect speech but with a formulaic, code-like vocabulary, suggesting adhesive mimicry and the loss of personal agency. Ishiguro is interested in the limitations and impoverishment of language, and the tendency towards concrete rather than symbolic thinking of those who have suffered neglect, loss and trauma. The ‘Butler-speak’ of Stevens (RD) is an example, as is the smug, ‘intellectual’, condescending voice of the promoted, art teacher (AFW) or the pedantic, forensic style of Banks, the detective (WO).

Except for Kathy H., their speech is not dialogic. The narrators’ voices do not approach an authentic quality until there is some retrieval of projections, and mutuality between the narrator and the other, as it does partly with Ono (AFW) through disavowal, incipiently with Stevens (RD), adequately with Banks after the silence (WO), and more fully with Kathy H. (NLG). The last two arrive at a clearer hold on reality, tempered with gentler, nostalgic narcissism, and by the end, they speak and think more flexibly.

Other voices are brought into the narrator’s plane of discourse so that their monologues include reported ‘dialogues’ or other opposing or alternative viewpoints, although the main character might be oblivious to their significance. Or they can exhibit their failures of communication, having not understood the jokes or the ridicule (WO), or the point, or another’s grief or have recognised love (RD). The reader will appreciate the irony, when Ryder (U) blandly and unwittingly relays the journalists’ offensive, personal remarks about himself, while they are sitting together at the same café table.

8.2 Dramatic irony, counter-transference and the ‘total transference situation’

Sodré (2004: 66) writes that:

‘...whatever actually happened...in external reality... what we have in the session is a narrative that gives a particular shape and meaning to psychic events.’

The reader, likewise, responding to implicative texts like Ishiguro’s, ‘reads’, ‘the shape and meaning of psychic events’ from the behaviours on the page. Spillius (2007:102-5)

points out that with the ‘total transference situation’, the analyst puts less emphasis on language and more on enactment, especially re-enactment of the past; on projective identification and associated mechanisms; and on the analyst’s own counter-transference, in order to arrive at an understanding of the patient’s internal world. The analyst remains ‘distanced’, and uses her own responses, her interpretive knowledge and her grasp of reality. Through dramatic irony as a form of counter-transference, the reader becomes aware of the discrepancies between the character’s expectations and assumptions, and the realities of the situation, while the character is not.

9. Humour

Ishiguro’s humour is not cynical nor does it celebrate fragmentation. It extends the incongruity of humour into a darker, more absurd, ironic zone. The humour of narcissism, distanced by the author, to which the characters themselves are blind, can be enjoyed, as the reader colludes with author, sharing the subdued pathos and covert tragedy at the same time. Ishiguro’s particular tragic-comic vision of ego-depletion and diminished object relations is expressed through his representations of disconnection: the top only of a dog gliding along the top of a fence line (U), for example. There is the Peace statue in Nagasaki (PVH), with its finger pointing to the sky like ‘a traffic policeman’, as if warning off bomb-laden aircraft were possible, or the ludicrously pompous dog funeral (U), displaying disproportionate adulation on a par with celebrity-worship, or the Recovery Centre’s swimming pool, concreted over but with the diving-board still intact (NLG) or the hotel porters (WO) enacting the playing of musical instruments in the depleted band.

Verbal tactics

In Ishiguro’s novels, the pervasive language, with its multiple semantic possibilities, say, in his settings, and imagery, expresses the instability and effacement of boundaries. These might vaporise or infiltrate like the ‘inhering’ nature of projective identification, and create distortions of personality and perception for the character. Fluid boundaries can also connote a sudden loss of self – of falling into outer darkness, infinity and annihilation.

10. Setting – space, place and mental landscapes

Ishiguro extends the traditional novel's particularity and atmosphere of setting. The task, he says, is:

‘to create the setting that feels firm enough, as concrete enough, for people to be able to find their way around it... but also, to make a particular setting actually take off into the realm of metaphors...’ (Vorda and Herzinger, 2008:75).

Steiner (1993: 1-13), a post-Kleinian analyst, calls the rigid, narcissistic organisations ‘psychic retreats’, and reports how the withdrawal from others – the retreat – is unconsciously experienced spatially, in a visual or dramatised form, such as a refuge, sanctuary or haven; in the form of a house, cave, fortress or desert island; or interpersonally, as in a business organisation, boarding school, religious sect, totalitarian government or Mafia-like gang, which might be idealised or tyrannical.

Ishiguro, similarly, suggests that there is a hiding place, a ‘splitting off’ and ‘retreat’ within the self (self-enclosure) from intolerable emotional pain. To show this, he stretches the significance of the imagery of settings, such as landscape, architecture, or the hiding and retreating behind costume, posture, clinging plants, formulaic language or caricatured, inauthentic, ‘acting’ versions of a role or profession.

His are space metaphors, in which the literal places and spaces also represent, not only emotion but even the very psychic narcissistic structures themselves, with ‘psychic retreats’ such as Ono’s enclosed valley with its self-enclosed aesthetes (AFW), Stevens’s windowless pantry or the fake, architectural detail of Darlington Hall that sum up Stevens’s years of inauthentic, emotional life (RD). Landscapes of feeling and mind are found in, say, Etsuko’s hazy grasp of reality in her ‘pale view’ from a tiny window of their mean flat (PVH), or Ryder’s (U) psychic circularity, figured in the circular pathways of the flats where he, Sophie and Boris used to live. Hailsham (NLG) is located in a remote, enclosed valley like the clones’ enclosed psychic space and their real disconnection from the outside world from which they have been split off.

Time, in *U* is expanded in Ryder’s first lift-ride at the hotel or compressed in his instant, ‘trapdoor’ return to Boris, waiting in the café, and hints at psychotic disturbance in which causal linkage, and internal and external boundaries have collapsed. Flashbacks

to settings, fusing a time and space,²¹ are a narrative method where Ishiguro intensifies his insight that place and time in memory have indelible, childhood shaping presences. Banks (WO) sees his family home in Shanghai firstly as the safe and fairly happy original, then on his return, as a hybrid version, with a superimposed façade. It is owned by others but, unable to differentiate time and change, he still feels entitled to it.

11. Imagery

While the space and places of settings – landscape and architecture – are made to function as broad metaphor (above) the more local metaphors within the text are devised to concentrate the themes in a way that is lean and dense. Imagery functions in a metonymic-synecdochic manner, where a part stands for the whole. For example, as Kathy (NLG) slowly apprehends her fate, the balloons with the smiling faces disconnect from their clown-owner and float away, to melt into nothingness. Small mirror frames encapsulate a phase of the action by highlighting a point in a condensed local form. Ryder and young Stephan are framed in the mirror of the bar, both positioned as possible younger and older versions of Ryder himself and hopefuls in the pianist, celebrity stakes. There are the exchanges between Banks and another, talking, surface-fashion, to their mirror images (WO), or the gleaming, misty tiles in the Recovery Centre (NLG) that give back only a blurry, half-effaced version of the clones, to indicate their cipher-like existences.

Things which provide *ways of seeing* can be given metaphoric potency. The binoculars (PVH) indicate an ‘unseeing’ Etsuko who will only *ever* see a rebuilt harbour, not the appalling damage, done by the atomic bombing to herself, Keiko, and her environment. Banks’s (WO) obsessive use of the magnifying glass on surface minutiae allows him to see only decontextualised, concrete ‘evidence’, rather than *see* the emotionally destructive relationships in his family, and the unreality of his plans, decades later, to rescue his parents.

12. Diction

Ishiguro opts for compression and austerity in his use of language, compared with some

²¹ In the literary chronotope, spatial and temporal factors are fused in a concrete whole. [Thus] space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history. (Bakhtin 1981:84).

traditional writers. He explains his elliptical style as wanting to go:

‘...beyond the reach of words. ... I’m interested in the way words hide meaning...I like to have a spare, tight structure...’ (Vorda and Herzinger, 1990; 2008:71).

Ishiguro enjoys the compression, ambiguity and wit, of word play and multiple semantic inflections of etymology. The hidden and projected aspects of his narrators’ internal worlds are conveyed by the ambiguity of certain words and the potency of their latent opposite meaning. There is the pleasure of recognising the irony of subtle pastiche (Stevens’s grandiose talk of duties ‘at the hub’ RD), Brodsky’s burlesque, perverse conducting (U), the parody of the pretentious, musicological jargon (U) and the cliché in Kathy H’s ‘waste of space’ (NLG), or the pun, Helsinki / ‘hell sinky’, the next disastrous venue for pianist, Ryder, in his downward spiral of multiple failures (U).

Ishiguro favours certain simple words which are loaded with significance: ‘spiders’, disappearing into dark holes into the space of the hidden or the metaphorical unknown, suggest an unarticulated horror, existing liminally in the unconscious, like ‘nameless dread’ (Bion 1967, 1984:116). The characters often use the vague word ‘strange’ to describe uneasy incomprehension but its derivation suggests ‘estrangement’ and disconnection – absence of relationship – from what is real and knowable. The word ‘home’, too, can imply Klein’s primary good object or ‘homelessness’ and must carry the full, implicative weight of both the physical home and the emotional anchorage. *Heimlich* also carries the paradoxical feeling of both the familiar and unfamiliar of Freud’s ‘uncanny’. Similarly, the word ‘laugh’ is used ambiguously, in ‘I gave a laugh’, in which ‘laugh’, used as a noun, has a passive, space-filling function, deflecting anxiety or hiding anger, and has little to do with the delight of humour, conveyed by the active verb. Stevens (RD) distances himself from his father by addressing him, not as ‘you’ but in the third person, impersonal voice, as ‘It is felt that Father...’, and himself as ‘one’ or ‘one’s person.’

Ishiguro’s titles indicate fluidity and indeterminacy in which there are no definite articles, proper names or specific time mentioned: ‘A’ pale view, ‘An’ artist, When *we* were... or The *Un*-consoled. Boundaries are blurred with indistinct, *pale* views, *floating* worlds, scattered *remains*, and evanescent yearnings to be *held*, rooted and stable. A world of foggy memories dominate his unknowing narrators: Ono’s transient, ‘floating’

political and social world, and his illusory, artistic renown; the dissolution of hopes as Stevens and Mrs. Benn wait in the *drizzling* rain for her bus or Ryder's exhausted merging of night and day. Readers note all that is dissolving, slippery, shadowy and opaque, which express the inability to observe boundaries, to be 'separate' and see reality clearly. The misty, merged, drifting, shifting, and unstable also become metaphors of shadowy, personal identity from over-projection, rather than more solid and connected selves.

Other words become thematic motifs: the emptiness and ghosts (PVH); the destructive smell of burning – artwork, buildings and bodies after bomb-raids (AFW); 'costume' as clothing, 'posture', and language – to cover up (RD). Circularity is found in many forms (U) – stairways, action, thinking, repetition and minimalist music, while discontinuity is rendered in *absent* connections which abruptly cut off, obstruct, stop dead or restart via an odd door, staircase, ladder, cupboard or labyrinthine tunnel. In WO, there are window blinds and 'blind' games, and clinging, adhesive plants as *surface* ways of holding on, unlike the types of holding, anchored in emotional relationships (NLG).

These verbal expressions of blurred boundaries and untethered psychic anxiety are also analogues of the projective identificatory processes at the heart of the borderline pathology in the novels

Linguistic Approaches

The postmodernist stance which deliberately alienates itself from the emotional life of the protagonist in favour of interest in textuality for its own sake is not Ishiguro's. As I mentioned earlier, he uses its more experimental resources only if the emotional upheaval he is representing demands it, such as the psychic breakdowns in U and WO.

13. Post-modernist inter-textual allusions

Ishiguro assumes an awareness of well-known texts and incorporates allusions naturally into the body of the narratives themselves. He calls upon the reader's self-conscious alertness to them as forms of pleasure in recognition and in irony. Banks (WO), implicitly and ironically parallels Pip (both orphans), in Dickens's *Great Expectations* in the journey through the plot trajectory. Ishiguro implies the values of the 19th century English novel and its focus on the family: marriages, property, money, progress and

self-knowledge but Ishiguro's Banks functions in the 'deficit' model. In NLG, the brief reference to George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* is part of Kathy H's project, significantly concerning a Jewish boy, seeking and finding his parental roots. This is a task which Kathy H. and her friends also attempt with their 'possibles' but fail.

Ishiguro incorporates the themes of other cultural forms such as opera, film, art, and minimalist music. He also embraces popular culture into his narratives, not by mocking it but by incorporating, for example, children's quiz shows (PVH), USA cowboy films (AFW), a science fiction film, *2001, A Space Odyssey* (U), and phrases from advertising copy on office work, briefly taken up by Ruth (NLG). More satirically, he uses gentle pastiche as an instrument of parody in the dated, cliché-ridden, travel guide to the English countryside and its post-card villages.

14. Art

Rather than flaunt the artifice of fiction writing itself, Ishiguro implies the reader's awareness of art forms and reading the distancing function of art (Wormald, 2003:226-238). He incorporates drawing, painting, music and posters naturally as possible truth-seeking media, generative of cognitive order, as in post-Kleinian aesthetics. For example, the perspective in the child's drawings during the cable-car outing (PVH) is judged to be out of perspective, implying to the reader that Etsuko's account of her life is also distorted. Tommy's contorted, mechanistic drawings (NLG) display his vision of what is like for a factory-made clone to be entrapped like a helpless creature or a replaceable screw at the back of a radio. The music tapes, although replicated and second hand, can still be treasures. However, Ishiguro shows (truthfully) that art can also be truth-occluding and self-serving. The advertising posters (NLG) or the three different schools of art (AFW) suggest that some artists and celebrity performers (U) can be self-admiring, manipulative or propagandist.

The two-column Table, following, points to Ishiguro's varying position within the continuities of and deviations from the humanist novel, and illuminated by the post-Kleinian body of knowledge. With this paradigm in mind, I shall investigate Ishiguro's 'stretched' conventions of the traditional novel, in the depleted, ironic register.

Table – Ishiguro’s ‘in-between’ position – humanist norms in tension with deconstructive approaches to the novel

Traditional novel – humanism Plot – developmental, closed endings, conflicts resolved Action linear explicit, descriptive	Post-modernist novel – humanism – irony, distance, deconstruction Plot – minimal, indeterminate endings, paradoxes, contradictions, conflicts partly/unresolved; impasse [overt approach to novel as artifice] Action circular, implicative
Character and motive – essential self development linear – teleological – ultimate self-knowledge	Character split – inconsistent, drives unconscious – development short-circuited or static – ontological weak self-knowledge and reality sense
Structured – continuity, ordered flashbacks	Structured – discontinuity, frequent time shifts in memory, shifts of tone, tense, grammar (person)
Situations – circumstances, settings explicit	Situations – circumstances implicit – dramatic irony – distance, absences, gaps, silences
Language – stable Imagery, metaphor embody the idea	Language – unstable, irony, layers of meaning co-exist, poly-semantic, pun, derivations; subversion genre, inter-textuality, art references, Imagery, setting as implied metaphor
Critic shows textual unity & coherence	Critic shows textual disunity, conscious & unconscious co-exist
Klein – Art referent – part objects – whole objects paranoid-schizoid position love/hate, good/bad development to depressive position, with projections re-integrated, symbol-formation	Post-Klein – Art referent – mental functioning borderline states of mind and feeling, excessive projective identification, little re-integration of projections, concrete thinking, poor symbol-formation
Implied aesthetics – Kleinian – reparation through art	Implied aesthetics – post-Kleinian truth-seeking generative of cognitive order through art
Implied ethics – reparative morality	Implied ethics – truth-seeking
Psychoanalytic thinkers – Klein Riviere Segal (Winnicott)	Bion Rosenfeld Segal Meltzer Britton Steiner Spillius Ogden Waddell Sodr� Roth (Bollas)

Chapter 3 – Theory

The Post-Kleinian Psychoanalytic Model of Identity, Identification and Narcissistic Phantasy

Echo and Narcissus

...Gossips

Came to Tiresias: ‘Can her boy live so long
With such perfect beauty?’ The seer replied:
‘Yes, unless he learns to know himself.’

Tales from Ovid, from the Metamorphoses, (Hughes, T. 1997:74).

As the epigraph suggests, the concept of not knowing oneself is a form of self-protection and survival. In the myth, Narcissus does not understand that the image he adores in the water is himself. He relates to nothing but his own reflection, oblivious to the cries of Echo, and finally wastes away in impotent despair.

Ishiguro shows how his central characters survive by means of such self-enclosure through the defences of borderline narcissism²² and its key mechanism, projective identification in some form. His characters have unconsciously formed different types of psychic narcissistic structures as forms of protection from unbearable trauma. Although they do not waste away in despair, they are left baffled in later middle age as to why, having tried their best, they are disappointed in love and in work, and beset by a sense of time having passed them by and of partly wasted lives.

Post-Kleinian thought provides a conceptual framework within which the sense of disconnection, unrelatedness and dread of separation from others can be theorised. This body of knowledge has a language for and an informed account of states of mind and protective-defensive, psychic processes to do with trauma and dysfunctional relationships between self and other. Beneath the dignified tone and controlled behaviours of Ishiguro’s first person narrators lie narcissistic organisations – drive-structures – derived from intolerable, psychic pain, that have led to over-projection (expulsion) of unbearable experience. The result is internal fragmentation of the ego,

²² ‘Borderline states are psychic structures or organizations which are of precarious equilibrium *between* paranoid-schizoid and the depressive states of mind but strong enough to fend off both the psychotic confusion of the paranoid-schizoid state and defend against the pain of depressive anxiety from loss and guilt.’ (Rustin, 1991:160).

dissociative states of mind, and difficulties with personal identity and relationships. What, one might wonder, is protecting these narrators, and where has their distress gone?

I shall contextualise these states of mind, later explored in the novels, using the basic principles of post-Kleinian thought outlined by Spillius (2007: 61). Analysing the post-Kleinian development, Spillius finds two core features and two key sources of psychological evidence. These are the theoretical orientation and the clinical attitude, and the two sites of investigation – its location, and its manifestation.

1.
 - i. The theoretical orientation is both Object Relations and Drive-structure theory.
 - ii. The clinical attitude is the priority of the search for psychic reality – truth-seeking – in Klein’s and Bion’s sense of both the person’s ‘epistemophilic’ need to know, and the pull to evade knowing and resist development.
2.
 - i. The location – where the roots of object relationships are to be explored – is in the internal world and to some extent, in remembered past experience.
 - ii. The nature of these internal object relationships is manifested through re-enactment in the external world.²³

Ishiguro’s novels occupy exactly this territory, focusing as they do on the interior life of the narrators, with their internal objects psychically alive throughout life and just as potent as their external ones. As well as experiencing catastrophic, traumatic change in the external world, Ishiguro’s characters have had early failed experiences of relating to and depending on care-giving figures. These repeated failures have become internalised, which, unmodified, have activated protective drive-structures – rigid, entrenched *narcissistic organisations* in the personality.

The psychoanalytic clinical attitude of truth-seeking corresponds in the novels to the central characters’ declared search for understanding of the self, and the gap between their earlier expectations and their disappointments in later life. Because of self-enclosure and the ‘blindness’ of narcissism, most cannot function in relationships of mutuality. They cannot see the severe discrepancies between what is real and what is t

²³This is seen clinically in modified ways in the transference between patient and analyst.

real in their internal and the external worlds, and *cannot know* that they cannot, hence the ‘phantasy’ of the title. Thus, the trajectory towards self-knowledge in the traditional novel form is just where these characters fail.

The roots of their current internal worlds lie in the past – in their a-temporal internal worlds, in which time past is mobile and exists powerfully in the present. Ishiguro’s narrators constantly evoke incidents through memory flashbacks, infused with feelings, phantasies, daydreams and thoughts that exist outside and inside normal time (Ishiguro’s mental ‘drift’). They show the reader the origins of past, emotional pain from traumas, such as loss, absence, exclusion, deprivation or humiliation.

Ishiguro shows in the novels that catastrophic experiences which remain unmourned are repeated in re-enactment and demonstrated by the narrators’ behaviours and speech, thoughts and attitudes. His traumatised characters find that their life trajectories are static and they live with persistent, haunting, fragmented memories of their trauma, ranging from the indelible ghosts of PVH, to persecutory figures of cruelty or indifference in AFW, U and WO or the benign but deceiving ones of NLG. The relative absence of the work of mourning where pain is acknowledged, confronted and struggled with, results in an impoverished grasp of internal and external reality and a stifled, severely restricted emotional life, (see Ingham, 1998, 2004: 99). And there is a failure of the ‘historical’ subject to emerge (Ogden, 1992: 67-99). This requires self-reflection, the renunciation of omnipotence, the recognition of the past *as* the past and different from the present, and to take responsibility for it. The characters’ social behaviours, frequently urbane and socially adept on the surface, are gradually revealed to be highly defended states of narcissism, for which the key post-Kleinian mechanism is projective identification in its different variants.

What happens in the gap between the narrators’ surface control and their internal fragmentation? Post-Kleinian thought is uniquely suited to theorising this gap because at its core, it is concerned with the more extreme forms of psychic disturbance and is a development of three fundamental Kleinian principles, elaborated by Roth (2001: 34-6), complementing those of Spillius (above):

‘...the ubiquitousness of unconscious phantasy, the infant’s inherent capacity to relate to objects, and the duality of the life and death instincts.’

1. From birth, all experiences (internal, external, physical or mental) are accompanied by representations in unconscious phantasy about the ego itself and its relation to internal objects (persons); and this becomes the basis of the structure of the personality.
2. The infant is innately constituted to turn to a ‘good object’ (usually the mother) to satisfy hunger and the need for loving feelings.
3. The duality of the life and death instincts (love and hate) determines the individual’s object relations and personality. The life instincts drive towards the recognition of objects, the perception of reality and the organisation of experience, while the death instincts drive towards anxiety, dissolution, disorder, disconnection and not ‘to be’.

Over fifty years of post-Kleinian clinical work has produced an impressive body of theory on narcissistic and borderline disorders: autism, D.I.D. (dissociative identity disorder), trauma, and psychosis, as found, for example, in the work of Rosenfeld, Segal, Bion, Grunberger, Grinberg, Meltzer, Ogden, Steiner, and Britton. What is being recognised is how the potency of destructive feelings of anxiety, envy, jealousy, humiliation, shame, deprivation and other negative feelings and thought processes lead to unconscious self-deception, and perverse idealisation of the good or the bad in oneself.

Ishiguro himself says of his novels:

‘...What’s important is the emotional aspect, the ...position the characters take up at different points in the story, and why they need to take up these positions.’ (Mason, 1989, 2008:10).

‘What I’m interested in is not the actual fact that my characters have done things they later regret... [but] how they come to terms with it. On the one hand there is a need for honesty, on the other hand, a need to deceive themselves – to preserve a sense of dignity, some sort of self-respect.’ (Graver, 1989:3).

I shall explore how *they*, the narrators, ‘come to terms with it’ – their emotional disturbances and their modes of psychic accommodation of this so-called deceit and honesty which Ishiguro calls ‘self-deception’. I see it more as unconscious and partly-conscious defensive ‘position-taking’, activated to manage the psychically intolerable

effects of trauma.²⁴ Post-Kleinian theory can illuminate the omnipotent states of mind, and forms of self-enclosure yet dread of separation from the other, that are peculiar to the manic defence of narcissism, presented in the texts, as well as each character's emotional motivation, key psychic mechanism, and re-enactments.

I shall address not only what unacceptable things the narrators might or might not have done but also the hidden, the silent and the unspeakable of *what has been done to them*, from the implications in the prose. Etsuko, for example, has taken her Japanese daughter away from Japan but was the only survivor in her family, wiped out in the atomic war on Nagasaki; Banks abandons his lover on the eve of departure for Singapore but has been abandoned three times himself, when a child in Shanghai. Their experiences of trauma in childhood have led to withdrawal from any close, dependent, emotional ties, and determined the particular psychic structures which still drive their behaviours in middle life. They demonstrate: what sort of object relationships dominate their internal worlds, how they are perpetuated in their lived lives, and how they attempt to master or evade certain anxieties and psychic pain by mobilising the defences of narcissism.

Post-Kleinian concepts in the field of narcissism and borderline states

Narcissism²⁵ is seen as a state of mind in which true object love is frozen and replaced by a 'narcissistic organisation' (defensive structure) in the personality, as a result of failures of 'containment' (Bion 1984:90-1). It is defined by a withdrawal *from* object relations, *towards* the self as the object of love, (Britton, 2003: 154):

'It is a particular kind of internal object relationship in which the separate existence and particular qualities of the internal objects are denied and an internal narcissistic relationship is created by projective identification.'

Narcissism is found to exist on a spectrum from Freud's necessary 'self-regard', (Freud, 1914:98-100), with a rightful expectation of self-esteem and the esteem of others, to the more pathological 'grandiose self' of Rosenfeld (1964:169-79), to the ego which destroys the links to feeling and thinking of Bion (1967, 1984: 93-109; 110-119), the self-sufficient complacency of Britton (1998:82-96), and the varied, self-enclosed, rigid 'psychic retreats', subsumed under 'Pathological organisations', found by Steiner

²⁴ The conscious and unconscious *co-exist* as the 'unthought-known' (Bollas 1987:278).

²⁵ See Britton, 1998: 170 for an account of the origin of the term taken up by Freud and its relation to the myth of the beautiful youth, Narcissus.

(1993). Britton (2003:152-164), reviewing the developments in this field of study, finds that a narcissistic disorder includes elements of the libidinal, the defensive, and the destructive but in varying levels of intensity. In Ishiguro's novels, I find that the libidinal and defensive forms of narcissistic organisation predominate, although severe, destructive currents exist in PVH, RD and dominate in U.

Narcissism – the psychoanalytic dynamic in the novels

In the novels, narcissism is a state of mind which has developed into a rigid character structure. The defences have been mobilised by traumas of history, such as socio-historic upheaval or the devastating, inhumanities of wars, including nuclear war, and compounded by the cumulative micro-traumas of emotional deprivation and childhood, failures of dependency by parental figures. This has caused overwhelming feelings of envy, deprivation, anxiety or catastrophic loss and fear of annihilation.

The particular dynamic at work within these narrators is set out in the title of this thesis: 'Identity, identification and narcissistic phantasy'. Broadly, it is activated by the psychic schizoid mechanism of 'splitting off' and projecting whatever is intolerable and inassimilable for the ego into another person, and to evade the sense of separateness.

More particularly, narcissism involves: poor identity formation through weak, uncontainable identifications and exchanges with others; trauma damage; identity disintegration; self-idealisation against persecutory feelings; the 'splitting off' of intolerable psychic pain, the projective identification of it into another, as a defence; and the re-introjection of a distorted self in narcissistic phantasy.²⁶ This is a dynamic in which the authentic self, (and the ego), becomes depleted, even invisible, through excessive splitting and projection. By the end of each novel, the narrators, apart from those in PVH and U, manage varying degrees of late retrieval of their projections (the 'split off' parts of the self) and variable degrees of reality are acknowledged.

Narcissism is characterised by the omnipotent nature of the phantasies that underlie these primitive defence mechanisms, manifested in typical, omnipotent behaviours, such

²⁶ Segal (1983:269-76) concludes that projective mechanisms can form a level of 'permanent character structure...built up by the re-internalisation of the projectively possessed object.'

as grandiosity, smugness, denial, control, contempt and triumph. These, I discuss further, for Ishiguro shows that in each narrator, a particular defence mechanism and state of mind dominates, along with persistent childhood memories of traumatic emotional experience. The narrators' memories, selective and fragmentary as they are, shift and evolve in the present, reactivating absence, indifference, neglect, abandonment, displacement, cruelty, and loss, in the universal struggle to preserve dignity, self-esteem and the esteem of others.

Key post-Kleinian concepts

Firstly, I shall outline: identity formation and identification with the other; secondly; trauma, the catastrophic fracture of the psychic 'protective shield' and inner, psychic continuities, with behavioural re-enactment; thirdly, narcissism and the protective defences, including the emotional motivation, and the psychic mechanisms – principally projective identification – and their disavowal or retrieval; fourthly, the damage to symbol formation; fifthly, 'reading narcissism' – two clinical accounts; and lastly, narcissistic organisations, as found in the respective novels.

1. Identity, identification and personality formation

Identity or the sense of self is not automatically present from birth but is a cumulative, developmental process.²⁷ Identity might be experienced as sturdy and structured but it can be experienced as fragile and unstable, and dissociated from affective states. From an aggregation of inchoate, unintegrated impulses, sensations, and feelings, the infant mind ideally moves to a coherent and integrated sense of self through identifying with the loving, regulating 'other'. Such figures identified with would be Freud's 'libidinally invested object', Klein's core, 'good internal object' and most notably, Bion's 'containing' other'. Ogden's concept of the interpersonal dialectic or the dialogic process that leads to subjectivity and the 'sense of oneself as a creator of meanings', sums up this essential mode of identity building (Ogden, 1992: 217). In the novels,

²⁷ Britton (2003:100 -103): 'The word 'self' refers to the concept of self in relationship with other. The word 'personality' applies to the whole mind with the idea of both pathological and healthily functioning parts. The word 'ego' I shall use when focusing on its functionality as mental apparatus. The ego is seen as the 'container' of psychic experience derived from within, [and its] interaction with perceptions ... from without. It nominates experience, allocates belief to selected ideas, and tests the reality of those beliefs... At the same time, it is the core of the subjective self, the recipient of experience and initiator of action...'

however, the parental figures cannot function in this role because they have been wiped out (PVH), are tyrannical (AFW), a remote, working servant or absent (RD, NLG), or provide only excluding, emotional discord in the household (U, WO).

Bion's concept (1962, 1984: 90-91) of 'container-contained' is the central tenet for coherence and integration of identity in post-Kleinian thinking. Through mother's responding emotionally and intellectually – 'reverie' – to the infant through normal projective identification, she metabolises the 'communications' (noises, feelings, body language), and returns them to him in an assimilable form. This way, identity is consolidated by repeated identificatory experiences of introjective and projective exchanges of a dialogic nature, with loving, thinking and dependable parental figures. They filter and make sense of the infant's disorientation, incomprehension or terror of annihilation, and return the experience in an understandable form. These figures, in other words, provide adequate correspondences between the need felt and the response given.

When the exchanges are good, they become the established prototypes for subsequent relationships and learning from experience, and help to develop a flexible internal world that can survive psychic damage. When they fail and the sense of self is weakly founded, seriously doubted, questioned, threatened or overwhelmed by catastrophe such as trauma, then the infant experiences a sense of terror and annihilation, as in Bion's 'nameless dread' (Bion, 1967, 1984:116), and this is a source of the fragility in Ishiguro's central characters.

Then, the narcissistic manic defences, needed for internal psychic protection and social survival, are unconsciously mobilised. This way, the child's early foundational pattern of emotional experiences forms the psychic structures which determine subsequent behaviours throughout life. For the utterly dependent infant in the best of circumstances, there is a struggle through growth and change, to have a solid, stable, consistent sense of self, and a reliable, continuous, integrated, internal world. It is a sense of being authentically 'at home', integrated with oneself and yet able to relate to *others as separate* individuals. Ishiguro's novels show how difficult and unfulfilling this struggle can be in severely damaging circumstances.

I shall include a brief reference to Winnicott's complementary concept of identity before examining the manic defences of narcissism. Winnicott's (1960, 1965:37-55) external, 'facilitating' environment, where mother-infant is the founding unit of psychological development, emphasises the practical aspect of identity formation, with the first maternal envelope, as holding and eye-contact. It is followed by the second phases of transitional objects and illusion, and then by 'an awakening consciousness of differences between self and others, of *'me and not me'*, and their separateness. It is André Green's 'otherness of the other' (Green, 2001:157). Ogden (1992:200) sums it up in 'the mother's psychological and physical activity provides the initial matrix for the infant's mental and bodily experience.'

The dimension of the body has a place in personal identity, most obviously in *Never Let Me Go*, where no parental figures exist from the start, but also in the other novels where the availability of the parental function is negligible. While identity formation develops through the solid, relational experiences of the emotions and mind with the 'other', it is underpinned by the internalisation of the solid, biological materiality of the body. Freud (1923:26) saw the ego as 'first and foremost a bodily ego' as well as a psychic one. The contribution of skin and touch towards building a sense of integration within the self has been developed in the object relations work of Winnicott and Bick. Only in the sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go*, does Ishiguro introduce the more benign experiences of the power of holding and touch for healing and relating to others.

Winnicott (1960, 1965:37-55) sees that the main feature of infancy is *dependence*, and so his concept of the holding environment, with the mother as 'other', is central.²⁸

'...the important thing...is that the mother, through identification of herself with her infant, knows what the infant feels like and is able to provide almost exactly what the infant needs in the way of holding and in the provision of an environment generally.'

The essential quality is the reliability and consistency of 'physical holding', and in this way, each infant is enabled to build up a 'continuity of being'. The infant can establish the solidity of 'memories of maternal care' or being held in mind, as demonstrated by

²⁸ Reisenberg-Malcolm (2001:170) notes that Bion's post-Kleinian view differs from Winnicott's in that the infant ego is *already* innate and participates in emotional interaction from the beginning.

the child in Freud's (1920, 1-64) cotton reel case study.²⁹

Bick (1968: 484), commenting on the body in the context of infant observation, crucially links skin contact with providing a sense of psychic coherence and identity.

She says:

‘...in its most primitive form the parts of the personality are felt to have no binding force amongst themselves and must therefore be *held together* in a way that is experienced by them passively, by the skin functioning as a boundary.’

The capacity to cohere psychically and introject at all, she says, must also depend on an

‘...internal function of containing parts of the self. [This is itself]...dependent upon the introjection of an external object experienced as capable of fulfilling this function [a loving parental figure] ...Until the containing functions have been introjected, a concept of a space within the self cannot arise.’

2. Trauma and psychic disturbance

In the novels, Ishiguro explores the aftermath of trauma from the perspective of the main character's middle and later years: how, in the condensed time-scale of *Never Let Me Go*, the clones, as ‘school’-leavers, gradually recognise their reality, and manage the trauma of their imminent, premature deaths as organ donors; and how the other narrators manage lives, fraught with the horrors of loss, absence, and emotional neglect which have been banished to the margins of consciousness.

Trauma – a wound – refers in this study to severe *psychic* wounding and fracture of the psychic continuities. Trauma attacks the core of identity and leads to extreme states of psychic disturbance in three phases: from shock (which pierces and overwhelms the psychic skin); to disintegration of the internal world through splitting and projection; and to persistent re-enactments thereafter. Trauma is experienced as something utterly destructive, inassimilable and overwhelming – the post-Kleinian catastrophic change. It might be sudden and violent as in wars, or destroy identity as with radical social change, or be corrosive from other forms of unavailability of the ‘containing’ figure.

²⁹ Freud, writing on trauma, outlines the scene of a child missing his mother, who, in play, throws the wooden reel on a string out of sight then pulls it back again, making the mother figure disappear and appear *repeatedly* in order to gain control over a painful situation. This is not the more serious ‘compulsion to repeat.’

Trauma is ultimately to do with the terrifying sense of personal annihilation.

The cumulative identity-building and its connectivity, described above, is blown apart and dismembered. Intolerable experience cannot be psychically contained and is '*split off*' from conscious awareness, particularly when the sense of identity and the capacity to tolerate conflicting loved and hated objects is precariously founded in the first place, as with Ishiguro's narrators.

Although these characters do remember, their *re*-remembering is selective, unreliable, and with the loss of the internal 'container', they are subject to their omnipotent, defensive narcissistic needs. What happens is psychic repetition: a cyclic re-experiencing of scenes from the original traumatic experience, and a re-enactment of the emotional responses and behaviours (the *après-coup*). No psychic reconstruction takes place (Garland, 1998, 2004: 112-3). Ishiguro makes it clear in *A Pale View of Hills* that the *reconstruction* of the apartment blocks in the external, post-atomic, cratered landscape is inadequate and has come to a halt, in parallel with the devastated, internal world of the narrator, Etsuko.

For recovery, mourning must take place, however painfully, so that the sense of self may be reconstructed and events safely remembered. Garland (1998, 2004:4-5) makes it clear that:

'It [trauma] cannot be willed out of existence. ...The task is hard since the extent of human destructiveness has to be faced... sometimes in both perpetrator and survivor.'

Only then could there be possibility for change, growth and the gradual recovery of the 'good object', 'core of the ego' (Klein, 1946, 1997:1-24; 1957, 1997:176-135), and the gradual installation of a secure and reliable sense of psychic integration. But Ishiguro's particular vision in these novels shows a relative lack of such good objects. Instead, he shows the narrators' very human attempts to keep their dignity and social composure, unaware of the way that their protective, internal defence structures determine their distancing, omnipotent behaviours and attitudes. The narrators survive like many ordinary people, with whatever inner 'splitting off' and controlling resources they can muster.

3. The narcissistic defences for psychic survival

There are two aspects to the drive towards unconscious splitting off: emotional motivation, driving the narcissistic behaviours; and the mechanism of projective identification in its variant forms.

3.1 Emotional motivation: in post-Kleinian thought, the drive behind the mechanism of projective identification is envy, stemming from the emotional privations which the trauma has caused. The desperate, often sadistic feelings of all the traumatised narrators are felt to be intolerable and lead to protective, libidinal self-idealisation – the over-valuation of the self to overcome envy or deprivation – and then split off and expelled into the other via projective identification (Klein, 1957:176-235). This prevents the sense of sinking into nothingness, in which the links between a part of the self and the object, dissolve, and produce the dreaded feeling of annihilation or oblivion.

Unconscious self-idealisation is followed by omnipotent thinking in a variety of forms: denial, overriding the psychic reality of a situation to avoid pain but also overriding such boundaries as time, gender, generation, law and morality; disparagement, where the ego cannot give up its good internal objects but cannot bear to be dependent on them and by contempt, denigrates their qualities and importance; control, in which powerful, narcissistic dependence is projected into another who now contains all the good parts of the self (or the bad parts); and triumph, where protection from pain arises through sadistic gratification of overcoming and humiliating the object.

Ishiguro's extremely defended, adult, central characters in U and WO have internal worlds in which the combined parental figure was experienced in infancy as monstrously cruel and excluding, arousing vicious sadism in the child, with the wish to hurt and punish. Etsuko (PVH) and Stevens (RD), surviving with the *absence* of parental concern, are likewise, unwittingly cruel. While the child/adult fears analogous retaliation, he also feels responsible for the unhappy, warring parent, as part of his omnipotent control (see Klein, 1929:212-3).

The omnipotence and obliviousness to others in narcissism might take the form of blankness as with Etsuko; condescension, as with Ono; grandiloquence as with Stevens; arrogance, complacency, and smugness, with Ryder; caricature with Banks; while Kathy H., with diminished affect, denies dependency, and with selective optimism and

endurance, finds value in any object or situation that can provide it. In view of their self-enclosure, sadistic impulses might suffuse any of their projections.

3.2 The psychic mechanism in unconscious phantasy which precipitates these defences is principally projective identification.³⁰ This is seen as a necessary mechanism on a scale from normal, in empathetic communication, to defensive, in narcissistic and borderline states, and pathological, in psychotic states. It is usually co-existent with introjective identification and aimed at obliterating the separateness and loss of the other, in order to evoke a relationship yet maintain control over it. The drive is to ensure that separate identity or any boundary between self and object is denied.

Klein observed that splitting off intolerable content from the ego must also mean:

‘... expulsion of part of the ego itself, vitally affecting its structure,’... ‘the effect... is a very real one because it leads to feelings and relations (and later on, thoughts and processes) being in fact cut off from one another.’ (Klein, 1946, 1997: 1-24).

Bion (1967, 1984: 93-109) argues that splitting off can aim at destroying all relationships, either through imperviousness to, rejection of, or active hatred of linking to an object, through envy or anxiety. And Likierman (2001:150)³¹ foregrounds this by stating that the dominant effect on the personality is the:

‘destructive nature of the schizoid processes [through ‘de-emotionalisation’], and the way in which they corrode the ego’s perceptive and experiencing capacities, ultimately fracturing its unified functioning.’

In differing degrees, these qualities pervade the behaviours and attitudes of each narrator.

Projective identification – sub-types

3.3 The term projective identification can be refined into sub-types, according to the unconscious motives and levels of omnipotence in association with it. These variants

³⁰ For an overview of the development of the concept of projective identification, see Spillius, 2007: 39-48; 112-121. Britton, 1998: 5-6 notes the contributions of Segal, Riviere, Rosenfeld, Bion, Sohn, Sandler, Britton, and Spillius. (They also acknowledge the invaluable use of projective identification in the countertransference).

³¹ Likierman adds that Fairbairn (1940:8) saw that their essential effect was ‘isolation and detachment’ and a ‘*de-emotionalisation of the object relationship.*’ (original emphasis).

spring from the basic one of Freud's 'identification' – identifying *with* someone, implying, 'I am *like* you' but post-Kleinian projective identification implies, 'I *am* you', entering *into* and *inhering* in the identity of the other and modifying one's own identity in some way by re-introjecting a preferred but distorted, delusory self.

Acquisitive projective identification: Britton (1998:6) – '*I am you*' – that is, another person's identity or attributes are claimed for the self. The more omnipotently this is done, the more the delusional the result.

Attributive projective identification: Britton (1998:6) – '*You are me*' – that is, an aspect of the self is attributed to another person. This may be 'evocatory', inducing change in the other, or 'non-evocatory', where no action is taken to give effect to it.³²

Undifferentiated identification: Rosenfeld (1965:170) – where self and object are not differentiated but described as similar to Freud's 'oceanic feeling'; a longing for union with the universe or God as a primary narcissistic experience. It might be incorporated through the senses with landscape or atmosphere but does not enter the ego as an object.

Adhesive identification: Bick (1968, 1987:114-18) and Meltzer (1975:289-310) – a particular type of identification in which sticking to an object as opposed to projecting into it prevents any solid identification. Introjection does not take place because of an absent sense of internal space in the ego to accommodate it. As Hinshelwood (1989:215) summarises, there is a 'lapse in developing a sense of internal spaces that leads to a tendency to relate to objects in a two-dimensional way without depth.' It creates object-relational difficulties owing to a weak sense of reciprocity, and it promotes narcissistic behaviours to do with mimicry, copying or superimposing.

Restorative identification: Restorative narcissism offers a more benign model of defending against traumatic failures of dependency. It might be found, for example, through an introjective internalisation of being valued. As Grunberger (1991:224)

³² Bion's extreme, pathological splitting of the ego leads to minute fragmentation and projective identification into things which become confused with persons and become 'bizarre objects', Bion (1967,1984:43-64), owing to partial failure to differentiate between early object relationships and things.

argues, the infant might regain value through understanding and love retrospectively, with a partial restoration ‘to the foetal and first narcissistic state from any people [objects] around who can provide such a subsequent foundation for hope.’

Grinberg (1991:99-100) finds that with the infant:

‘consolidation of the ego [depends on] self love in a satisfactory form, as a result of his own achievements and of the mother’s contributions... without which the narcissistic equilibrium is fragile and needs *constant external* relations with narcissistic objects [to help him] feel alive and real.’ (my emphasis).

While Symington (1993: 34-5) finds that the choice of an appropriate object as ‘the source of initiatory action’ for the taking in, becomes ‘the source of creative emotional action’, or the “life giver”.³³

Disavowal: a non-psychotic form of denial, in which emotional damage is acknowledged but its real, personal significance is not. Pines (1993:207-8) adds that in the worst of cases, between the splits, there might arise an undercurrent of mythical and unreal states which provide meaning to a life.

Ishiguro’s narrators’ traumatised lives become more manageable by excessive omnipotence in the use of the defence mechanism of splitting off the unbearable aspects of the trauma, depleting the ego, and then re-internalising an idealised self. To varying degrees, they are entrapped in rigid, distorted, phantasied worlds, made up of projected and re-introjected aspects of themselves and of others.

The retrieval and integration of projections:

Hinshelwood (1991:329), as mentioned, points out that integration involves the *developmental task* of cohering impulses, sensations, split-off projected fragments in the ego, all working towards their retrieval through understanding, maturity and a sound reality sense, (original emphasis). The capacity to re-own projections through such a mourning process is shown by Ishiguro to be very difficult. Full retrieval of the projections occurs only when the mind is able to process the shock and disorder for

³³ Introjective identification: recent thinkers have stressed the role of introjections as a factor in arriving at narcissistic equilibrium. They also argue that it can be massive, ‘concrete’, intrusive and pathological as well as benign. It also might be temporary or occupy only a part of the psyche, allowing for other parts to develop independently. (Sodré, I. 2004:56-7 and Roth, P. 2004:67-8).

itself, and integrate the experience into the whole ego. It does not happen in *The Unconsoled*, although other narrators, for example, Stevens (RD), comes close, gains self-recognition and new hope for a different kind of relationship with his American employer. Even when the narrators have glimpses of self-understanding, it is usually too late to change their life's direction in the external world.

4. Symbolisation

Trauma damages the capacity for symbol-formation (Segal, 1957, 1981:49-65). When symbol formation is severely damaged, symbolic function cannot be managed, and 'concrete' or literal thinking (symbolic equation) results. Trauma obstructs transforming an experience or thing into a symbol (language) to enable it to be thought *about*. In the novels, the flashback experience is usually remembered, re-experienced and repeated in some way by the narrators, who are still partly locked into their closed world. Bion's concept of alpha-function extends symbolisation to mean: with the internalised maternal function of containment, comes the ability to move through the 'contact barrier' to produce a 'language' or 'symbol' for a thing or event, and then move it, symbolised as a thought, into another mode so that it can be *thought about* – the faculty of thinking (Bion, 1967, 1984:110-119). When emotion and its linking function is attacked as intolerable, the psyche is left with the more unreasonable, psychotic part of the personality (Bion, 1967 1984:108-9).

Symbolic representation allows for imaginative and intellectual thought and a reflective life, through making one's own meaning – again, Ogden's 'sense of oneself as creator of meanings' (Ogden, 1992:217). This capacity is the basis for flexible thought which is needed in the mourning process, outlined above. Any defensive structures in the ego can be modified when the trauma is re-evoked and 'worked through' by reconnecting with it via thought, feeling and talk over a long period, so that its meaning is understood and integrated into conscious existence. The language which Ishiguro gives to each of his first person narrators is a limited and imitative one, indicating a narrowed, enclosed thinking capacity. Their 'idiom' is that of a vocational code, role or social class – butler, detective, performer and so on, and is applied in all situations, with little flexible thinking *about* the other or about their lives over time.

5. Reading narcissism – two post-Kleinian clinical accounts

5.1 Sodr 's example (2004: 53-68) is significantly entitled *Who's Who?* She discusses a patient who evokes the difficulties of 'who is who' in the consulting room. The patient demonstrated the pathological, 'inhering' nature of his massive projective identification into her, and his 'cannibalistic' re-introjection of a distorted self. It produced serious difficulties for the patient's identity as well as for hers. He projected his 'personality, affects and mode of functioning', and in a smug, superior, 'expert' tone, declared that *she* was short-sighted and vain because she did not wear glasses (she does not need to), whereas *his* sight was perfect. Indifferent to the facts, he reacted with rage and triumphant certainty: *he* has perfect sight, and she, it seems, is vain, blind and stubborn. This *acquisitive* mental functioning, (I am you), is akin to that of Stevens (RD).

5.2 Steiner's Patient B (2004: 44-52) demonstrates *attributive* mental functioning (you are me) and is comparable with Etsuko's (PVH). With his background of vocational failure, depression, obsessional indecision, and hypochondriacal back pain, he had a demanding, manic, coldly superior manner and was 'proud of his ability to suffer the consequences of senseless, self-destructive acts.' His language and themes, often involving menace and threat, were dissociated from feeling. He behaved as if he had no access to any emotional reaction which might regulate his behaviour and protect him from danger. The analyst felt drawn in to provide the appropriate emotion and to teach him to recognise it.

Patient B became excited when he saw that he could evoke the analyst's emotions: irritation, anger, frustration or distress, enjoying its sadistic quality and believing that the analyst was frightened of his own suppressed anger. He knew he could enter the analyst's mind, arouse emotion and then control him by remaining undisturbed, with a complacent, dismissive, 'these things happen.' However, despite disturbing, horrific and violent material, including readdressing letter bombs, denouncing doctors who invent chemical weapons, and denigrating psychoanalysis, he seemed in touch with the enthusiasm of a young student. But this too was disowned. He successfully projected his affect into the analyst, refusing to take responsibility for his own feelings, keeping this as his way of staying in his 'psychic retreat' (Steiner, 1993).

The second session involved a dream in which he was in a bed, hidden at the back of a 'Jewish church' where he was happy to receive some sweet cake. Patient B was representing the comfortable position he had adopted by 'taking up residence in analysis'. Although feeling critical of, and distanced from it, he was taking the 'sweet things', disowning his emotions and seeing them in the analyst. Complacent Patient B does this in order to maintain his psychic equilibrium. An interpretation is that the patient is afraid of being expelled from analysis because expulsion would threaten this balance. His *attributive* projective identification (you are me) is akin to that of Etsuko (PVH) and Ono (AFW).

6. Narcissistic organisations in the novels

6.1 A Pale View of Hills

To have a manageable life, Etsuko's experience must be split off via *attributive* (you are me) projective identification into Sachiko. Time is compressed retrospectively in her story and the two mother/daughter pairs are conflated explicitly at the end by the pronouns 'I/we', (172). Etsuko, in her mind, is the dutiful, thoughtful, kind daughter, wife and mother and both her suffering and sadistic cruelty are split off, disowned and projected into Sachiko, the parallel figure who must carry the projection.

6.2. An Artist of the Floating World

Ono, to defend against humiliation by his father and loss of power, mobilises *attributive* projective identification of the inadequacies into his friend and fellow artist, the 'incompetent' Tortoise, and into other artists or family members. Rigid, tyrannical control and condescension mean that there is no room for the 'other', no dialogic exchanges and no modification of understanding. Later, in the post-war, cultural climate, with his second daughter married, Ono's tyranny is no longer tolerated in the household, and he appears to see that the teacher might be surpassed by the pupil. He finally arrives, not at full retrieval of his projections but at *disavowal*. He gloats over the demise of the artists' retreat which could not tolerate him, the 'distinguished' artist but is silent at his friend's comment that in the end, they were both just 'ordinary'.

6.3 The Remains of the Day

Stevens functions through *acquisitive* projective identification, (I am you), into his master, Lord Darlington. He dissociates from his butler-father, has no links with a

brother (killed in war) and there is no mention of a mother, let alone containment from either parent. His identity is found in his role which he 'inhabits'. He also makes *undifferentiated identifications* in 'oceanic' style with Englishness, and the English countryside which he has read about but never experienced. His mode of super-control, and identification as Great butler in the Great House, disintegrates by 1958, as does his sense of self. Dialogic dysfunction is evident. After his vision of the waste and the bleak 'remains' of time left to him, he retrieves his projections, and will try to relate more warmly to others, through the exchanges of 'banter'.

6.4 *The Unconsoled*

Ryder's experiences of noisy, parental rows and exclusion in childhood lead to *attributive* projective identification where sadistic indifference and neglect is dispersed into many people in multiple projections, including his 'wife' and 'step-son'. He idealises the messianic fervour of his efforts with his minimalist music, oblivious to the fact that it alienates audiences and does not bring about the cultural cohesion that the promoters want. He adopts adhesive 'celebrity' behaviours in public. In turn, the community promoters, fans and celebrity hunters project *acquisitive* identification into *him*. He becomes immersed repetitiously in and submerged by conflicting waves of projective behaviours.

6.5 *When We Were Orphans*

Silent, parental enmity, followed by separate abandonments, has led to terrifying anxiety for Banks. *Adhesive* identification – copying or sticking *to* – has replaced projection *into*. Good, early introjections have not taken place and a sense of internal space is absent. His two-dimensional world pervades his childhood, school, and adult professional and private life. With his lack of insight and perception, he is considered 'odd' by acquaintances, although Banks, blind to others, cannot see it. By the Epilogue, two decades later, Banks has retrieved his projections but in his thin social and emotional world, he knows it is too late to find a partner.

6.6 *Never Let Me Go*

Kathy H., a clone without parents, displays another model of defending against failures of dependency by *attributively* projecting her deprivation into others and addressing it there. She finds selfhood through her self-selected role as the one-to-be-depended-upon

and best Carer. The *exchanges* of treasured ‘things’ between one another is a concrete way of introjecting the narcissistically-needed object relationship in order to feel more real. Idealisation of her schooldays, along with holding and touch, maintain her ‘continuity of being’. (Winnicott (1965:52).

The theme underlying all six of the novels is the universal, lifelong struggle between narcissism and object-relatedness. Ishiguro shows that each central character has evolved a distinctive narcissistic structure to defend from traumatic disturbance and preserve a sense of dignity and self-worth. All have failed to find loving mutuality in object relationships. McDougall (1986:218) comments:

‘The narcissistic economy, in order to maintain the sense of personal identity and to regulate self-esteem, must deal with a constantly fluctuating fantasy of the self [involving] exchange with internal and external objects as well as a continuing intimate relationship to this inner self.’

And continues,

‘The struggle to maintain one’s narcissistic integrity and feeling of self-esteem is incumbent on every human being...personal identity must be maintained by a constant movement in psychic space between the self-image and the image of the objects in the ego; [which]... determine the relation of the self to the outer world. ... [for some, this] demands the setting up of innumerable defences or protective relationships which play a truly vital role.’, (McDougall, 1990:302-3).

I shall draw upon complementary strands of theory to illuminate further aspects of the novels where necessary.

Chapter 4

A Pale View of Hills (1982)

‘It is possible that my memory of these events will have grown hazy with time, that things did not happen in quite the way they come back to me today. But I remember with some distinctness that eerie spell which seemed to bind the two of us as we stood there in the coming darkness looking towards that shape further down the bank. Then the spell broke and we both began to run.’ (41).

In the middle of Part 1, Etsuko, the first person narrator, identifies herself with her friend, Sachiko in some special way that has to do with the ‘shape’ – the small, human, female bundle lying on the riverbank.

Etsuko, now Mrs. Sheringham, is a middle-aged widow, living alone in an English country village. She has two daughters, one, Japanese, Keiko, and the other, half-English, Niki. She tells the story of her painful past retrospectively, over the five-day visit from Niki. As it unfolds, it seems possible that Sachiko and her young daughter, Mariko, have become conflated in Etsuko’s memory with herself from an earlier period, (then pregnant with her daughter, Keiko), instead of her later self and child, about six years afterwards. By the end, Ishiguro indicates that the story *is* to be read in this way and that Etsuko has been unconsciously presenting herself in the role of the responsible, loving mother and Sachiko in the role of the damaged, cruel, neglectful one.

I shall argue that the binding, ‘eerie spell’, shows that Etsuko inheres herself as a traumatised mother with Sachiko, also traumatised, and in Kleinian language, rids herself of her sadistic cruelty through attributive projective identification into Sachiko. This is part of her protection and the delusory quality of narcissism generally. The title, *A Pale View of Hills*, reinforces this by implying that the ‘view’ Etsuko presents of Sachiko and herself in her narrative is also hazy, without distinct boundaries, and probably distorted.

This novel shares a number of themes and techniques across the range of six novels, concerned with the variant ways in which trauma might be defended through the psychic defences of narcissism and the delusory, narcissistic behaviours that ensue. A central trope is parenting and the child’s need for stable dependency and dialogic exchanges, also found in the other five novels. I shall provide the historical context, and

discuss the way the themes are borne out in the action: the narrator's situation and behaviours, the ironic play with genre, inter-textuality, the multi-semantic possibilities of word-play, the circular plot, the interplay between past and present time, the settings which also figure states of mind, and the symbolic use of art and music.

In PVH, the genre takes the form of a short memoir but most notable for what is misremembered and reconfigured in a narrative of denial. It also has echoes of a ghost story, but not a thrilling, safe one with a happy ending, such as Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, which Sachiko's husband had forbidden her to read. Instead, it is a story of a real ghost, Keiko, in the form of a persistent, turbulent and haunting, internal object within Etsuko:

‘Perhaps it was not just the quiet that drove my [English] daughter back to London. For although we never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko's death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked. ... she was Japanese ... she had hung herself in her room.’ (10).

Etsuko relies on her blurry memory of a severely fragmented Japan, in the aftermath of the destruction of WW2. Ishiguro mentions the loaded word ‘Nagasaki’ early and the reader understands what is implied: the unspeakable horrors of the atomic bombing of 9th August, 1945; the 39,000 dead – exterminated, vaporised – not to mention the thousands, permanently maimed and traumatised. Etsuko herself is silent on the facts as they apply to her but the reader infers that she was orphaned – bereft of family and likely fiancé in the horror of Nagasaki. She has been adopted into another family and her new father reminds her how she used to play her violin in the dead of night and wake up the whole house:

‘Was I like a mad person?’ And Ogata replies, ‘You were very shocked. ... We were all shocked, those of us who were left. Now, Etsuko, let's forget these things.’ (58).

This was a time of fragmentation at all levels: broken buildings, displacement from homes, fractured families, intergenerational tensions, uneasy marital and gender relations, and moral and emotional dissociation in the ego-self. Etsuko, I argue, has survived only by means of the defence of narcissism. She psychically splits off her unbearable experiences and projects them into Sachiko to obliterate them. The conflation of Etsuko with Sachiko, suggested by the epigraph, has been triggered by the Japanese connection of Keiko's suicide in Manchester. It evokes her hazy memories of

post-war Japan in the 1950s, with the American occupation, during which she, at some point – there is a gap – had a baby girl, suffered and left the loveless marriage to her adoptive brother, Jiro.

As Etsuko recalls Nagasaki and the attempts in the present to reconstruct her external world, she unconsciously reconstructs her memories in her internal world, where Sachiko and her daughter, Mariko, become the bearers of her projections. With the recent suicide hanging heavily in the air, Etsuko links Keiko's suicide with Sachiko, saying to Niki:

“I was thinking about someone I knew once. A woman I knew once.” ... “I knew her when I was living in Nagasaki...a long time ago. Long before I met your father.” (10).

Then musing to herself:

‘She [Niki] had not come simply to see how I had taken the news of Keiko's death; she had come to me out of a sense of mission. For in recent years she has taken it upon herself to admire certain aspects of my past...that I should have no regrets for those choices I once made, in short, to reassure me that I was not responsible for Keiko's death. ...it was during *that visit I remembered Sachiko again after all this time*. I never knew Sachiko well.’ (10-11, my emphasis).

The repetition heightens the feeling that this *other* woman is significant. Two pages later, Etsuko connects again by linking Sachiko's reputation for aloofness with her own ‘wish to be left alone’ (13). Both have survived the atomic bombing, one has had and the other was about to have a daughter, and each was in an unsatisfactory relationship with a man and wishes to leave Japan for a safer, more independent, fulfilling, Western life.

The text suggests that Etsuko, beneath her calm, reasonable voice, finds it impossible to own her own past as victim and survivor of the cataclysmic events of the atomic bombing. She has suffered overwhelming trauma, multiple loss, and emotional deprivation, and been the likely perpetrator of cruelty to her first child. In order to survive with any sense of identity at all, she takes psychic protection from the defences of narcissism: to be silent, to split off and to evacuate intolerable fragments of past psychic pain by attributive projective identification into Sachiko. Etsuko self-idealises, behaves omnipotently with denial, at times by disparagement, control and triumph, as she ‘re-members’ the ugly side of herself with Keiko, as the sadistic Sachiko and *her*

daughter, Mariko. The intolerable, split off material in Etsuko's mind becomes the narcissistic organisation or as Sohn (1988:278) puts it, the identificate.³⁴

‘Something takes place, dictated by envy [deprivation] followed by omnipotent denial, in which a part of the ego becomes as if concretely differentiated, yet plastic in its manoeuvrings...[assuming] omnipotent control.’

Her serene, narrating voice is always that of the dutiful, understanding step-daughter, helpful friend and responsible mother. She represents herself as gentle, undemanding and complaisant. Britton (1998:84-90) writes of the ‘dreaded antithetic twin’, who is almost always significant in the lives of his complaisant patients as their ‘sibling, spouse, lover, colleague ...’ In the a-temporal realm of Etsuko's memory, Sachiko, the friend of one stifling summer, becomes Britton's ‘unreasonable twin’ or the traumatised, neglectful, harsh, selfish mother, while Etsuko is the concerned, loving mother, unaware that her version of events might be delusory and part of borderline survival. Britton also notes that with such people, there is a ‘tendency towards excessive reasonableness’ and that they are ‘unrealistically free of discontent’. Furthermore, there is no change in the patient until there is outrage and a sense of their entitlement being attacked, and then they become like his or her ‘invisible, difficult twin, unreasonable and demanding’. But in Etsuko, there is no rage and no unreasonable indignation. She is uncomplaining, tries to look forward, and although others ask if she is unhappy, she never concedes that she is.

In Britton's terms, what Etsuko has suffered, although apparently ‘surmounted’, remains unmourned – neither modified nor assimilated and integrated into the whole personality. In the text, she repeatedly describes herself as ‘gazing emptily’ out of the window; her object relationships seem just as empty and unresponsive, and her social conversation, distanced like that of Stevens (RD).³⁵ Niki, during her visit after the suicide, also gazes emptily out of the window, and keeps intensely private about her life and friends in London, sharing nothing personal with her mother. She had usually

³⁴The ‘identificate’, Sohn's term, is the narcissistic organisation where introjection is at the minimum and the identificate ‘believes itself to be the whole ego.’

³⁵ Britton 2003:147 makes a distinction between differing types of narcissistic disorder according to the nature of the transference-counter-transference experience, describing this type as schizoid – ‘patients who create an *empty* space in the consulting room...and leave the analyst *with a sense of exclusion from the patient's internal world.*’, (original emphasis).

avoided her half-sister, Keiko, who just made her feel miserable, did not attend her funeral, and comments, “I can’t even remember what she looked like now.”

The plot is slight and circular, superficially centring on Niki’s awkward visit from London to inquire after her mother, some weeks after the funeral and to acquire some sort of souvenir, possibly a postcard, of the devastation of Nagasaki for her friend who is writing a poem about it. Unaware of the irony, Niki tells Etsuko, ‘She’s been through a bit herself, you see.’ The underlying plot question is what the suicide of Keiko in Manchester has to do with Nagasaki and Sachiko, since Etsuko, after survival in Japan, has responded to the relentless pressure to forget, to look forward and to be optimistic.

The narrative is structured with an outer frame story which is in the present time in England, and encompasses the arrival and departure of Niki. The inner, main story, tells of Etsuko’s first marriage and the adoptive family in Nagasaki in the aftermath of the atomic bombs. The brief outer story is informed obliquely by the inner story, as in all the novels. Here, the reader glimpses the horrors which Etsuko and Keiko in Nagasaki had *really* ‘been through’. Her account slides in and out of the present and the past, between the narrative threads and her own musings to herself, like the fluidity of a film script. But little of Etsuko’s own sufferings and *nothing* of the seven years separated from Jiro, is explicitly recalled.

The narrative has three threads: firstly, the outer frame story, Niki’s visit to Etsuko after Keiko’s suicide, in the present, and a return to the present at the end of Parts 1 and 2. Secondly, the inner story is Etsuko’s account of her early, married days with her husband, Jiro, during the summer visit of her father-in-law, Ogata. Here, Ishiguro places an implied contrast with Mrs Fujiwara, the noodle shop-owner who, apart from caring for one severely shocked son, has, in the bombing, lost her husband, four other children, and a daughter-in-law. She had previously been of high social status but has now adapted to mingling sociably with and serving lunches to office workers. She seems, unlike Etsuko, able to integrate the reality of loss and mourning into her personality. Thirdly, there is the key thread from the past which focuses on the pregnant Etsuko’s friendship with Sachiko and her six year-old, Mariko. This, I explore in some detail.

Place and space are of importance to Ishiguro and his settings are found to be landscapes of feeling and metaphors for states of mind. For Etsuko, the period of reconstruction after the war expressed the drive to rebuild the external world, in line with the pressure to do the same, emotionally and psychically. However, Etsuko's relocation in England has not meant psychic integration of past trauma or the restoration of a sense of home and belonging.

Britton, (1998:89-90) writing of his complaisant patients, mentions Freud's idea of the *unheimlich*, the eerie and alien – about images which remain latent in the unconscious ego and re-emerge as 'untethered images of a frightening or horrifying kind attached to nothing in particular.' There are, in this text, Etsuko's recollections of Mariko's snake-like lengths of rope in the grass and her ghost-women mothers, as well as her own 'ropes', hangings, ghostly premonitions, dreams, and presences. Ishiguro, using dramatic irony, leads the reader to make the conscious, sinister linkages with such allusions, while Etsuko, herself, does not.

As the defences of narcissism are seen in re-enactment and talk, I shall comment on the protective behaviours attributed to Sachiko: denial, control, disparagement, triumph, and the disturbing reactions of Mariko, as recounted by Etsuko. I shall also draw attention to Ishiguro's metonymic settings and his misty, blurry outlines or physical boundaries which function as literary analogues, paralleling the inhering nature of projective identification *into* the boundaries of another's psyche, and distorting the view of the self in the process.

Part 1

Etsuko recalls herself and Jiro and the other young couples in Nagasaki, in their stark, modern apartments in four concrete blocks on the space, now bulldozed clear of 'charred ruins', rubble and corpses.

...I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better.' (12).

But the remaining ground to the river has been left derelict: improvements have come to a halt and hope among the occupants has turned to cynicism.

‘...between us and the river lay an expanse of waste ground, several acres of dried mud and ditches...All year round there were craters filled with stagnant water, and in the summer months the mosquitoes became intolerable.’ (11).

Despite some rebuilding, it remains a place of neglect and static, festering irritations. This blasted terrain is also a reflection of an unconscious part of Etsuko’s mind in which the trauma and the good objects of the past exist as ‘charred ruins’; and undrained water is ‘stagnant’ like the immovable shock within her internal world. At home, there is barely disguised friction between Jiro and his father, Ogata, and between Etsuko and Jiro who sees her as just the submissive wife. Etsuko frequently gazes *emptily* from her apartment, during her ‘*empty moments*’ at the desolate, abandoned scene, and mental landscape which offers no comfort.

The cottage over the rough land by the river, now derelict and makeshift, is all that remains of the original village. This is where Sachiko now lives alone, with young Mariko. The space is metaphorically like narcissism – distanced and self-enclosed, figuratively, a place into which Etsuko’s unconscious, intolerable split off, emotional experience might be lodged. Sachiko, with her optimistic and bland dismissal of her neglect of her daughter, denies her internal ‘charred ruins’ in her desperate attempt to keep going and leave Japan with Frank, her alcoholic American friend, on whom she has pinned her hopes for a better future in the United States. Ironic, distancing parallels with the perfidious Frank in Puccini’s opera, *Madam Butterfly*, cannot but seep into the reading.

The river separates this area from a wood and the two are joined by a bridge – a bridge to the mysterious, wild wood of fairy tales, and the unconscious world where the ghost-woman who haunts young Mariko, lives. This river and the associated canal in Tokyo, are dangerous places and the locations of disturbing glimpses of murders by drowning. This, too, is the riverbank where the molested Mariko is found lying, and later, hunched in distress on the bridge by the snake-like rope.

The Sachiko that Etsuko presents is a separate person who has also suffered huge trauma from the war. Gradually, the reader discovers, in fragments, that Sachiko’s external and internal worlds have also been shattered. Early on, she explains that Mariko’s schooling had been continually disrupted by their moving so often, and that if

it were not for the war, her husband might still be alive and the child's up-bringing appropriate to their high social standing. She married at a foolish time, since although everyone knew of the war, they had no idea of its impact and the catastrophic change it would cause. Her exhaustion and disappointment show as she struggles alone to secure some sort of new life for herself, having left her old uncle's house because of its 'emptiness.'

The action begins with Etsuko, pregnant at that time, drawing Sachiko's attention to Mariko, who, on a weekday, is not at school but fighting with two boys down by the river. The child is suspicious, wary and declares that she never goes to school. She is unused to dialogue with others and is ready to run away, which is her usual escape when uncertain. Sachiko is heading for the train into the city, her mind preoccupied. She is uninterested and dismissive. Her attitude is a faintly contemptuous, narcissistic one, where every point made by Etsuko is met with 'an amused expression' or 'a laugh' or a condescending, 'I'm sure you'll make a good mother.'

Sachiko, desperate to get to the USA with Frank, begins to show through her behaviour, that others are merely an extension of herself and her needs. She needs money and bluntly asks Etsuko to use her friendship with Mrs Fujirama to get her a job at the noodle shop. She expects Mariko to help in the shop but fails to stop her being rude to the customers. She has stolen a delicate tea set from her uncle, explaining that she is from a good background and used to quality. Sachiko often goes out at night leaving Mariko alone. One particular night, returning from a bar, she calls Etsuko out, ostensibly to help find the child who has wandered away from the cottage, but her real news is that she and Frank are *definitely* to depart for the USA to start a new life. In controlling mode, she demands that Etsuko be happy for her, show interest in the project but is angry that Etsuko cares more about the child, even suspecting her of being envious.

Only on Etsuko's insistence do they begin to search for Mariko. Etsuko senses the curious *fusion* with Sachiko, quoted in the epigraph when, as one, they run to the suspicious 'bundle' on the far bank. It is Mariko. At this point, Ishiguro has written a visual image of attributive projective identification. In a metonymic reading, I see that the human figures merge: the pregnant Etsuko with the foetal Keiko lying in her

amniotic fluid stands beside Sachiko who is looking down at Mariko lying in a puddle in foetal position, 'curled on her side, knees hunched, her back towards us.' Her dress is soaked in dark water on one side, where blood is coming from a wound on the inside of her thigh. Her eyes are open, staring blankly ahead. She is described as a 'fragile but senseless doll.' Some sort of sexual molestation is hinted at but Sachiko, in faint, narcissistic contempt, declares the wound to be minor and trivial, since the child says she fell off a tree, 'the cut's nothing'. Dismissing its seriousness, she returns the conversation at once to Frank and their imminent departure.

At the core of Part 1, and only after tea with Etsuko, does Sachiko slip in, as an aside, the atomic devastation that she and Mariko had endured in the physical and psychic wreckage in Tokyo:

...she put down her teacup for a moment and for some moments sat examining the back of her hands.

"Week after week it went on....Towards the end we were all living in tunnels and derelict buildings and there was nothing but rubble."

She continued to gaze at the back of her hands, avoiding eye contact.

She turned over her hands and looked at the palms looking from one to the other as if to compare them.

"There was a canal at the end and the woman was kneeling there, up to her elbows in water. ...I knew something was wrong as soon as I saw her....she turned round and smiled at Mariko. I knew something was wrong and Mariko must have done too because she stopped running. At first I thought the woman was blind, 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." ' (73-4).

The woman was not killed in an air raid; she cut her throat some days later.

Mariko, then aged about six, seemed passive and did not talk about it until some months later but now behaves as if the 'woman' were still to be seen and talked with. Alvarez (2010:13-14) writes that, 'Many borderline, traumatized children have suffered severe neglect as well as trauma.' In some cases, she argues, with 'certain blunted, empty children', their internal objects are 'not devalued but unvalued'. In Mariko's case, her mother's absences and unreliable promises about keeping the cats, her only love objects, render Mariko even more empty, desolate and hopeless. For her, the shocking experience of the murderous mother in the canal lives on in 'ghost' form, conflated with another woman who had stared at them, sheltering in a ruin from the bombs, one night.

Subsequent scenes show little Mariko also staring at her hands, avoiding eye-contact, with a blank expression or communicating only with her pet cats by whispering to and stroking them as if *they* were her family. She is haunted by ‘conversations’ with the ghost-woman from across the river, who offered to take her to her house and take one of her kittens. But she did not go because it was dark.

It is not surprising that narcissism dominates Sachiko’s behaviour. It is Etsuko (in her version) who reminds her of her job at the noodle shop but Sachiko abruptly instructs Etsuko to inform Mrs Fujiwara of her departure, disparaging the shop as a place unworthy of her social status. Yet, three sequences later, the chapter opens with the word, ‘Gone’. Frank has simply disappeared from his hotel, as he apparently has done many times before. In a burst of omnipotent bravado, Sachiko insists that she is used to this and, as if it were a mere after-thought, reveals that Frank had once drunk away all their money with bar girls in three days, much of which she had earned as a maid, scrubbing floors in a hotel. She declares herself neither ashamed of nor embarrassed by her activities.

Shame comes only with a clear reality sense, which the omnipotent Sachiko, in her desperate circumstances, does not have. She blatantly asks Etsuko for money – Etsuko’s private store of money, carefully placed among her photographs and family memorabilia – with assurances that it would be paid back by post, although on present form, this seems highly unlikely. As Sachiko denigrates her uncle’s house for its emptiness, she persists in believing all will be well, and is as ‘unreasonable’ as she, Etsuko, is ‘reasonable’.

Her attempt to recover Frank fails and with the ‘blindness’, denial and triumph of narcissism, evading disappointment, she is able to assert vehemently, that in any case, her priority has always been her daughter’s welfare. They will return to her uncle’s house because she always puts her daughter’s welfare first (87). Mariko has no friends, is often described as blank, staring or expressionless. Her cats have names and are her only consistent relationships, although one kitten has already been killed by the other children, and her first cat in Tokyo disappeared the day before they were leaving for Nagasaki. As Mariko’s experiences of failures of dependency and emotional deprivation

become more evident, so Sachiko continues to assert that Mariko can take care of herself.

Mariko has shown herself as a child deprived of consistent, maternal dependency, especially the loving eye-contact of the mother's gaze. Rhode (2010: 25-6) cites Winnicott (1967, 1971:130-38) and the idea of the mirror role that provides emotional receptivity and affirmation of identity, comparable with Bion's 'containment'. Sachiko has not provided a 'holding environment' (Winnicott 1965:37-55) for Mariko, apart from allowing her the cat and kittens. This mother is unavailable, for she, too, is still in shock and so Mariko makes fragile identifications with the ghost woman and the mother cat. Mariko is used to wandering about alone, and if uncertain, anxious or suspicious in company, she runs away. When slapped for running outside while Etsuko was sitting in with her, her pleading response is, ' "Why do you always go away with Frank-San?" '

The 'responsible', patient Etsuko of her narrative, stays with Mariko in the cottage to enable Sachiko to continue searching the bars for Frank (80-81). The neglected Mariko seems not to belong anywhere, is unused to engaging with people, and her cats are her family. Significantly, she curls up on the floor with the kittens and their mother, sharing their warm, comforting embrace. Her conversation is, typically, more monologic than dialogic:

' "But I want to go out."

"Stay here now, Mariko."

She continued to look outside. I tried to see what was visible to her; from where I sat I could see only darkness....

"I know why Mother asked you to come here."

"You can't expect to make friends if you throw stones."

"It's because of the woman. It's because Mother knows about the woman."

"Tell me more about your kittens."

"It's because the woman might come again. That's why Mother asked you."

"I don't think so."

"Mother's seen the woman. She saw her the other night."....

She had turned away from the window and was gazing at me with a strangely expressionless look.

"Where did your mother see this – this person?"

"Out there. She saw her out there. That's why she asked you."

Mariko ...returned to her kittens. The older cat had appeared and the kittens had curled up to their mother. Mariko lay down beside them and started to whisper. Her whispering had a vaguely disturbing quality. '

"Your mother should be home soon."

Mariko continued whispering. '(78-80).

And so Sachiko, after Frank's disappearance and betrayal, controls the situation by claiming that it is *her* decision to return to her uncle's house. She lectures Etsuko at some length on her own role as the good mother in triumphant, grandiose narcissism.

‘ “Etsuko, I've told you many times, what is of the utmost importance to me is my daughter's welfare. That must come before everything else. ... As a matter of fact, Etsuko, I'm rather glad things have turned out like this.... Imagine how unsettling it would have been for my daughter, finding herself in a land full of foreigners ... And suddenly having an Ame-ko for a father.... She's had enough disturbance in her life already. Children, Etsuko, mean responsibility. You'll discover that yourself soon enough. And that's what he's really scared of. Well, that's not acceptable to me. ... Distressing? ... do you imagine little things like this distress me?” [She laughs.]. ... “I've no intention of accompanying some foreign drunkard to America.”

Sachiko stares at the teapots for some time, seemed to gaze out the window as if looking for Mariko but then says, “No... she'll be back soon. Let her stay out if that's what she wants.” ’ (86-7).

At this point in the novel, Ishiguro has Etsuko move abruptly to the present, outer story where she unconsciously links Mariko and Keiko: Mariko's 'freedom' to wander outside at night by herself and Keiko's freedom to leave home and live away in Manchester. Etsuko experiences ghostly premonitions from Keiko's old room, empty for six years and Keiko now dead. Etsuko recalls how disturbed Keiko had been in England. She shut herself in her room, ate dinners left outside the door and changed the linen similarly. She then went to Manchester, asking not to be contacted. Her journalist stepfather, Mr Sheringham, had blamed Japan, blamed Jiro, ignored her, and Keiko did not go to his funeral.

And so Part 1 ends in the present. It is early on the last morning of Niki's visit and Ishiguro prepares the reader for further opaqueness. He uses language of melting, blurring and dissolving boundaries just as the omnipotence of projective identification in narcissism infiltrates personal boundaries to annihilate the other. Etsuko has had a disturbed night, gets up and enters Keiko's old room from where she hears a noise. The room is bathed in *greyish*, in-between, early dawn light; rain is uncertain, and later, as she wipes the *mist* from the window to 'see' better, it begins to *drizzle*. She describes her dream – that *drifting* space between consciousness and unconsciousness – of the happy little girl in England, seen recently on a swing, except that it was not a swing she was on. The reader is not told. Perhaps it was what Keiko's landlady had found – a swinging rope – a noose? Etsuko muses in gentle defiance and reasonable self-

justification, that although she could not remember Jiro with affection, she had not pretended that Keiko would not miss him. She had done her best after that appalling war, and could justifiably leave Japan.

Part 2

‘Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it can be coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections [from Nagasaki] I have gathered here.it was a premonition... – something much more intense and vivid than the numerous daydreams which drift through one’s imagination during such long and empty hours... The tragedy of the little girl found hanging from a tree – much more so than the earlier child murders – had made a shocked impression on the neighbourhood....’ (156).

This brief passage from the middle of Part 2 emphasises the embedded nature of Etsuko’s memories, selective, fragmented and saturated with Sachiko as they are. Part 2 intensifies the disturbing events that are signalled in Part 1. As that summer moved towards its height, the waste-ground became dried and cracked, and the irritating midges and grubs proliferated, matching the overheated minds of Etsuko and Sachiko.

In the second narrative thread, Ishiguro highlights the tensions Etsuko endures between Jiro and the controlling father, Ogata, which reach breaking point, illustrated by the collapse of their chess game. Then Ogata, self-idealising about his impeccable moral standards as a teacher, demands that the young Matsuda withdraw the unfavourable comments about him in a teachers’ journal. Although Ogata is the product of his time, he still does not expect to hear the explicit, unpleasant truth: that he and his colleagues had been taught lies and never to question authority. Five teachers, thanks to Ogata, had been sacked and imprisoned for *telling* the truth (147-8). Then, Ogata, blind to his own narcissism, describes his own daughter’s father-in-law as intrusive and controlling, and laughingly comments: ‘Old Watanabe rules over them like a warlord.’ (34-5). Ogata’s projective identification parallels, in microcosm, a bald version of Etsuko’s own implicit defence system but without her silence.

At this time, Etsuko remembers emptily gazing out of her window, and confronting the ‘emptiness’ of long afternoons when the only relief was the view of the pale hills over the harbour. She presents an omnipotent Sachiko arguing grandiosely that she has *freely*

chosen (not Frank's desertion) to return to her uncle, despite the fact that large parts of his house were 'empty and silent'.

"I was in the process of considering certain other possibilities. But a mother can't be blamed for considering the different options that arise for her child, can she? It just so happened that there seemed to be an interesting option open to us. But having given it further consideration, I've now rejected it ... I've no further interest in these other plans that were suggested to me. I'm glad everything turned out for the best. I'm looking forward to returning to my uncle's house. ... I don't understand what could have made you suppose otherwise, Etsuko. Yasuoko and I were the best of friends. All those months we sat in that house together, we hardly saw an outsider the whole time. It's a wonder we didn't really quarrel." (102).

A key scene focuses on one happy day out. Sachiko, Mariko and Etsuko herself go on an excursion across the harbour to the cable car on the hills. They are in high spirits; the sounds of rebuilding in the harbour create a sense of optimism. They chat with another mother and child, look at Mariko's drawings, and play at looking at the views through a pair of toy binoculars. The theme here is that of perspective. From the cable-car, they enjoy the better perspective of the harbour from high up. Items in Mariko's drawings which are out of perspective are nevertheless declared to be well-drawn; somehow truthful.

However, the views seen through the toy binoculars which should make the *invisible*, visible, do not. Another form of seeing is required for Etsuko. Ishiguro implies a shift of perspective for the reader, different from usual and peculiar to itself – to read projective identification. The unbearable, atomic bombing raids and subsequent bad life experiences of Etsuko *with* Keiko come from a slightly later time-frame – the seven year separation from Jiro – and are projected into the friend, Sachiko with *her* child, Mariko.

And so the excursion ends in good humour with Mariko doggedly trying to win a basket in a lottery game; a *home* for her cat and kittens. At the third try, she wins a 'major prize', a vegetable box which will serve the purpose nicely, and is a miniature expression of what she needs for herself. Even Sachiko agrees to take it and the cats back to Uncle's house.

Along with grumbles about the heat and the loathsome waste-ground, things worse than maggots proliferate: chilling rumours of a spate of child murders, a boy and girl have been found battered to death, but the little girl found hanging from a tree troubles Etsuko most. A car bumps over to Sachiko's cottage which is empty, save for Mariko. Yasuoko, the elderly cousin, bearing gifts, is trying to find them. In her self-enclosed way, Sachiko has let three weeks pass by, neither bothering to reply to her cousin and uncle's welcoming letter nor arriving when expected. Uncle appears to have been disparagingly dismissed and both are unaware of the existence of Frank.

By the evening, Sachiko is found at home, packing and almost ready to depart, not to Uncle's house but to the port of Kobe with Frank, then on to America. She laughs dismissively at Etsuko:

‘ “Don't look so surprised. You didn't expect me to stay here forever, did you? Frank has arranged everything. Aren't you pleased for me?” ...
And as for the uncle, “I'm afraid I've made other plans now” ...and of the cottage, “ ...I trust I've seen the last of such squalor.” ’(164).

Her delusory narcissistic thinking persists: she is convinced, in some idealising way, that Frank will not let her down this time. He has a job on a cargo ship back to the USA, and is to send the money from there. She sighed, “One has to be patient, Etsuko.”, as if in manic denial of her own helplessness. Mariko, she persists would be happier there, pointing out the advantages such as a business training or art college.

‘ “Etsuko, Japan is no place for a girl. What can she look forward to here?” ’

Then her mood fluctuates and in a brief flash of realism which cannot be sustained, says:

‘ “I realise we may never see America. ... Mariko, she'll manage well enough. She'll just have to. ‘Do you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother to her?”
I remained silent. Then suddenly Sachiko laughed. “Everything will turn out well, I assure you.” ’(170-1).

In the hurry to depart, Mariko pleads for her kittens, repeating Sachiko's promise to keep them. Instead of at least turning them loose, Sachiko picks up the boxful, marches down to the river, and in a re-enactment of the appalling scene in the Tokyo ruins where a mother is drowning her baby in the canal, she tries to drown the first kitten. It is difficult. Exasperated, she throws the entire boxful into the current. Mariko runs after

her, stunned and betrayed, and continues to stare in shock at this new horror unfolding before her. The kittens are her only reliable, living things which she loves. She remains quite still, staring blankly, then runs fifty yards along the bank, following the passage of the box, to stare at the water until after dark. She is expressionless, like the woman drowning her child in the canal some years earlier or the 'senseless doll', after her dubious injuries on the riverbank.

After dark, with the kittens drowned and Mariko still out, Etsuko goes in search of her. Ishiguro writes a visual image, superimposing Keiko on Mariko. Etsuko, pregnant with Keiko, is holding up the lantern, with her shadow projected on to and encircling Mariko within the light.

'...I saw my own shadow, cast by the lantern, thrown across the wooden slats of the bridge.....the little girl was before me, sat crouched beneath the opposite rail. ...She was looking at her palms and said nothing.' (172).

Here, there are two versions of Etsuko: the solid conscious one, carrying both the lantern and the unborn Keiko, and the shadowy unconscious one, conflating Keiko with Mariko in an image of projective identification.

The plot moves towards its explosive climax. As Etsuko reassures the little girl that a new father and a new country will work out well, she betrays herself six times in a momentary lapse by her choice of first person pronouns instead of third person ones, letting slip seven times that it is *she* who was that cruel mother at some crucial point in her past.

' "What's the matter with you?Why are you sitting here like this?"
After a long silence, she said, "I don't want to go away. I don't want to go away tomorrow." ...
' "Everything will turn out well, I promise."
The child said nothing. I sighed again.
"In any case", I went on, "if you don't like it over there, **we**'ll come straight back. But **we** have to try it and see if **we** like it there. I'm sure **we** will." ', (172-3, my emphases) .

Then Etsuko recalls an ominous, obsessive, unassimilated fragment from the unconscious; a scene on the riverbank in which Mariko is frightened by a piece of rope caught around Etsuko's ankle which Etsuko picks up.

'The little girl was watching me closely. "Why are you holding that?" she asked. "This? It just caught round my sandal, that's all."

“Why are you holding it?”
“I told you. It caught round 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...
The child began to run...
Once, through the dimness, I thought I could see Mariko running along the riverbank in the direction of the cottage.’ (173).

This is a deliberate echo of an earlier scene in Part 1 dominated by snake-like, menacing ropes. In Part 1, Etsuko is with Mariko at the cottage one evening when Sachiko is out looking for Frank. Mariko has no friends and Etsuko attempts to console her with idea of a new father.

‘ “He’s a bad man,” Mariko said and soon runs outside.
She is found sitting on the grass with her knees hunched up to her chin.
“What’s that?”...
“Nothing. Just a piece of old rope. Why are you out here?
“Do you want to take a kitten?”...
“Why have you got that?”
“I told you, it’s nothing. It just caught on my foot.” I took a step closer.
“Why are you doing that, Mariko?”
“Doing what?”
“You were making a strange face just now.”
“I wasn’t making a strange face. Why have you got the rope?”
“You were making a strange face. It was a very strange face.
“Why have you got the rope?”
...Signs of fear were appearing on her face.
“Don’t you want a kitten, then,” she asked. ...
I noticed the cottage a short distance away, the shape of its roof darker than the sky. I could hear Mariko’s footsteps running off into the darkness.’ (83-4).

Finally, I referred earlier to Britton’s ‘untethered images’ of a frightening or horrifying kind attached to nothing in particular, incorporated but not assimilated into the ego: the snake-like ropes; the rash of child murders, especially a little girl hanging from a tree; a loose rope by the bridge, catching Etsuko at the ankle, which appears twice, terrifying the little girl; in the present, a view of a happy child on a swing; but then in a dream, it is not a swing she is on. Ishiguro leaves the reader to make the links between these and their associated traumas and the first image – Keiko, found hanging in her room in Manchester. As the narrative moves on, these images from memory and dream accumulate: a ghost mother-woman who reappears; the one who drowns her baby in the canal; another who stares at them in the ruins one night; one who lives in the woods; the mother who drowns the mother cat and kittens in the river. Then there are the two

pictorial images binding the mother-daughter figures together in emblematic metaphors – literary analogues – of attributive projective identification.

The novel concludes with the outer frame story, back in the present, where the motif of merging personal boundaries and present and past time, is conveyed by the *murky* early light at five a.m. Etsuko is still in the world of ghosts, haunted by light noises near Keiko's door: 'I was sure someone had walked past my bed and out of my room, closing the door quietly.' Niki, too, is up, has had bad dreams and comments,

“Dad should have looked after her [Keiko] a bit more...He ignored her most of the time. It wasn't fair, really.”

Niki assures her mother that she did the right thing by getting out of Japan, and with unconscious irony, not wasting her life, although Etsuko's current life is shown to be isolated and empty of close family or neighbourhood friends. The souvenir photo that Etsuko gives Niki for her friend is *not* of the catastrophically ruined Nagasaki, over which she remains silent and unable to revisit – split off – but an old calendar photo of the reconstructed harbour which evoked the happy day out to Inasa:

“...because **Keiko** [instead of Mariko as in her earlier account] was happy that day. **We** rode on the cable cars.”

Here, she finally confirms her own projection into Sachiko-Mariko. The origins of Keiko's suicide in England, then, are represented through the medium of Mariko's young, emotionally neglected life in Japan. The Keiko displaced to England is miserable, isolated and ignored. Her suicide is not a surprise.

Niki, her sister, cannot share her London life with her self-enclosed mother, who knows only that the boyfriend's name is David. If Etsuko inquires further, 'the barrier comes down'. The day of departure is *pale* and *windy* and they go for a walk. Etsuko is not even on first name terms with the few neighbours she meets, avoiding any mention of the suicide. Her life in the village seems solitary and depleted, and although she suggests an outing, it becomes clear that she has never gone to the local cinema or theatre or even found the will to tend her drooping tomato plants. In the older Etsuko, little has moved and little has changed; her rigid defences continue to protect her from those terrible, early years.

The silence of the countryside is intolerable to Niki, who also ‘gazes *emptily*’ out of the window, and she leaves after one of many private phone calls, as soon as she decently can. Etsuko notes that she seems embarrassed by her offer to accompany her to the station and is surprised at her parting smile and wave.

Etsuko, extremely ‘reasonable’ in her narrative, seems to be asking what else she could have usefully done. The fact that she survived and struggled for a better future for herself and her child is an achievement in itself. Ishiguro implies that blame, shame and guilt in this context are morally ambivalent, and cannot reasonably be ascribed after trauma of this order. It is the corrosive, emotional damage which interests him. He shows the long-term psychic depletion of identity and the fragile capacity for close object relationships which result from the massive defences for such trauma. For Etsuko, it is the resources of protective narcissism with attributive projective identification and the idealisation of England which salvage her dignity. She ends by declaring how she has always liked the quiet, and how truly English their village setting is: “All these fields, and the house too. It was just the way I always imagined England would be and I was so pleased.” (182).

Chapter 5

An Artist of the Floating World (1986)

Masuji Ono:

‘...looking at the portrait, you would probably take him to be the sort you could confidently elbow aside for an empty tram seat. But then each of us, it seems, has his own special conceits. If the Tortoise’s modesty forbade him to disguise his timid nature, it did not prevent him from attributing to himself a kind of lofty intellectual air – which I for one have no recollection of. But then to be fair, I cannot recall any colleague who could paint a self-portrait with absolute honesty; however accurately one may fill in the surface details of one’s mirror reflection, the personality represented rarely comes near the truth as others would see it.’ (67).

Ishiguro’s second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, is concerned with an artist in an external world of shifting values and in an internal world of shifting self-representations. Instead of the silence (PVH) of disowning the intolerable experience of the atomic bombing and the subsequent cruelty and neglect, this narrator is verbose and self-justifying, as he finds narcissistic protection through attributive projective identification. He maintains his need for public recognition, despite his many compromises with alluring artistic allegiances over a lifetime, and finally ends in disavowal.

As the narrative proceeds, Ono’s self-idealising view of his artistic integrity and his independence as a painter and critic become, for the reader, increasingly dubious. The epigraph above implies with some irony, that it is the artist, Ono himself, who, in his own ‘lofty, intellectual’ style, is unable to give an entirely truthful representation through his verbal self-portrait, and projects his less favourable qualities into the Tortoise. He, I shall argue, demonstrates a particular type of defensive narcissism with attributive projective identification and disavowal, as he struggles to survive with self-esteem in the rigid, but splintering, culture of post WW2 Japan.

As with all the novels, I shall discuss Ishiguro’s ‘deficit’ versions of genre, situation, character, plot, narrative voice, metaphors for dual reality; comment on the narcissistic mechanisms and behaviours; and show how they are played out in the four sections of this novel.

The novel belongs to the genre of memoirs of the distinguished, but reveals itself to be the selective memories of an obscure artist, now forgotten; a ‘diary of a nobody’.³⁶ It is set in the past and intersects with the history of Japan at a socially fragmented time: the rise of imperial Japanese militarism and the invasions into China, in the expectation of a powerful, prosperous, extended empire. The aggressive entry into WW2 resulted in a catastrophic and shaming outcome for Japan: the atomic bombing, death, destruction, defeat, surrender, and occupation by the USA. Ono mentions ‘the surrender’ twice in the early scenes and again at the end, and the shadowy sense of past humiliation is pervasive.

The aftermath of defeat involved destruction, demolition and reconstruction at every level, as the frequent references to ‘war damage’ of different kinds indicate. There was the inevitable fragmentation of the political and institutional domains, and in parallel, the fissures in intergenerational, domestic and psychic spheres. Not only has the previous regime been authoritarian, absolute and dependent on blind loyalty and unquestioning trust, but Ono’s ego-destructive father has also demanded equivalent respect. In place of the imperial autocracy in which Ono grew up, there is an emerging new democracy with its unfamiliar values, embraced by the younger generations around him.

Ono, the first person, narrating character, is a retired professional artist, father and grandfather, who is approaching old age and looking back, from post-war Japan, at the wide sweep of his past life. Ono’s thoughts slide back and forth from the present to his childhood in 1913, when he arrived in the run-down village, Furukawa, now the suburb of a provincial city where he reached his peak in 1938 as a war propaganda artist, and now resides. The narrative is structured in four sections, with Ono putting his past life in perspective, unconsciously misremembering and ‘reconstructing’ his version of it: Part 1. October, 1948, as an out-of-favour military artist with a daughter to marry off; Part 2. April, 1949, the students he has betrayed and the Miai; Part 3. November, 1949, the different schools of art he has espoused; and Part 4. June, 1950, the brief epilogue after the death his old colleague and friend, Matsuda.

³⁶ *The Diary of a Nobody*, George and Weedon Grossmith (1892).

The plot is slight. At the surface level, Ono must negotiate another marriage partner for his second daughter, Noriko, since the first attempt has failed, the implied reason being his now discredited art posters in support of Japan's wars of Imperial expansion. At the Miai, the conversation flags, his daughter is disheartened, and he feels it is going so badly that he must make a token, dismissive reference to his past role as a war propagandist. This is the turning point at the dinner: jokes are made and the company relaxes. The deeper, psychological plot is Ono's quest to re-find and reaffirm his broken sense of himself as an independent artist of great distinction before 'the surrender'.

But Ono discovers hubristically, that for the groom's family, the Saitos, he had never been famous or even well-known, and they are indifferent in any case, or think that his record is best suppressed. This, for Ono, is an appalling narcissistic wound and he cannot accept that he was never considered influential by Dr Saito, the art critic, neighbour, and likely relative-in-law. The marriage plans go ahead. Indeed, later, Setsuko, the older, married daughter, pretends ignorance of her earlier warning – to 'take precautionary steps' in case the marriage detective should uncover some unpalatable details about Ono's now discredited, professional past.

Psychoanalytically, Ono is trying to manage a violent, social and personal upheaval in a rapidly changing Japan, and is in an emotionally precarious position. He is anxious over his sense of identity: of his place in the world, which affiliations and relationships are the most satisfying or the most expedient, which can provide his rightful measure of healthy, narcissistic 'self-regard' (Freud, 1914c: 75), and how to find self-esteem and the esteem of others.

Ishiguro locates an important scene early, when not one of Ono's paintings is to be seen in the house. When his grandson, Ichiro, asks bluntly to see them, saying:

'Father says you used to be a famous artist but you had to finish...Because Japan lost the war.' (32), Ono can only reply,
'They're all [paintings] *tidied away*...' (79, my emphasis).

I explore Ono's behaviours and object relationships as he 'tidies away' – splits off – the painful, emotional experiences of his past life. He, like many others, has suffered significant trauma. As a child, he endured early failed dependency from his ego-

destructive father (Britton, 2003:120)³⁷, just when he was producing his first, serious paintings. Then Ono suffered multiple, un-mourned, war-time losses, which, he has marginalised in his internal world, and in his narrative. He is bereft of two close loved ones in a succession of absurd, cruelly ironic accidents: his only son, Kenji, and his wife, Michiko, killed separately (68) in the very wars that his posters had promoted.

Ono recalls that at Kenji's burial ceremony, his son-in-law, Suichi, who had been a soldier himself, was contemptuous of Ono's generation. Kenji's ashes had taken a year to arrive and then were only part of the mangled remains of the twenty-three other young men, lost in 'that hopeless charge across a minefield' in Manchuria. As Suichi walked out of the burial ceremony in disgust, Setsuko, his wife, excused him with the unlikely comment that he had a 'touch of malnutrition.' The absurdly random death of Ono's wife is mentioned as an aside to Matsuda, in a conversation, punctuated by friendly laughter:

'A cruel thing ...And with the war all but over.. something of a freak raid Hardly anyone else was hurt. It was, as you say, a cruel thing.' (90-1).

Ishiguro shows that Ono, unable to mourn, is defended from grief by unconscious omnipotent control through wry humour, minimising its importance. Ono, by his dissociating from and projecting his overwhelming, emotional experiences, has not been able to transform, through symbolisation, what must have been shock and grief, into thoughts and feelings that are more flexible, manageable and in touch with reality. (see Segal, 1981: 52-65).

His reliably unreliable, narrating voice is rationalising and although confessional and 'truthful' in tone, is usually lofty, self-idealising and condescending. He allows that he digresses, that his mind will float or 'drift' (40), or is 'drifting' (48), 'drifted' (151) between past memories and the present, stating one thing but then, later, contradicting it in words or behaviour, or ascribing it to another person. He hints at possible misremembering, as he projects his own failings unconsciously into others, blurring reality with narcissistic phantasy.

³⁷ Britton considers patients who are 'internally menaced by a hostile super-ego, particularly when they show signs of independent, personal development, sexual maturity, or creativity. ... [the parental] continuing love is complicated by envy of the child's personal capacities when there is separate development....'

He maintains a sententious, controlling, language style, saturated with self-enhancing words such as reputation, esteem, prestige, admiration, celebrity, acclaim, honour, respect, renown, distinction, status, superiority, pride and élite. Then, at the height of his career, he uses the intoxicating, delusory, ‘a lord must gather his men’, of himself and his followers in the Migi-Hidari café. He relaxes the flow only in the short epilogue that is the ending.

I argue that Ono reconstructs his memories in a non-psychotic form of denial – disavowal,³⁸ namely, while there is still a splitting of the ego, there is a state of mind which acknowledges events but does not perceive their significance, like living in a double reality (Pines, 1993: 186; 207-8). Even the name, Ono, is a palindrome – the end is the beginning, and the thinking, dual. He is troubled underneath and hesitates between the indignity of acknowledging some of his past behaviour, which was autocratic, vain and self-justifying, and believing that there is nothing at all to be ashamed of, given the extreme circumstances, his ‘great’ talent and his wish to do good. His name captures his ambivalent, defending states of mind.

This duality is metaphorically conveyed further by place – The Bridge of Hesitation – set between the old pleasure district and the old domestic quarter. On three or four evenings a week, Ono stands on this bridge, and unaware of the irony, says:

‘...it is not that I am hesitating. It is simply that I enjoy standing there as the sun sets, surveying my surroundings and the changes taking place around me.’(99).

Ono often stands in the middle, so that the bridge becomes a metaphor for psychic space in which he is caught: between the old, confident empire and the new hubris; between owning and disowning the past; frankness and denial; reality and phantasy, but suspended in the middle in a place of disavowal. Steiner (1993:116) in *Oedipus the King*, views ‘turning a blind eye’ or ‘the blindness of the seeing eye’ as a form of ‘psychic retreat’, with a perverse relation to reality.

Ishiguro encapsulates Ono’s form of narcissistic disavowal in the brief, emblematic incident of the Hirayama boy, still living in the past, into whom Ono projects the critical

³⁸ Pines, D. on disavowal, .refers to Freud, 1925, Negation, S.E. 19:235 and writes on trauma, double reality and the lasting impact of the holocaust on certain patients.

comment that could well be applied to himself. The very slow boy, during the war years, sang military songs and mimicked patriotic speeches for money or food. After the war, semi-oblivious to the change, he simply continued, and was beaten up:

‘No doubt...fixated on those patriotic songs because of the attention and popularity they earned him.’ (61).

Ono too, in the new post-war culture, must avoid patriotic art-work and the indignity of being metaphorically beaten up. Ono, however, sees *himself* in opposite terms: as the independent, aware, culturally critical artist, capable of reasoned discussion. Ono comments that men like him were ‘all too rare’.

‘I do not think I am claiming undue credit for my younger self if I suggest my actions...were manifestations of a quality I came to be much respected for in later years – the ability to think and judge for myself, even if it meant going against the sway of those around me.’ (69).

Ono’s early, crucial identifications with his father are *repeated* under the ‘sway’ of subsequent leader-fathers, for in his active years, Ono has been dominated by the omnipotence of the Emperor, that of his father and the three leader-fathers who follow, who are all in some way, authoritarian, patriarchal, and demand unswerving loyalty: Master painter, Takeda, Moriyami and his bohemian colony, Matsuda and the patriotic Okada-Shingen society, and finally, Ono himself, perpetuating the same absolute control as a sensei (leader) of his own group. He has a government, cultural post at the peak of his career, and is susceptible to attention, flattery and group behaviours at the height of Japan’s militarism.

Another important motif, which evokes the persecutory trauma of destruction and permeates the whole novel, is that of burning and the smell of burning. Fire and ashes are images of wilful obliteration and loss: the burning of people and buildings from air raids; the ashes of dead loved ones; Ono’s father’s ashpot and the smell of Ono’s ‘decadent’ early artwork burning; Mori-san’s burning of disloyal students’ work; the arbitrary, Nazi-style, bonfire burning of all Kuroda’s works, after Ono unthinkingly suggested he be given a warning; and by the end, the smell of burning garden rubbish that still disturbs.

To sum, up in post-Kleinian terms, Ono has suffered overwhelming or ‘catastrophic’, traumatic, emotional damage and unconsciously mobilises the manic, narcissistic

defences: excessive self-idealisation, splitting off the unbearable, emotional experiences and projecting them attributively into another, sometimes retrieving the projections, but re-introjecting a distorted, disavowing self, and re-enacting the behaviours of control, disparagement and sadistic triumph over the object. Ono often exhibits grandiosity, snobbery and smugness in the struggle to find a solid sense of self 'as a creator of meanings' (Ogden 1992:217), as the action following, demonstrates. Now elderly, with his two daughters married, he finds his greatest moment to have been his narcissistic triumph over Moriyami, an artist-leader from his past, and, in disavowal, decides that if he has perceived things narrowly, it was only as a *true artist would*.

Part 1 October 1948, War damage, Fathers

Ishiguro opens the novel with Ono's remark, echoing the title of the post-modernist writer, Italo Calvino, '*If on a winter's night a traveller*', implying that the reader take a detached and a more ironic stance toward the comments of Ono about himself.

'If on a sunny day you climb the steep path leading up from the little wooden bridge still referred to around here as 'the Bridge of Hesitation', you would not have to walk far before the roof of my house becomes visible.....you may find yourself wondering what sort of wealthy man owns it.' (7).

With the intimate term 'you', Ono is made to assume the reader's collusion in his vanity and cannot help mentioning that his predecessor was none other than, 'Sugimura, unquestionably amongst the city's most respected and influential men.' The passage continues, with Ono explaining that although not a wealthy man, he won the house in keeping with his status, in an 'auction of prestige', won because of his good character and achievements. It is also viewed as a significant asset in arranging the marriages of his daughters.

The architecture and landscape sets the psychic and emotional scene and is an important metaphorical device to convey Ono's states of mind. The most attractive aspect of his present home is the long corridor running alongside the garden to connect the main body of the house with the east wing, rumoured to keep the original owner's parents at a distance. It has suffered much war damage – a tarpaulin covers some of the roof – just as the links between Ono and family have also fractured but await repair.

Most of the old pleasure district is war-damaged terrain, with its heaps of rubble and stagnant puddles; a 'graveyard' with fires 'like pyres at some abandoned funeral' (27-8). Ono's corroding object relationships are also broken connections with the younger generation, represented by 'pieces of piping protruding from the ground like weeds'... [and]... 'telegraph wires without poles to connect them.' (27). The external world echoes Ono's self-enclosure: he has no wife, no regular close friends but for Mrs. Kawakami, a confidante and owner of the old bar where he is often the only customer.

Despite the destruction, Ono would prefer to cling on, as if the old pleasure district might return, for behind the bantering, as in RD, there is a thread of serious optimism. He adds, with slight disparagement, that her little world had passed away, myopically projecting his *own* feelings attributively into her, saying:

'...much of her life and energy had been invested in it – and one can surely understand her reluctance to accept it has gone forever.' (126-7).

But Ono recalls too, the destruction of his creative artwork with his father, a business man, before any direct 'war damage' had even happened. Repeated scenes had taken place in the family reception room (41ff), or what might be fairly called the control room at the centre of the house. Here, from the age of twelve, Ono had been subjected to lectures on accounting by Father, with his business box aptly positioned beside the Buddhist altar. Nothing was explained, there was no interpersonal dialogue, no clarity about whether or not a response was required, and dread in case there were.

The climax to these ritual encounters came when Father discovered Ono's interest in art and his desire to become a professional artist. He demanded to have all the paintings brought to the room, examined them and then, with invasive control, demanded the last two which Masuji had left behind. On that occasion, the business box had been replaced by the ashpot and on Ono's return, there was a smell of burning which was to be repeated after the last painting had been handed in. With the mother present, Father declaimed an old priest's prophecy about their son in a loud, omnipotent tone and in the third person, as if the boy were not there. He was:

'... born with a flaw in his nature', a 'tendency to slothfulness and deceit', had a 'weak streak', 'dislike of useful work... a weak will', and unless vigilance was kept over him, he could become a 'good-for-nothing.' (45).

Artists, he thundered, are ‘weak-willed, and depraved.’ Although the mother tried to reason and ‘contain’ her son and point out that with artists, there are exceptions, she was over-ruled:

‘The handful with extraordinary resolve and character. But I’m afraid our son here is far from being such a person. Indeed, quite the contrary.... We do after all want him to become someone we can be proud of, don’t we?’

Ono, however, in a pun, simply asserts that all this did was to ‘kindle’, ‘inflamm his ambition’. From then on, he determines not to be this ‘nothing’ but an achiever to be ‘proud of’, who rises in society but on his own terms. Although Ono is defiant, he has introjected his father’s contempt, which is then split off into other artists, as his artistic life evolves over the years – into the Tortoise, Shintaro and others. And with an ego-destructive super-ego now active, Ono becomes sensitised to the confiscation and burning of art objects, a form of destruction to recur later in his history.

This father has stifled his son’s capacity for interpersonal relatedness that ideally exists between parents, children, and ‘others’. In Ono, there is an unacknowledged but excessive need for self-esteem and the admiration of others but obliviousness to how he might affect others. By burning all his son’s artwork, Father has exterminated something of his son’s creativity and connectivity. As Milner says (1971:159):

‘... what the painter does conceptualise in non-verbal symbols is the astounding experience of what it feels to be alive, the experience known from the inside, ... with capacities to relate oneself to other objects in space.’ (159).

Early in Part 1, Ishiguro shows Ono’s key psychic mechanism in action; his habit of projecting unwanted experiences attributively into someone else, such as his grandson, Ichiro. Their outing to the cinema to see a horror movie had been insisted upon by Ono, himself, who wanted to go. When Ono’s omnipotence was over-ridden and the visit was postponed (37-9), his own disappointment is projected attributively again into the boy. Finally at the film, Ichiro’s response to the monster scene is to throw his raincoat over his head, declaring that that the film is not frightening but boring, and to tell him when it gets interesting. Ono is figuratively doing just the same with his monsters from the past, by keeping them stifled beneath the surface. When Ono insists upon giving Ichiro, at six years old, saké to drink for his ‘pride’, despite the family’s objections, it is clearly Ono whose pride is injured when he is over-ruled (188-9) and left without narcissistic control.

The political and cultural climate of Ono's generation does not accept the loss of national pride over their defeat. Ono cannot but feel surprise at the anger of the younger, war-experienced Suichi:

‘Of course it is tragic that that so many of his generation died as they did, but why must he harbour such bitterness for his elders?’

Ono is perplexed by the phrase ‘the greatest cowardice of all’, which recurs in variations five times. He is preoccupied with who exactly said it and to whom it might refer – himself and the rest of his generation? Both young Miyake's and Suichi's caustic comments about ‘war criminals’ and ‘stupid causes’ and the ‘real culprits being still with us’ and ‘living very comfortably’ (58), clearly disturb him. But in the end he cannot entertain another viewpoint, and he rejects them as excessively cynical and bitter, when a country is at war (21-3).

Ono is partly-blind to the devaluation of patriotism after the war and minimises, in disparagement’, the significance of the Miyakes' refusal of Noriko in marriage. He omnipotently declares that the reason had been the imbalance in social status:

‘... they were just the proud, honest sort who would feel uncomfortable at the thought of their son marrying above his station. ...but what with the couple claiming it was a ‘love match’ ...the Miyakes are the kind of people who would become confused...No doubt the explanation is no more complicated than that...For I was very lax in considering the matter of status, it simply not being my instinct to concern myself with such things. Indeed, I have never at any point in my life been very aware of my own social standing and even now...I am surprised afresh of the rather high esteem in which I am held.’ (19).

Then with the Saitos, he appears not to see what is meant by his married daughter, Setsuko's realistic insistence on his taking ‘precautionary steps’ this time (19). But he does. He makes sure, privately, that none of his patriotic, wartime activity will be mentioned – by Matsuda, for example.

Part 2 April 1949 Betrayal, the Miai

Opening again with a scene on the Bridge of Hesitation, the short, second section concentrates on Ono's contradictory, moral positions; his pride in his past and his need to suppress parts of it, if he is to secure a successful marriage for Noriko this time. While Ono certainly does take devious, precautionary steps, he, Ono, when visited similarly by his former student, Shintaro who needs a letter to support his application

for a teaching job in a neighbouring high school, treats him with contempt. Shintaro respectfully asks for a statement that he had not personally been in agreement with the poster-painting for the China crisis. Ono, as ever, recounts Shintaro's lavish, nervous expressions of gratitude and praise, for example 'I cannot begin to calculate what you have done for me', as Shintaro explains that the committee need to be reassured of certain things and there are 'the Americans to satisfy'. Finally, Ono's smug duplicity dominates, as he grandiosely dismisses Shintaro in attributive projective identification:

'...Dissociating you from my influence....Why don't you simply face up to the past? You gained much credit at the time for your poster campaign. Much credit and much praise. The world may now have a different opinion of your work, but there's no need to lie about yourself.' (103).

Ono, having already secured for himself the same delicacy of Matsuda, although not of Kuroda, cannot allow that Shintaro, who has not retired, needs a job and might need the same discretion about his past. Shintaro should not 'shirk his responsibilities.' Then Ono narcissistically turns his back on Shintaro, gazes out the window, refusing him even the dignity of a courteous exit (100). Significantly, the April snow is gently falling and the stone lantern in the garden – the source of light with which to 'see' clearly – is lightly covered with snow.

At the Miai hotel which Ono disparages as 'vulgar, the narcissism continues. Noriko is tense when it becomes clear that Kuroda is a teacher at the younger Saito's school, and harmful information about Ono's part in Kuroda's arrest and torture might leak out. Ono sees that it is not just expedient but essential to admit in bland, general terms that he had possibly made 'mistakes':

'...there are certain aspects of my career that I have no cause to be proud of.'
(191).

Dr Saito was watching him, 'rather like a teacher waiting for a pupil to go on with a lesson he has learnt by heart' (123), implying that these were mere words, rehearsed and reproduced to cover awkward situations. And so the repetitions of 'freely admit' and 'in sincerity' do not carry conviction, but no-one in the party, except the daughters, knows of any harmful complicity and the marriage negotiations go well. It is as if a family equilibrium has been recovered.

Indeed, months after the successful marriage, near the end of the novel, it is as if Setsuko's repeated instructions to take 'precautionary steps' had never happened. Setsuko blanks out her warnings four times, saying, 'Forgive me, Father, I don't recall giving any advice last year', adding that Noriko and the Saitos are 'extremely puzzled' about what Father could have meant by his remarks about his 'mistakes', given that Ono has not been particularly influential.

Part 3 November 1949 Leaders, Artistic integrity

Ishiguro opens as in Part 1, with Ono's self-idealisation over his prestigious house and his version of Dr Saito's effusive welcome: '...a real honour to have someone of your stature here in our neighbourhood.' (131). Reputation and influence still obsess him, as does the tension between loyalty and artistic independence. He still cannot comprehend how the Saitos seem never to have heard of him, and his thoughts turn to the various schools of art he has adopted.

Ishiguro is interested in the powerful dynamic between leaders and followers, 'filial' disloyalty in sons, pupils and students. There is a string of authority figures in this novel: the emperor, Ono's father and the three leader-fathers of the groups that Ono joins, until he becomes a leader himself. Freud (1921) argues that group members, idealising their leader, project their own capacities for thinking, decision making and authority into the group leader. To criticise and challenge the group leader becomes difficult, yet the paradox of the group is the tension, the duality, between the member's wish to belong and his wish to be separate, with individual identity intact. Ono's weakened ego allows him to identify strongly with the group leader yet be susceptible to the charisma of other leaders, who promise artistic self-fulfilment in different modes.

In Bion's concept (1961, 1989:77-8) of the aberrant, basic assumption dependency group, the expected interdependence between the leader and followers has degenerated, so that the leader exercises omnipotent control and can be tyrannical and excluding. Each group which Ono joins has a leader who is authoritarian and absolute in different ways, and each school of art to which Ono adheres, is derivative. The first group, Master Takeda's, recalled in Part 1, is the business firm of commercial artists, relentlessly committed to huge orders for copies of Japanese stereotypes, such as geisha, carp and cherry trees. The second is Moriyami's Bohemian, art for art's sake, aesthetes'

colony, which is as self-indulgent and decadent as Ono's father had assumed. Mori-san insists on an adaptation of a Western style to the Japanese *Utamaro* style, which substituted hard-edged boundaries for subdued brush strokes and patches of colour, hinting at an unboundaried, narcissistic, self-serving world for Mori-san.

The third, Matsuda's Okada-Shingen Society, promotes Japanese poster-art, with hard, rigid outlines, as propaganda, glorifying the proud and noble cause of Japanese militarism. Finally, Ono becomes the leader himself, re-enacting the controlling behaviours of his previous leaders. He has a government, cultural post, committed to producing more military propaganda posters, in proud support of the Emperor's empire-building wars. By the end of his career, that 'artistic integrity' – a truly individual technique and content – of which he has boasted, has not developed. Now, in retirement, Ono paints watercolours of plants and flowers.

Ishiguro conveys these approaches to art in his writing of space. Master Takeda's factory-studio and attic are low-ceilinged, oppressive, uncomfortable and the ambience, imaginatively constricting. Here, Ono finishes his workload, likened to the manufacture of cardboard boxes, in the evenings to fulfil the orders. The artists' main task is volume, battling as a group to meet deadlines and uphold the reputation of the firm. The workers give up proper sleep and never fail to complete a commission on time. As Ono says, '...that was the hold Master Takeda had over us.' (66).

But the group soon becomes a gang, taunting the Tortoise for his slowness. Ono, self-idealising, recalls how the group was fascinated as he defended the Tortoise's artistic integrity, but that:

'This is a matter of many years ago now and I cannot vouch that those were my exact words that morning.' ... 'I distinctly recall the look of gratitude and relief on the Tortoise's face...I myself commanded considerable respect amongst my colleagues – my own output being unchallengeable in terms of either quality or quantity'.

Ono cannot help some narcissistic boasting of his younger days, in his lofty, sententious style:

'...my actions that day were a manifestation of a quality that I came to be much respected for in later years – the ability to judge and think for myself, even if it

meant going against the sway of those around me.’, and of the compliant, fellow-student, the Tortoise’s, gratitude for his ‘courage’ and ‘integrity.’ (68-9).

The younger Ono soon responds to an invitation to join Moriyami’s art group. He is flattered by another leader who recognises his ‘gifts’ and artistic integrity, and with unconscious irony, persuades the Tortoise to depart with him, saying:

‘Loyalty has to be earned. There’s too much made of loyalty. All too often men talk of loyalty and follow blindly. I for one have no wish to lead my life like that.’ (72).

For him it is always *others* who go blindly. He wonders whether these were his exact words, blindly admiring what he considers to be his lucid, language style, which is really vain, pompous and verbose. He departs, expecting to find prestige and celebrity, instead of the mediocrity of illustrating popular magazines or comics or school-teaching.

‘I have had cause to recount this particular scene many times before, and it is inevitable that with repeated telling, such accounts begin to take on a life of their own. But even if I did not express myself quite so succinctly to the Tortoise that day, I think it can be assumed those words I have just attributed to myself do represent accurately enough my attitude and resolve at that point in my life.’ (72).

Mori-san’s artists’ colony exhibits a culture of omnipotence, far exceeding that of the commercial, Takeda factory. The colony is located outside the city in an isolated, self-enclosed compound in a country valley, and is also fenced in against students’ ideas and individuality. It is narcissistically self-absorbed and decadent in bohemian style, with the fabric of the building significantly dilapidated and riddled with decay. The goal is to change fundamentally the identity of painting, ‘as practised in our city’. The students slavishly follow the leader’s particular blend of Western European art, favouring subdued, sensuous blocks of colour over clear boundaries, intended to evoke floating, transient, self-indulgent, night-time worlds. In practice, expression is far from free: there is no inter-subjective discussion on style or content and no independent thought. The students must gratify the narcissistic leader by following blindly and allowing the leader to project into their personal boundaries, as of right.

This group is just as stereotypical in its compliance as the previous group but functions more insidiously. The controlling leader finances his group and owns their art, which is

to be done in his chosen, hybrid mode. When Mori-san holds his own exhibitions, he sits aloof, apparently oblivious to the presence of the students, who automatically perform a ritual of admiration, commenting in hushed voices, as he sits, looking away in a self-absorbed, theatrical pose.

One evening when Ono drifts away from the music and dancing to sit in the storeroom to think, he sees all the finished canvases as ‘some grotesque miniature cemetery’ in a colony which deadens original, independent thought. (149). Ono has been spotted and flattered but wants to evolve his own style at Mori-san’s. He disparages the Tortoise as a traitorous friend, at the same time revelling in his praise:

‘While some may appreciate their [Tortoise-types] plodding steadiness and ability to survive, one suspects their lack of frankness, their capacity for treachery...one despises their unwillingness to take chances in the name of ambition for the sake of a principle they claim to believe in.’ (159).

Ishiguro positions the delusory, narcissistic nature of *both* artists through the very banality of their titles. The Tortoise continues:

‘...I would never have progressed as I have over these years without the constant inspiration of seeing your works appearing before my eyes. No doubt you’ve noted the extent to which my modest “*Autumn Girl*” owes itself to your magnificent “*Girl at Sunset*”.

Anyone who does not conform to the rituals is expelled as a traitor. A leading pupil such as Sasaki might decide if a piece were disloyal and there would be immediate capitulation on the part of the offender, ‘who might burn it along with the refuse’ (140). Then Sasaki, as Ono regretfully recalls, was himself deemed a traitor and cruelly ostracised. Ono, in turn, after seven years work in the villa, is betrayed implicatively by the Tortoise, and is subtly confronted by Mori-san in a scene, paralleling that with his father and the ashpot, from childhood. Two of his new, socially critical paintings have gone missing and been handed over to the leader, who quietly demands the others, about which he seems to know. The presumption is that they, too, will be burned, and Ono must consider his future elsewhere, illustrating comic books.

In the third group, whose leader is the seductive and powerful Matsuda, Ono is told he is talented and can advance his career status. Matsuda, of the Okada-Shingen Society, takes him to look at the slums in the city, to be persuaded to channel his energies into

changing attitudes. Instead of merely protesting against poverty, he could support the nationalist vision by helping the emperor and military to expand the empire, rather than give power to ‘greedy’ businessmen and ‘weak’ politicians. Again, Ono needs to feel that he is the chosen one, and moves from a brief engagement with social, satirical art, to war propaganda posters, eventually becoming a teacher-leader himself.

Ono, in dual-mindedness, recalls Mori-san’s comments on a failed artist-dancer, Gisaburo:

‘... sometimes we used to drink and enjoy ourselves with the women of the pleasure district. Those women would tell him all the things he wanted to hear, and for the night anyway, he’d be able to believe them.’

Once the morning came, he was much too intelligent to go on believing such things, although he could still value the transitory and beautiful – the ‘floating world’ – and feel that he had not *wasted* his life. (149).

But Ono revises his comment and thinks this was himself speaking. Perhaps, he muses, unaware of his false modesty and tendency to fictionalise, he did owe those words to Mori-san after all. At one level, as in disavowal, Ono follows the ‘logic’ of not believing in the fanciful but at another, he does. Most important to him is his sense of some necessary narcissistic destiny. He would declare to his own pupils:

‘...you have a great responsibility to the culture of this nation.’... ‘I may deserve only the smallest praise for my own paintings, when I come to look over my life and remember how I have nurtured and assisted the careers of all of you here why then no man will make me believe that I have wasted my time.’ (151).

He cannot resist adding that all the young men gathered round would drown out each other in protest, that his great works assuredly had a place in posterity.

Ishiguro locates Ono’s triumphal last phase in the Migi-Hidari café (right-left in Japanese, evoking soldiers’ marching boots and dogmatism). It is appropriately narrow and self-enclosed, with its slogans and garish national flags. It is noisy, intolerant of ‘disagreeable views’, and bores whom the students quickly squeeze out. It is where Ono declares – oblivious to his own irony – that they ‘get drunk with ‘pride and dignity’’. This is clearly the place where psychic contradictions co-exist. He is now in full omnipotence as the sensei, surrounded by adulatory students.

Ono calls it a 'patriarch' among establishments, where naturally, he holds court (63). When an interesting question arose, 'I would have a circle of faces awaiting my reply. ...an ear open for another piece of knowledge I might impart.' Here, the culture of controller and subordinates reaches its peak, with its unquestioning obedience and the gang ethos. Those who disagree are thrown out (73-4). His perceptions, fuelled by power and alcohol, Ishiguro implies, are self-deceptive.

At his peak, Ono is a government official among the staff of the Cultural Committee of the Interior Department, organising and painting posters, along with the banners, slogans, flags and maps (63). He works as the official advisor, reaching the apex of his career in 1938 by winning the Shigeta prize, and is paid due respect by the Chief of Police. His artistic integrity is even more compromised. He believes that, 'time is due for Japan to take her rightful place among world powers,' and describes his main work of propaganda, *'Eyes to the Horizon'*, in all its crudity and hard outlines, as receiving praise for its 'vigorous brush strokes and powerful use of colour.'

As an official advisor to the Committee of Unpatriotic Activities with the totalitarian government, Ono has unthinkingly ordered that his most gifted pupil, Kuroda, be given a talking to for his own good. Perhaps, in post-Kleinian terms, with more concern for the 'other' and an ordinary sense of the consequences of his actions in such a government department, Ono might have anticipated that Kuroda would be arrested, jailed, beaten, tortured and permanently disabled. He tries to intervene too late. Approaching Kuroda's mother's house, he smells burning again. This time, it is a bonfire in their back-yard where his student's entire work is being burned by the police, apart from the examples, seized as 'offensive material' for evidence. Despite Ono's protests, the matter is out of his hands.

After the relief of Noriko's successful marriage, and from the slightly more realistic perspective of an ageing man, Ono does have moments of understanding. When speaking of teachers and pupils, although it is doubtful if he applies the insight too stringently to himself, he comments:

'It is this same leading pupil who is the most likely to see shortcomings in the teacher's work or else develop views of his own, divergent from those of his teacher. In theory, of course, a good teacher should accept this tendency indeed, ...welcome it ...in practice, however, the emotions involved can be quite

complicated. Sometimes, when one has nurtured a gifted pupil...it is difficult to see any such maturing of talent as anything other than treachery...' (142).

He acknowledges that Japan's military sentiments are now outdated, and says, with unconscious irony, 'I am not one of those who are afraid to admit to the shortcomings of past achievements.' Yet, at the same time, he seems aware, perceptively, of the naivety of the Okada-Shingen Society as to the limits of art in changing people's attitudes; 'what art can and cannot do.' (172).

Ono cannot let go of his idealised identity as a major, influential figure. Publicly, he is trying to conform, at least superficially, to the current view of Japan's past wars as 'disastrous'. The younger generation insist that Father lacks perspective; he might have had a minor influence on other painters of similar interests but he cannot have done major wrong. Still, privately, Ono is equivocal. He wrestles with the notion that for sixteen years Dr Saito, the distinguished art critic, did not know of his work. Setsuko, he decides, is certainly mistaken. And this is the view that he, caught in his 'floating' world, and in his protective defensive position, stays with to the last.

Part 4 June 1950 Elegy

This is an epilogue, elegiac in tone, opening with another loss for Ono, the death of Matsuda. The novel ends as Ono recalls their last meeting the previous month, and before that, the moment of triumph in his own life, the Shigeta prize presented by the local Police Chief: 'ut happy as I was that night, the feeling of deep triumph and fulfilment which the award should have brought was curiously missing.' (202).

What was missing was another sort of triumph, to do with that old narcissistic wound, delivered by Mori-San; that he might possibly have future illustrating comic books. Ironically, it is now Mori-san who is the one illustrating popular magazines and must have heard about Ono's national award. It is not until Ono walks up the high path to gaze down upon at Mori-san's old villa and sits down, relishing the flavour of fresh oranges, that he feels a 'deep sense of satisfaction and triumph rise within me' (204). That moment, Ono believes, is the consolation of his life – to know that it has contained a moment or two of real satisfaction. With this sense of protective, sadistic, triumphant narcissism and pride, he can feel vindicated at last.

He is convinced that he and Matsuda have, unlike the Tortoise and Shintaro, striven to rise and ‘...acted on what we believed and did our utmost.’ Matsuda, however, on that last visit, when they were both old and frail, agrees, but then adds more perceptively:

‘It’s just that in the end we turned out to be ordinary men. Ordinary men with no special gifts of insight. It was simply our misfortune to have been ordinary men during such times.’ (200).

Ono remains silent. He still lives in double reality – a famous artist and prize-winner who has split off the shame of Japan’s defeat and his own contribution, yet still alert to the smell of burning – of bombed buildings, paintings, Kenji’s ashes – and his wife’s death. Matsuda, by contrast, quietly remarks that now, that smell usually just means garden rubbish burning.

At the end, Ono feels neither shame nor guilt, and sees the suicides, like those of the popular war-time song-writer or young Miyake’s Company Director, as unnecessary. Ono’s psychic integrity has been compromised through childhood failures of dependency, losses and over-projection from narcissism. Similarly, his artistic integrity has been compromised through his natural ambition and choices, caught as he was in the floating historical and political conditions of the times.

Feeding the carp with Matsuda, Ono is now in a more accepting and serene form of disavowal: he can acknowledge the facts of events but does not perceive their significance. He concedes only that if he saw things narrowly, it was with an artist’s vision, and he is still haunted by the weight of his losses and the smell of burning.

He has had an illness and uses a stick. Emotionally, he keeps his fragile identity intact with disavowal, seeing himself as the artist who can be rightfully proud that he had had the courage and energy to do what he thought best at the time, and always rose above the mediocre.

Ono is valued by his daughters; accepts that he is no longer the autocrat of the family, is proud of his grandson and is looking forward to more grandchildren. Nowadays, he simply paints plants and flowers. He often sits in the yard outside the new offices on the bench on the site of his old table in the Migi-Hidari bar, but no longer commanding

centre stage. He sits alone, full of memories, quietly enjoying the cheerful office workers as they pass nearby, talking and laughing amongst themselves.

Chapter 6

The Remains of the Day (1989)

Stevens, the Country House butler:

‘...professional prestige lay...in the moral worth of one’s employer. ...the world was a wheel ... with these great houses at the hub ... each of us harboured a desire to make our small contribution to the creation of a better world. ... [and] serve the great gentlemen of our times in whose hands civilization had been entrusted.’ (115-6).

‘I gave a small laugh. “In my experience,” I said, “too many people believe themselves capable of working at these higher levels without having the least idea of the exacting demands involved. It is certainly not suited to just anybody.” ’ (172).

These passages show Ishiguro’s interest in the human need to be not ‘just anybody’ or a nobody but to have a place, an identity, moral worth, self-respect and the respect of others, and, as I shall argue, a good object at the core of one’s emotional being.

In the third novel, Ishiguro again explores a fractured period; England, before and after WW2, and the impoverished emotional life of the butler-narrator, whose sense of self is defended predominantly by *acquisitive* projective identification. Posture, costume and a restrictive, formulaic idiom are the external forms of his self-protection. Unlike the previous two central characters, Stevens, after the long lapse of time, and his own inaction, reaches a painful awakening to the reality of his wasted hopes for love, and dignity in work.

I shall explore historical context and Ishiguro’s vision of human deficit in title, genre, structure, plot, narrating voice, place and setting as metaphor, irony and word-play. In this novel, narcissism in the central character is dominated by acquisitive projective identification – (*I am you*) and a delusory grasp of reality.

Stevens, adrift in a rupturing socio-cultural climate of the mid-twentieth century, has believed in good faith but misguidedly, that impeccable work, and unswerving loyalty to Lord Darlington to the exclusion of all else, was the route to a fulfilled and morally estimable life.

From the vantage point of the 1950s and the sale of Darlington Hall, Stevens remembers aspects of the fragmenting twentieth century. This was the time of the recent humiliation of the Suez Crisis, the collapsing Empire and a weakened Great Britain. Stevens has suffered a loss of identity with the break-up of the culture of large, aristocratic Houses and the slow fracture of the social class system. Stevens, now an ageing servant, has endured cumulative social and private trauma. No mention is ever made of a mother; the primary, core object is either absent or dead; nothing is made of the loss of his older brother, Leonard, killed in the Boer War, in a very 'un-British' (dishonourable) attack on a village; and his elderly father has had to be taken in as 'staff', and died on the job at seventy-two. Furthermore, he has endured the humiliation of knowing that his Lord Darlington, with whom he has identified and idealised, has been publicly shamed as a Nazi sympathiser, before and during WW2.

Darlington Hall has been a self-enclosed community, with the owner-Lord, as the Head of Household, including the servants. They found their identity defined by their role in the established, hierarchical structure of the Hall, with its 'containing' function as an institution. For servants, this often precluded a private, family life, and if they retired or resigned to be independent, they could become homeless. By mid-century, many such houses had been sold off to affluent Americans who pursued their own versions of English living. In this case, the new American owner, Mr Farraday, has included Stevens, the genuine English butler, in his purchase, as part of the package.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro subverts the genre of English Country House novel, which concerned the personal lives of the aristocratic families, with the minor, servant characters from 'downstairs', used as comic foils or confidantes. P.G. Wodehouse's comic novels, set at Blandings Castle in the 1920s-30s, feature the witty, realistic butler, Jeeves, who brings his foolish young master, Bertie Wooster, down to earth with his dry realism, but we know nothing of Jeeves himself. In *The Remains of the Day*, it is Stevens the butler, who is the centre of the delusion, pathos and disappointment. Lord Darlington, the aristocrat, now dead, is the minor character and in serious moral and diplomatic disrepute. This novel can also be seen as a critique of the English novels in which the house represents the moral values of the householder, such as *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen, 1814, *Howards End*, E M Forster, 1910, or *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh, 1945.

The title, *The Remains of the Day*, suggests the routine clearing of guests' leftovers or the dregs of time which remain after a lifetime's service and the decline of all hopes and expectations.³⁹ At a further level, it suggests Freud's 'day's residues' or '*Tagesrestes*' (Freud, 1900), which surface in dream or in re-enactions in the external world, (found psychotically in Ryder's 'dream furniture', U). Such fragments represent wish-fulfilment, internal conflict or 'split off', intolerable experience. Stevens's half-buried memories leach out as he motors towards the West Country to meet Miss Kenton, the Housekeeper of twenty years earlier, apparently to replenish his staff-plan. Time, in Stevens's emotional world, has barely moved, as he recalls himself and Miss Kenton in the 1920s when they were both young, at the top of their professions and the mainstays of one of the most prestigious English Country Houses.

The plot is minimal. It is 1956 and Lord Darlington has been dead three years. The House, now owned by the American, Mr Farraday, is half-empty, covered in dust sheets, and to be unoccupied for five weeks. Stevens, now older and making errors, needs to add to his staff. At the surface level, the question, Stevens believes, is a professional one. As he had received a brief, friendly letter from Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper, (who has been Mrs Benn for twenty years), he has construed in phantasy, that because she has briefly left her husband three times and is currently staying with a friend, her marriage must be over, and she must want a home and her old position back. As part of a short motoring holiday in the West Country, with petrol paid for, he will complete his new staff plan by bringing back Miss Kenton.

At an unconscious level, the plot question is whether or not this journey – his first away from Darlington Hall – is a quest for love and companionship. He might, in post-Kleinian terms, be object - seeking, retrieving a relationship which had been previously 'split off' as unacceptable. Had he been impervious to her affection because of a lifetime's misplaced loyalty to his late master, Lord Darlington? Stevens is socially and relationally adrift. His is a journey towards self-knowledge, albeit with a tentative ending.

³⁹ The Earl of Halifax's autobiography, *Fulness of Days* (1957), sits ironically in this context of emotional emptiness. He is a real person in the novel who praises the silver at the Hall as a contributory factor in the apparent success of the 1923, secret International Conference.

Structurally, the outside frame story is Stevens's six day, solitary, car journey to the West Country, and the inner story, in counterpoint, is his selective, self-idealising journey through memories of his life during the past decades at Darlington Hall. They focus on the climax of his career, the 1923 secret International Conference, with Miss Kenton as housekeeper in Darlington Hall. The journey is circular – almost a round trip, but with some important geographic and psychic detours on the way.

En route with the character, Stevens, the reader becomes aware, psychoanalytically, of his cumulative trauma from childhood: the emotional absences, neglect and deprivation, accepted as part of servant life. There is no hint of his forename or of loving, containing, parental figures from whom identity would gradually derive during the normal introjective and projective exchanges. These would produce a strong sense of continuity and connectedness, and a correspondingly strong ego and capacity for self-determination.

But Stevens is dominated by a need to be someone who is valued and at the hub of international diplomacy, and so the narcissistic defences are mobilised to avoid a fear of annihilation and separation. The dominant psychic mechanism is acquisitive projective identification. The authentic self becomes invisible through excessive projection into Lord Darlington and the re-introjection of a distorted, phantasied self.⁴⁰

In this novel, the short car journey focuses firmly on the nature and quality of Stevens's relationships, therefore I shall explore Stevens's behaviours in relation to his three significant figures, Lord Darlington, his father, Stevens senior, and Miss Kenton/Mrs Benn, the housekeeper. I shall comment on Stevens's states of mind : the narcissism of omnipotent thinking, namely: denial, control, grandiosity, triumph, smugness and disparagement and the corresponding re-enactions. I discuss the metaphors of landscape and architecture to do with perspective, especially on the presence or absence of 'view' and windows, as ways of 'seeing' reality, like the binoculars of PVH or the magnifying glass of WO.

⁴⁰ Farraday's guests, the Wakefields, find that an arch in Darlington Hall's architecture is mock (123-50), implying that that other parts of the package, say, the butler, might also be mock. It is as inauthentic as Gatsby's huge, fake, period mansion, in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926. Gatsby misnames the narrator, Carraway, as Farraday.

The important theme of losing identity emerges as Stevens, self-idealising, identifies acquisitively and omnipotently with his own notion of greatness and dignity, through his role as a Great butler to a morally distinguished Lord of a Great House. He also identifies with the English landscape in a way comparable with the ‘undifferentiated identification’ of Rosenfeld (1966:172),⁴¹ claiming it to be:

‘the most deeply satisfying in the world... best summed up in the word, ‘greatness’...I distinctly felt that rare and unmistakeable feeling... that one is in the presence of ‘greatness’...we call our country Great Britain...the landscape of our country alone would justify the use of this lofty adjective. ...I would say that it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart...the calmness of that beauty, its *sense of restraint*.’ (28-29, my emphasis).

The reader, however, begins to perceive a poignant irony in that Stevens is a limited, uneducated and un-travelled man, who has already stated, ‘It has been my privilege to see the best of England, sir, within these very walls [Darlington Hall].’, (4). He has known the English countryside only vicariously from reading Mrs. Jane Symons’s out-of-date guide book, *The Wonder of England*, yet he positions himself as ‘any objective observer...’ (28).

Stevens believes that his aim in life is to achieve ‘that balance between attentiveness and the illusion of absence that is essential to good waiting.’ (72). He is concerned with his performance for others, rather than the idea of being himself. He is immersed in self-idealising within a myth of Englishness, claiming that,

‘...butlers only truly exist in England...other countries have only manservants’, declaring that, ‘Continental ... and Celts are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint’ required... [he] will, at the slightest provocation, tear off his suit and his shirt and run about screaming.’... ‘dignity’ is beyond such persons.’ ...[As with] ‘the great butler... it is with the English landscape, ...one simply *knows* one is in the presence of greatness.’(43-4, original emphasis).

Stevens conflates role with identity when he says of dignity:

...‘a butler must not abandon the professional being he *inhabits* ...great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to *inhabit* their professional role and *inhabit* it to the utmost ...they wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit.’ (42-3, my emphases).

⁴¹ The separate identity of patient and analyst is not differentiated as in Freud’s ‘oceanic feeling’.

A butler of any quality, he declare, must be seen to *inhabit his role utterly*. He cannot just don it when it suits him like a ‘pantomime costume’ or drop it like a ‘facade’, to reveal the actor beneath.

But the role, however, inhabits *him*, to the exclusion of any personality derived from inter-subjective exchanges and the ‘sense of oneself as a creator of meanings’ (Ogden 1992:217). Stevens adds more tellingly, that role can only be relinquished when one is ‘entirely alone’ (169), for in his view, personal relationships are a distraction. At this stage, the notions of relating naturally to others in a spirit of mutuality, and of the value of relationships per se, in giving meaning to life, are entirely outside his consciousness.

Stevens’s preoccupation with clothing shows how he both disguises and reveals his need for professional cover to cloak his emotional life. In the prologue, planning his trip, he considered his ‘costume’; either a new travelling outfit or Lord Darlington’s old suits, old-fashioned and formal, which he has inherited. But then, as he sees himself as a special kind of son and heir, these suits seem appropriate.

Similarly, Stevens, as the first person narrator, is given an idiom which obscures the self and conveys his emotional dissociation. In object-relations terms, his mode of symbolisation, like his clothing, is designed to mask the self and exclude emotion. The code of ‘butler-speak’ is formal, formulaic, functional and distancing, derivative and circumlocutory, with double negatives and balanced syntax, as many of the quotations show.

Stevens’s self view is presented in his self-betraying voice which can be vulnerable as well as pompous, self-righteous and contradictory, as he reveals his self-deceptions and self-justifications. Caught by Miss Kenton reading a romance, he explains it away as language-learning for self-education but is silent on the content:

‘The book was ... what might be described as a ‘sentimental romance’ – one of a number kept in the library, and also in several of the guest bedrooms, for the entertainment of lady visitors. 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. ... It has never been my position that good accent and command of language are not attractive attributes, and I always considered it my duty to develop them as best I could. ... such works [romances]

tend to be written in good English, with plenty of elegant dialogue of much practical value to me.' (167-8).

Inter-personal dialogue, elegant or otherwise, he never engages in, since spontaneous, natural exchanges are not seemly. He frequently refers to himself in the depersonalised 'one' or 'one's person' and the House guests as 'distinguished personages'. Such language is inadequate for crucial emotional situations such as Miss Kenton's bereavement or his father's dying. His own feelings of grief and disappointment are disguised by 'a laugh' or said to be 'strange'. When Miss Kenton seeks permission to close his dead father's eyes, he can say only:

'Please don't think me unduly improper in not ascending the stairs to see my father in his deceased condition just at the moment. ...I know my father would have wished me to carry on just now...To do otherwise, I feel, would be to let him down.' (196).

It is possible that the 'him' is Lord Darlington, his psychically adopted father, with whom he identifies (Segal, 1983:270).⁴² Nonetheless, here, there is that endless deferral, as if he were not only 'waiting' on guests but always waiting, waiting, as in U and NLG, for some better, 'timeless' moment for hopes to be fulfilled.

Lord Darlington

Stevens's relationship with Lord Darlington is the significant one of his life. By 1923, Lord Darlington has become Stevens's replacement, class-father through the process of acquisitive projective identification. This is intensified by moral narcissism and his phantasy of himself as the indispensable facilitator in their 'joint' efforts for peace, at the *hub* of international diplomacy. This was not an unreasonable aim after the recent horrors of WW1.

Stevens's preoccupation throughout is his anxiety over what makes him 'not just anybody'. Ishiguro places Stevens's self-view at the centre of the novel, where he, self-idealising, argues that he was part of 'an idealistic generation', with 'idealistic motivations' (116). He has been an under-footman and then butler in various great houses, and, ironically prides himself on being less snobbish than the members of the Hayes [butlers'] Society, because he admires above all, *moral worth*, even if the owners

⁴² Segal writes of the permanent, narcissistic, personality structure built up by the '...re-internalization of the projectively possessed object.'

are industrialists. Stevens believes he has found both moral worth and a landed, aristocratic family in the single and childless Lord Darlington.

For Stevens, the central question is the 'great' butler, and who ranks among those exclusive elite? (29-33). He implies that *he* is, despite his self-deprecation. Professional prestige, he claims, lies in the moral worth of one's employer, 'who needs to be an enlightened force for good ... furthering the progress of humanity.' (114). Stevens re-internalises aspects of Darlington, casting himself as a top professional, *morally* superior and contributing towards a better world. His destiny is to enable, to facilitate, those 'in whose hands civilisation has been entrusted.' (116): aristocrats and members of the Foreign Office in high, social and political circles. This is a distorted self-view.

As the epigraph shows, Stevens sees the world as a wheel, at the hub of which are the great houses, where the real political debates and key decisions are held in privacy and calm. He, himself, is at the hub of Darlington Hall, masterminding the privacy and calm, much as a General masterminds manoeuvres on the battlefield, for 'History could well be made under this roof.' (77). Without him, the top secret conferences cannot effectively take place nor the mighty, international decisions made. Stevens comments frequently and grandiloquently along these lines: 'one has had the privilege of practising one's profession at the very fulcrum of great affairs....one's efforts ...however modest ... comprise a contribution to the course of history.' (139). Lord Darlington occupies himself only with the 'true centre of things.' (137-8). When, in 1923, Miss Kenton tells him that she has accepted a proposal of marriage, Stevens is in denial over his need to love, and is too preoccupied to notice. He hastens away, for 'events of global significance are taking place in this house at this very moment.'

Ironically, the true significance is that Stevens has lost his only chance of love in the prime of his life, having stated his life's ambition to Miss Kenton earlier in their relationship, when she had hoped that he, at the height of his career, might want more than his work:

'...my vocation will not be fulfilled until I have done all I can to see his Lordship through all the great tasks he has set himself...the day he is able to rest on his laurels...' (173).

Stevens works the staff up to a high pitch of excitement for the conference, with himself at the centre. This extended performance suggests his narcissistic need for the stimulus and heightened states of mind and feeling that come with needing to be valued. He has projected this attributively into his father, whom he describes as super-charged:

‘As the great challenge of the conference drew nearer, an astonishing change came over my father. It was almost as though some supernatural force possessed him, causing him to shed twenty years.’ (78).

Stevens’s narcissistic identification with Darlington defends him from, for example, the humiliating interrogations from two guests who, late one night, quiz him in order to ridicule his lack of knowledge of world affairs (194-6). It is poignant to see that Stevens is out of his depth, explaining that such things are out of his ‘realm’, unaware that Lord Darlington, too, is out of his depth in believing that democracy is outmoded, and that countries should be run by strong (fascist) leaders, as in Germany and Italy. (198).

The last word of the chapter, in which Stevens sums up the secret, International Conference, is ‘triumph’ (110), signifying *that* narcissistic defence, with its element of sadistic gratification over the ‘other’. And he *is* triumphant. Certainly, the preparations for the conference were manic, and the management, fraught. Apart from the conference itself, the blisters of M. Dupont take precedence over Stevens’s dying father, and he overhears Lewis, the American delegate, describe Darlington as *amateur*. Yet, another guest comments, ‘At one point during dinner, Stevens, I would have thought you were at least three people.’ (107). Stevens’s self-deprecation, with his sententious, ‘my humble standards’ and ‘I do not delude myself’, show his pride in the compliments and a real need for some narcissistic self-congratulation.

Lord Darlington belongs to the network of European aristocrats and gentlemen whose narrow code of honour includes being sporting to past enemies, and he is, indeed, uncritical, self-focused and amateur. Ishiguro implies that his efforts might even have been driven by personal homo-erotic motives, to do with his very dear, German officer friend, Herr Bremann, who visited Darlington Hall in officer’s uniform, just after WW1 and returned at regular intervals. It was a ‘close’ friendship; Darlington spoke of him ‘with intensity’ and visited Berlin several times in 1920 (71). Stevens describes the meetings at the Hall as ‘unbroken lines of gentlemen in evening suits’, with very few of ‘the fairer sex’. The room, on the other hands, is feminine. Bremann died of poverty and

starvation because the Versailles Treaty was harsh and punitive, and although he was said to be married, Darlington could not find one relative. Stevens is impatient with liaisons between the staff and, identifying with Darlington, finds them ‘distractions’ for which the women are the more to blame.

Given Stevens’s unthinking, acquisitive loyalty, he embraces Lord Darlington’s anti-Semitism (146-7), sacking the two Jewish maids without a qualm, despite Miss Kenton’s outrage. (148-9). Later, in a spirit of narcissistic triumph, he taunts her by asking why she has not already left the House since she had been so shocked; she admits that she has nowhere to go. She, however, uses her mind independently, while Stevens evades thought, regarding politics as ‘out of my realm.’ Towards the end, (224-5), Stevens recalls Mr Cardinal’s exasperation with him:

‘Are you not at least *curious* about what I am saying?’

His own typical reply is, ‘...I have every trust in his lordship’s good judgement.’ (225). He has to hear out Cardinal’s ruthless exposé of how Darlington, his godfather, had been Hitler’s most instrumental pawn but Stevens refuses to see himself as a pawn of the pawn.

In hindsight, the irony of the Conference was its moral ambivalence. Diplomacy in 1923 was seen by some as constructive, in view of the massacres of WW1, but by 1936, seen by many as appeasement, according to Foreign Office data which revealed German rearmament.⁴³ Reggie Cardinal, regarded as ‘kin’, confides in Stevens that Darlington, by 1936, was out of his depth with the Nazis:

‘I mean to say, he’s been like a second father to me. I hardly need tell you, Stevens.’

‘No, Sir.’

‘And I know you do too. Care deeply for him. Don’t you, Stevens?’

‘I do indeed, Sir.’ (221).

Indeed, it had been Stevens to whom Darlington had delegated the family task of explaining ‘the birds and the bees’ to Reggie, albeit unsuccessfully, who, at twenty-

⁴³ The German ambassador Ribbentrop’s contribution to these meetings was duplicitous: on the one hand, hoping to make a British-German alliance, while on the other, assuring Hitler that the British would not oppose an invasion of Poland. Significantly, he hosted, with Hitler, secret, high-level conferences in his private villa in Berlin-Dahlem.

three, was about to be married. Stevens even mentions his 'pride and gratitude' for his privileged status as Darlington's confidante in respect of the international, off-the-record visitors, '... You can say anything in front of Stevens, I assure you.' (74).

As Stevens looks back over Lord Darlington's pro-Nazi work and subsequent disgrace, his denial in narcissism continues in such justifications as:

'A great deal of nonsense has been spoken and written ... and some utterly ignorant reports have had it that he was utterly motivated by egotism or else arrogance ... I can say with conviction that his lordship was persuaded to overcome his more retiring side only through a deep sense of moral duty.' (61).

Stevens fairly points out that many had been charmed by Ribbentrop (136-7); he is still proud and grateful, believing that Darlington had moral stature to dwarf his critics (126). He feels privileged not to have served a mediocre employer but to have been at the fulcrum, contributing to the course of history. As he returns endlessly to his theme, re-editing and amplifying it, he concludes that in the end, he was not 'just anybody', and that many butlers with promising careers who tried to have a voice, came to nothing and 'drifted from view altogether.' (200).

By 1956, Stevens's ego has been so depleted in projection that he has a deficit of 'observation and judgement', (Britton 2003:101), as does Etsuko over her neglect, and Ono over his fame as an artist. Stevens has no independent voice and so far does not want one. But during his disturbing journey West in Mr Farraday's Ford, he re-delivers his views on greatness in the unfamiliar territory of Moscombe, a small village in Devon, where he gets lost in every sense.

After the hillside view of the 'perfect' English pastoral landscape near Salisbury, Stevens encounters a more disturbing view from the twisting lane on the hill in Devon where he breaks down. He is no longer self-sufficient, having run out of petrol and radiator water, nor is he entirely protected from other views of Englishness. The way is muddy and difficult to navigate on foot but it is also difficult to navigate the new ideas and opinions of those he meets in the village. Trampling through the pastureland to get help, he finds the turn-ups of his 'aristocratic suit' soiled and his fixed attitudes disturbed.

Mr Harry Smith, an ordinary middle-class Englishman, argues the case for democracy, declaring that at whatever your social level, you have the right to express your opinion freely – it is ‘what they fought against Hitler for – otherwise you are slaves and without dignity.’ (186). Even by 1956, Stevens finds this new definition of dignity idealistic and misguided, because for him, dignity is still about emotional restraint and control (194).

In Moscombe, however, with Mr Farraday’s car and Lord Darlington’s old suit, he is unwittingly in ‘costume’ and mistaken for a Lord himself. He is reckoned to speak almost like a gentleman but if the locals are deceived, the doctor is not, tactfully asking if he were some sort of manservant. Stevens accepts the term with some relief, although in his prime, he had held it in utter contempt.

In retrospect, Stevens rejects ‘mindless loyalty’, judging his to have been trustingly and ‘*intelligently* bestowed’ (200, original emphasis); that the likes of him can never be in full possession of the facts and have to trust. He adds defiantly,

‘It is hardly my fault if his lordship’s life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste – and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account.’ (201).

Father

Throughout the journey, Stevens’s memories of his butler-father rise to the surface, although none recalls a loving, containing parent. By the end, at Darlington Hall, they speak with mutual embarrassment (64). Stevens identifies with him as a butler rather than a father, retaining this as a shadowy ego-ideal. He allows that his father *was* a dignified butler, despite no command of language, a poor accent, and no general knowledge. His recollections are not personal but reside only in three reported anecdotes.

The first, Father’s favourite, is about another admirable butler in India who failed to panic on discovering, prior to a grand dinner party, a tiger under the dining room table, shot it with the twelve-bore gun, and announced:

‘Dinner will be served at the usual time and I am pleased to say that there will be *no discernible traces left.*’ (36, my emphasis).

Stevens senior, like his son, found dignity in the impression of ‘absence’, with no ‘discernible traces’ left – but only up to a point.

In the second story, Stevens senior was obliged to chauffeur three young gentlemen after a drunken lunch party. As they became progressively abusive about their host, he brought the car to an abrupt halt, opened the rear car door and stood a few steps back, gazing steadily into the interior for some minutes. This silent rebuke from a servant was sufficient to restore order. Dignity was maintained in the face of unseemly disrespect.

The third story involved the incompetent General, responsible for the pointless death of the older son. This same General stayed at the estate where Stevens senior was obliged to be his valet, to suffer the General’s gross behaviour and boastful military stories. In the end, Stevens senior donated his large tip to charity. The difference between the father and son is that the father, despite his inferior social position, does at least have critical agency, and a moral dignity which says that there are limits to unacceptable behaviour. Stevens himself, with his moral narcissism, unconsciously puts narcissistic loyalty above critical judgement.

When the elderly father arrives at Darlington Hall in 1922, having neither home nor savings after a lifetime in service, the power relations between father and son are reversed. Father enters the story as an under-butler, although Stevens, out of the respect owed to himself, insists that he retain some status and be called Stevens senior, not simply William. In any case, this father has long been replaced by the admired, father-mentor, Lord Darlington.

Either out of staff protocol or an Oedipal need to control (if not kill) the father, Stevens does not make father’s room comfortable nor communicate with him, except as staff. During this time, Stevens denies the fact of his father’s failing powers, which have to be pointed out repeatedly by Miss Kenton. These, he dismisses with contemptuous irritation: the dustpan and brush, unattended in the entrance hall, the china statues misplaced, the dripping nose while serving at table, or a silver fork, found with traces of polish on it. Then finally, one day, walking up to the summer house, Stevens senior tripped, fell over in front of everyone and dropped a loaded tea-tray. Eventually, Lord Darlington himself remarks, ‘...these errors are trivial in themselves: but you must

yourself realise their larger significance' (59). Stevens agrees that they could undermine the secret international meeting, so dear to them both.

The professional end of Father, the second fall, is devastating in its narcissistic inhumanity. Stevens, unfamiliar with his father's bleak quarters, is surprised how high up some rickety stairs the room is; how like a prison cell, and that there is no 'view', only roof-tiles. Father has been up three hours already and is in uniform. He is addressed by his son in the third person, passive voice, as if he were an abstract entity. The harsh, early morning light enhances the harsh rigour of their conversation. The father is contemptuous and humiliates the son; the son is omnipotent and depersonalises the father:

'Ah', I said, and gave a short laugh. 'I might have known father would be up and ready for the day.'

'I've been up for the past three hours,' he said, looking me up and down rather coldly.'

'I have come here to relate something to you, Father.'

'Then relate it briefly and concisely. I haven't all morning to listen to you chatter....'

Come to the point then and be done with it. Some of us have work to be getting on with.'

'My father's face in the half-light, showed no emotion whatsoever.'

'Father has become increasingly infirm.... His Lordship is of the view as indeed, I am myself, that while Father is allowed to continue with his present round of duties, he represents an ever-present threat to the smooth running of this household, and in particular, to next week's important international gathering. ...It has been felt that Father should no longer be asked to wait at table, whether or not guests are present.' (64-65).

The response is only that Seamus, another servant, should be checking the outside steps for the safety of important guests. Stevens's next comment disparages, in narcissism, his father's adapted cleaning trolley as some kind of 'street hawker's barrow.' (78).

The climax to Stevens's professional career is the unofficial, International Conference of 1923, and present are the German ambassador, Ribbentrop, selected American and French diplomats and English Nazi sympathizers. But Ishiguro has Stevens senior collapse over his cleaning trolley in a grotesquely comic attitude of obeisance. Father is taken up to his room. He is seventy-two and has had a stroke.

During the following conference day, Stevens, on his father's instructions, is summoned upstairs but feels that he cannot be spared and eventually attends briefly. His response is a disparaging remark about the smell of roasting fat coming from the cook, who is in tears nearby. He appears oblivious to the significance of the situation; clearly, his father is dying, and equally clearly, Stevens is unaware that Father is trying to say goodbye:

'My father opened his eyes and turned his head a little upon the pillow and looked at me.

'I hope Father is feeling better now,' I said.....

'Everything in hand downstairs?'

'The situation is rather volatile ...'

An impatient look crossed my father's face. 'But is everything in hand?' he said again.

'Yes, I dare say you can rest assured on that. I'm very glad Father is feeling better.'

With some deliberation, he withdrew his arms from under the bedclothes and gazed tiredly at the back of his hands. He continued to do this for some time.

'I'm glad Father is feeling so much better,' I said again eventually. 'Now really, I'd best be getting back.'...

He went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: 'I hope I've been a good father to you.'

I laughed a little and said: 'I'm so glad you're feeling better now.'

'I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I've been a good father to you. I suppose I haven't.' ...

'I'm so glad you're feeling better now,' ...and took my leave.' (97).

Stevens remembers the banqueting hall, the delegates and the conflicting pressures in immense detail, as opposed to the bleak account of his dying father. Miss Kenton has called a doctor who is waylaid by the French delegate, for his blisters, while Stevens maintains the conviviality of the conference with port, denying any feelings of irretrievable loss. Lord Darlington notices him:

'Stevens, are you all right?'

'Yes, Sir. Perfectly.'

'You look as though you're crying.'

I laughed and taking out a handkerchief, quickly wiped my face. 'I'm very sorry, Sir. The strains of a hard day.' (105).

Miss Kenton/Mrs Benn

As Stevens drives westward, expecting to recruit Miss Kenton for Darlington Hall, he considers his relationship with someone who has been Mrs Benn for twenty years. With narcissism, he omnipotently overrides the reality of the boundaries of time, oblivious to the fact that twenty years would have wrought enormous change. Consciously, he believes that his past connections with Miss Kenton were professional, with him always

in control. There was cocoa in the evenings in *her* pantry, regarded as planning meetings, but when Miss Kenton brought flowers to enliven his bare, sterile pantry, she was rebuffed and cocoa was never taken together again.

Alone, off-duty in his pantry, he would often read romances, experiencing love vicariously but was appalled when the real Miss Kenton once came in, making playful comments about his reading, and once teased him about some pretty maids. His pantry – the box-like, viewless, ‘prison cell’ room – is, metaphorically, a ‘psychic retreat’ (Steiner, 1993: xi). It is a refuge or sanctuary in which Stevens, in narcissistic withdrawal, is stuck, stifling strong feelings and flexible thought, such as love and compassion.

As he drives, Stevens’s mind uncovers turning points in their relationship. When he claimed that he, too, was distressed by the sacking of the Jewish maids, Miss Kenton was exasperated, saying, ‘Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend?*’ (153). Just to share his feelings then, would have helped her to feel less alone. When Miss Kenton’s aunt, her only ‘mother’, died, Stevens was glad that she remained composed, and felt only a ‘strange’ sense that behind her closed door, she was weeping. He hovered for a while but instead of offering sympathy or comfort, or even being aware of the sadistic edge to his behaviour, he narcissistically denigrated her work by criticising her new maids:

‘I have noticed one or two things have fallen in standard recently...you might be a little less complacent as regards new arrivals.’(178).

As he drives nearer, he again, recalls her grief and his failure to console, (212). The third time (226-78), he reassures himself that in any case, he could not have delayed himself unduly, as he was required to serve the distinguished gentlemen upstairs.

When Kenton carefully trained Lisa to be a good housekeeper, perhaps as a replacement if she, Kenton, were to marry, she asked him, if, at the top of his career, he might wish for something more. He, however, remained impervious to her meaning, declaring undying loyalty to Lord Darlington until his destiny in history should be completed. He was faintly contemptuous of her intention to marry a butler, gone into business in the neighbouring village. He was distant and dismissive at her leaving (215-6), and

although she gave him an opportunity to ask her to stay on, she was wounded that he affected so little interest, after so many years of service together. He twice offered perfunctory congratulations, then smugly added, ‘...there are matters of global significance taking place upstairs and I must return to my post.’ (219).

As he drives closer to their meeting, a faint memory of her weeping behind her door re-surfaces. Stevens has stood outside many doors as an over-hearer and on-looker, detached, dissociated, and living vicariously, just as he had overheard the American, Mr Lewis, calling Lord Darlington ‘amateur’ but did not fully understand. Miss Kenton’s letter had mentioned one happy time of their enjoying a view *together*, which Stevens recalls with something like yearning. They had shared one particularly magical, summer evening, observing his father from a second floor landing. After the accident with the tray by the summerhouse, Father was found slowly walking up and down, scanning the ground, as if, said Miss Kenton, ‘hoping to find a precious jewel.’ (50). Early in the novel, this seemed to convey Father’s desire to find the cause of his fall and his lost, precious competence and identity.

Now, late in the narrative, Stevens seems to be thinking of it (a precious jewel) in connection with his broadening perspective; his own lost time and potential closeness with Miss Kenton (67, 180). He knows that Kenton is spirited, independent and has true dignity, having sometimes challenged his intransigence in her own critical voice. And she has empathy for others, having watched over his dying father and closed his eyes in death.

Lord Darlington has been dead three years and Stevens is struggling with the new freedom that Mr Farraday gives him. He re-reads Miss Kenton’s letter. It is sad and nostalgic but she does not ask to return to Darlington Hall. His first response to it is one of extended narcissistic condescension, in which he projects his own emptiness attributively into her.

‘...It is of course tragic that her marriage is now ending in failure...no doubt she is pondering with regret decisions that have left her, deep in middle age, so alone and desolate...of course, Miss Kenton cannot hope...ever to retrieve these lost years....it will be my first duty to impress this upon her...I cannot see why ...her seeing out her working years there should not offer a very genuine consolation to a life that has come to be dominated by a sense of waste.’ (48).

As Stevens approaches Cornwall, he re-reads the letter more realistically and concedes that it expresses no clear desire to return, and that it may have been his own wishful thinking, given the errors he has been making, now that he is older (140). On the day before they meet, he checks the letter again, thinking that he may have read more into her lines than was wise. He retreats into denial, becomes emotionally disengaged and says of their approaching interview, ‘... aside from a few informal exchanges, it will be essentially a professional one’, still assuming that her marriage has broken down and she is without a home. (180).

The day before he is to arrive at Little Compton, he again recalls his past failure to console her grief and begins to recognise time lost. He uses the depersonalising pronoun, ‘one’ but cannot minimise the enormity of his failures to respond to a possible life companion, by referring to their disagreements as ‘small incidents’ and mere ‘misunderstandings’. He concludes:

‘...it was as if one had a never-ending number of days, months, years in which to sort out the vagaries of one’s relationship with Miss Kenton; an infinite number of further opportunities in which to remedy the effect of this or that misunderstanding. There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable.’ (179).

Two days after their meeting, Stevens sits alone on a bench on the pier in Weymouth; an isolate, but ‘with his feet on the ground.’ Now, he *can* view the end of his hopes with the ‘sun setting over the sea’ but is waiting for the lights to come on. He has reached the turning point of his internal and external journeys. He now has a perspective on the ‘evening’ of his life. He has met with Mrs Benn and seen reality for what it is.

Recalling their recent tea together, Stevens has noticed her graceful ageing and her pleasant defiance. Mrs Benn is still the person, he realises, ‘who *inhabited* my memory over these years’ (232), recognising in one of his favourite words, the existence of feelings. (236). He has the shaming tale to tell of Lord Darlington’s national disgrace and last empty years as an invalid. Mrs Benn assures Stevens that she certainly did *not* think that she had written of her life as stretching out like emptiness before her. Despite some periods of discontent, she will again return to her husband; she has a daughter and a grandchild coming.

Stevens's rigid, narcissistic, psychic structure is liquefying, as they wait at her bus stop in the drizzle, with the view of empty fields intensifying his own emptiness. Only then, does he ask her if she was unhappy, since she has left her husband three times. Mrs Benn had grown to love him but she has sometimes wondered what life she might have had with him, Stevens. Her eyes fill with tears; it is too late for Stevens to reciprocate. All he can do is smile.

Only later on the bench in Weymouth, does he allow a stranger beside him to know that, '...at that moment, my heart was breaking.' (239). And only when envying the happy groups and couples on the pier, can he tell this stranger: '...it's no use. I've given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington.' (243).

His own tears now flow for his disappointment at the loss of Miss Kenton, his misplaced identification with Lord Darlington, and his inner desolation. Ishiguro builds into the text many images of the hard, brittle, psychic structures of defensive narcissism fragmenting and *dissolving* with the steady rain, the drizzle, a puddle, her tears, his tears and his heart breaking.

The shame of recognition bursts out in his lament of narcissistic rage and disappointment, as happens '...when...grandiose aspirations are found to be discrepant with reality and this discrepancy is apparent to others.' (Mollon, 2002:34).

'At least he [Darlington] had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. ... He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. ...I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that?' (243).

As Stevens struggles to give meaning to a depleted life, he begins to perceive that ordinary people, 'the likes of you and I ...try to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy.' If you do make sacrifices to this end, 'that is...in itself, cause for pride and contentment.' (244). He observes those around him without trying to control them, notices them *exchanging* (13, 245), my emphasis) one bantering remark after another, and decides that the secret of human warmth resides in banter. Banter

might be the start of the two-way, reciprocal exchanges which are part of containment and object relations (RD, NLG) and missing in narcissism (PVH, AFW, U, WO).

Life in 1956 with his new American owner is disorientating. Mr Farraday does not worry about the silver, makes saucy jokes, gives him holidays, use of a car, and freedom. The ageing Stevens, who has neither friends nor family and a tendency to errors like his father, does not see any option other than return to Darlington Hall, although other butlers in the story have retired or gone into business. He will relate to Mr Farraday and his 'strange' American ways through banter.

Bantering, as Stevens recalls near the beginning, might be a skill for which he has some flair (16-7), for although his joke fell flat, he knows the reason. Practising three witticisms a day (130-1) does not sound too promising but with his awakening to human warmth and object relationships, Stevens might find a more solid identity, and contentment in the evening of his days.

Stevens's psychic organisation is now more flexible than the earlier, rigid one of a butler whose behaviour was grandiose, denying, controlling and disparaging. He is a man now capable of self-recognition, insight, and the acceptance of reality. While he has made a circular external and internal journey, there have been important detours in which he has psychically changed. Although he is left with only 'remains' as internal objects, he is planning exchanges of human warmth in a changing national culture, from which he need not be dissociated.

Chapter 7

The Unconsoled (1995)

Ryder, concert pianist:

‘Someone was playing a single short phrase – it was from the second movement of Mullery’s *Verticality* – over and over in a slow, preoccupied manner.’ (4).

Ryder as critic, on Kazan:

‘These failures of nerve are, in my experience, very often associated with certain other unattractive traits. A hostility towards the introspective tone, most often characterised by an over-use of the crushed cadence. A fondness for pointlessly matching fragmented passages with each other. And at the more personal level, a megalomania masquerading behind a modest and kindly manner...’ (202).

Ishiguro’s long and multi-layered fourth novel concerns the extreme demands and expectations of a touring, celebrity concert pianist, Ryder, and how corroding the celebrity culture can be for emotional health. Ryder protects his fragile sense of identity through attributive projective identification and responds to the acquisitive identification of the concert organisers, audiences and hangers-on into him. The parodic use of experimental, writing methods conveys the extreme, inter-personal disconnection and distortions of narcissistic states of mind. Ryder has suffered from early failed dependency and is now overwhelmed by excessive travelling and demands for performances, both off and on the stage. He is approaching psychic collapse.

I shall discuss the themes, art, psychoanalytic theory, genre, setting, characters, plot, irony, inter-textuality, word-play and structure. This is another novel about an artist, this time in the field of modern music – minimalism – from which the novel’s controlling conceit, ‘verticality’, derives. In minimalism, the musical interest has moved from the development of a musical theme over a time continuum to its resolution, linear-style, to repeated, short motifs, focusing on the *static*, unresolved quality of an individual note or note-cluster – its ‘verticality’. In each brief, repeated note-cluster, there are minuscule differences of texture, pitch, tone colour and rhythm. They serve as literary analogues for the continual, repetitious digressions of Ryder’s action over the three-day visit, as he prepares for his concert, responds to his family and celebrity-hunters, and unconsciously re-enacts trauma from his childhood. Ishiguro parodies Ryder’s repetitious, emotional ineptitude and pretentiousness through both the minimalist and musique concrète titles, mentioned throughout: *Verticality*, *Epicycloid*, *Glass Passions*, *Grotesqueries*,

*Ventilations, Globestructures, Option 11, Wind Tunnel, 2 1/4 hours, and Asbestos and Fibre.*⁴⁴ His experimental writing mode realises the repetitiousness, circularity and empty thinking of extreme, borderline narcissism which dominate in Ryder.

Ross (2009: 549-50) captures the emotional quality of minimalist music which permeates Ishiguro's vision of personal and cultural loss:

‘Minimal harmonic movement and minimal on-stage action can together suggest a canyon of emotion behind the stage, a *zone of nameless loss.*’ (my emphasis).

Psychoanalytically, this ‘nameless loss’ and Bion’s ‘nameless dread’ from ‘failures of infant containment’ (1967, 1984:116) lie at the heart of *The Unconsoled*. Grinberg et al (1975, 1985:57, 25) add that this state of mind exists ‘in an area of infinite dimensions’, *without roots or boundaries*. Narcissism involves pathological splitting and projection, and damaged ego-functions such as perception, judgement, attention and anything that has a linking function. Bion (1967, 1984: 93-109) argues that ‘attacks on linking’ destroy bonds with people, as ways of disconnecting from painful emotional experiences to evade facing them, and to obstruct understanding them. Symington (1993, 2006:119) emphasises how the narcissist needs *not to know*, and how attacks on linking damage a wide range of vital mental processes: ‘perception, memory, imagination, thinking, judgment, conscience, emotions and feelings’, essential for the development of verbal thought.

Ryder does not think. He is limited to cycles of self-idealisation and attributive projection in outbursts of panic and anger at the demands made on him. Bion (1967, 1984:40-1; 50-2) develops Segal’s concept of symbol-formation ‘...where the psychotic has activated excessive projective identification, ‘and what should be his unconscious is replaced by the [concrete] world of dream furniture.’ (41). The near-psychotic, borderline patient ‘moves not in a world of dreams, but in a world of objects which are ordinarily the furniture of dreams.’ (40).⁴⁵ ‘He can compress but cannot join, he can fuse but cannot articulate.’ (52). All sense of causality is lost. In the global, fragmented

⁴⁴ Examples of minimalism: Philip Glass (1975), *Einstein on the Beach*, a study of infinity; John Cage, (1952), 4’33” – *Four Minutes Thirty-three Seconds* of silence; Steve Reich (1988), *Different Trains*, music for strings and repeating tape-loop to suggest endless trains, linking himself with his separated parents in USA, conflated with the holocaust trains of European WW2.

world of this touring, performing artist, meaningful links are almost outside the margins of consciousness, and not only with places, family and friends but also with the self. Any attacks on the linking function of emotion, lead to further withdrawal from reality, and an over-prominence in the psychotic part of the personality of links which appear to be logical but are never emotionally appropriate.

Ryder's dominant, emotional, behavioural quality is complacency (see Britton 1998:82-96). Flashes of outrage, injured entitlement and frustration oscillate with an appeasing, placating, excessive reasonableness, so that only tenuous contact with reality is maintained. Britton points to the 'failure to protect oneself from exploitation', the hiding of childhood fears and anxiety, and an unsatisfied need to feel favoured, welcomed and valued by parents.

Ryder's identity is damaged in three ways: an excluding, childhood trauma, compounded by the global treadmill of celebrity performances, including the time-zones and dislocations of jet-lag from months of extended air-travel, and the exorbitant social demands at the venues, expected of him, as a celebrity.

For his part, Ryder believes primarily that he must prove himself worthy to his parents with some stunning performance now that he is at the peak of his form, and therein recover his rightful recognition and love. Even in adulthood, he carries, out of sadistic control, the conviction that he had been responsible for their early bitter discord, (Winnicott, 1958, 1965: 22-3), and that this will restore their love and happiness. Performance, as shown with Gustav, the champion of the Porters' dance, can be abused, for although satiating the voracious demands of his audience, his performance ends in his death.

In this novel, two-way projective identification mechanisms are at work: Ryder splits off intolerable psychic experiences through excessive projection into others (attributive) and responds blindly to others who project into him (acquisitive). He doubly loses his

⁴⁵ 'Verbal thought...appertaining to the depressive position is gravely disturbed because it is that which synthesises and articulates impressions and thus is essential to awareness of internal and external reality.' (41). Ogden, as mentioned, argues for the agency of subjectivity and a self as a creator of meaning.

own identity and re-introjects an idealised, version of the self, as an urbane, sociable communicator and brilliant concert pianist, always in demand. He so needs to be valued, that he recycles any flattering comment, such as the hyperbole, purporting to come from the porter, Gustav.

‘Many people here believe you to be not only the world’s finest living pianist, but perhaps the greatest of the century.’ (11).

Over all, Ryder displays his version of all the behaviours of narcissism to protect his fragile identity: self-idealisation, omnipotence, complacency grandiosity, contempt, control, obliviousness, denial and triumph.

Ishiguro refashions genre so that instead of the usual story of celebrity success and adulation, (say, *Three Days in the Life of X*), he writes a critique of celebrity and the relentless, touring regime of a concert pianist, with the myriad demands of those in the host city. Ryder has been ‘travelling for months’ (147) and Ishiguro, without a mention of jet-lag, provides the experience of prolonged exhaustion and confusion from the different time-zones of air travel, and of body-brain time being out of synchronisation with local time. Ryder is always late and tired. Events and places which belong to night or day, twilight or dawn, overlap and conflate. He is sleepy or cannot sleep. His erratic failures of performance, both professional and personal, are often compared with those of a Kafka figure, such as Josef K. in *The Trial*, who is led in many arbitrary directions, subjected to arbitrary decisions, and is utterly without control. The difference is that Josef K. is helpless but *aware* of his loss of control while Ryder, is not. He is a pianist ‘... *on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*’.⁴⁶

The setting is Middle Europe, the original location of great Western music, but which, for centuries, has been repeatedly devastated by wars, culminating in the world wars of the twentieth century. This has made for fluid national boundaries, comparable to the unboundaried feeling of air travel and Ryder’s endless, global circuits, along with the collapse of boundaries in narcissism that annihilates the otherness of the ‘other’.

The title, *The Unconsoled*, suggests that aesthetically and culturally, music is expected to heal, harmonise, and console a disappointed, disparate, unhappy community, supposedly in ‘cultural crisis’, now that religion is no longer a cohering force. Christoff

⁴⁶ Almodóvar, Pedro, (1988) film – *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.

(Christ-off), the cast-off, ageing cellist, has been expected – impossibly – to regenerate the local community’s cultural life which is being hi-jacked by those who favour the cult of celebrity more than the music itself.

Even the clusters of names, dropped into the text, suggest an exhausted, rootless post WW2 Europe, fragmented and peopled by exiles, refugees and travellers, seeking solidarity.⁴⁷ But this unnamed, Germanic city – any city – expects too much of art and makes unrealistic demands, not only of music but also of the artist, cast in the impossible role of cultural saviour.

A critique of the performance culture emerges as a central theme. Artists are used as cultural ambassadors for speeches, receptions, reviews, press interviews, autographs, photographs, former friends, and for personal favours, intended to enhance the status of the hosts as much as that of the artist. Not only Ryder but other secondary characters are also narcissistically wounded from their lost hopes of great musical careers, fame, and love – even spurious love, dependent on success. As in the previous novels, there is the endless waiting for fulfilment. Having had a recurring dream of hope, personal happiness and its immediate evaporation, Christine Hoffman, wife of the hotel manager and failed composer, remarks:

‘Like many people in this city, I thought it simply a matter of replacing Mr Christoff ...After all, we get older and parts of us start to die. Perhaps we start to die emotionally too. ...I do fear it... that we shall see off Mr Christoff, only to find, in my particular case at least, that nothing has changed.’ (417).

Ryder, the character, is depersonalised, with no given name and no good object in his internal world. The name, Ryder, denotes someone who travels as a passenger – the driven rather than the driver managing his own ego-function and the motive power behind his intentions. He *follows* the set transport routes; he *follows* the red car ahead which is always there, despite his café stop, while Hoffman’s car, driven by him, permanently ‘veers to the left’. Ryder is born along by the current of his particular

⁴⁷ Hoffman, Sedelmayer, Pedro, Saunders, Parkhurst (a psychiatric prison), Horst Janning, Gustav, Pedersen, the Max Sattler (Marx, Stalin and Hitler) monument, Piotrowski, Zanotti, Rozario (surrealist painter), Baudelaire (poet – beauty out of degradation); and places such as Antwerp, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Lucerne, Florence, Vienna, Heidelberg, and Kazimierz.

narcissistic drive-structure, which includes the opportunistic agendas of others, who constantly include 'riders' – extra digressions, to his disintegrating 'schedule'.

Ryder justifies his mission to Sophie early, in his self-idealising, messianic voice:

Sophie: 'How much longer can they expect you to carry on like this? Neither of us are so young any more! You've done your share now! Let somebody else do it all now!'

Ryder: '...the fact is, people need me. I arrive in a place and more often than not, find terrible problems. Deep-seated, seemingly intractable problems and people are so grateful I've come.' ...

'They don't understand the first thing about modern music, and if you leave them to themselves, it's obvious, they'll just get deeper and deeper into trouble. I'm needed, why can't you see that?... You live in such a small world!' (37).

Miss Stratmann, the shadowy secretary, says, unaware of the irony, 'Nobody wants it said that they distracted you' (11). Ryder wants to oblige in limitless ways, not just as a performer but as a vehicle into which the townspeople acquisitively project their desire to be of some consequence, too. As Symington (2006:52) puts it, the narcissist is: 'without the capacity to initiate action ...so he derives this capacity by putting on the emotional cloak of another. ...by being able to sense the emotional tone of the other.'

Ryder functions in time present, unlike the other narrators, who speak retrospectively. He is invited to the city as part of an ill-conceived, civic project to rebuild a sense of community. It involves modish, modern music, which might interest a small coterie but does not unite. Rather, it destroys the international performer, meeting the relentless demands of the celebrity worshippers. Ryder projects his confusion attributively into Sophie. Ryder:

'...my forthcoming address was not only far from ready, I had yet to complete the background research. I could not understand how with my experience I had arrived at such a state of affairs ... I had even pictured myself ...making a striking impression on the company with my easy authority over the range of local issues, producing at least one spontaneous witticism at Christoff's expense memorable enough to be quoted throughout the town the next day. Instead I had allowed myself to be deflected,...with the result that ..., I had been unable to manage a single note-worthy comment. It was even possible I had created the impression of being less than urbane. Suddenly I felt again *an intense irritation with Sophie for the chaos she had caused and the way she had obliged me to compromise so thoroughly my usual standards.*' (115, my emphasis).

Significantly, Ryder has lost his schedule. Unaware that he is drifting from the world of reality and conscious thought, he vents his anger at the delays, projecting blame contemptuously into others but does not effect change himself. He says with scathing aplomb, when it is he who has arrived late and not kept appointments:

‘The world seems full of people claiming to be geniuses of one sort or another, who are in fact remarkable only for a colossal inability to organise their lives.’ (171-2).

Ishiguro’s six secondary character-clusters are rendered by his use of the minimalist principle of note clusters, and are variations on repetition and circularity. Each cluster is a triple, made up of two dysfunctional parents and possible child. They represent different stages of the life-cycle, and as such, might also be seen as oblique versions of Ryder’s own life-trajectory. The hope of musical stardom is presented in the promising, young Stephan, undermined by his parents’ own needs; next, the middle-aged, pretentious, hotelier-failed composer, Hoffman; then the older, drunken, degenerate conductor, Brodsky, and finally, the rejected, old cellist, Christoff. Like serial, minimalist motifs, the relationships in each cluster remain static, despite hopes for change:

- (Mr and Mrs Ryder) and young Ryder;
- Ryder (step-father on tour), Sophie and Boris;
- Hoffman, Christine and Stephan;
- Gustav (grandfather) and Sophie, (his daughter, not talking to Gustav) and Boris;
- Brodsky, Miss Collins and Bruno, the dog (dead);
- Christoff, Rosa Klenner (who has long abandoned him owing to his failure to become distinguished), and nothing.

These musician characters signal Ishiguro’s awareness of circularity, or the re-enactment of unresolved, personal trauma.⁴⁸ Their repeated motifs of loss and disappointment feature in extended monologues in their cyclic, verbal ‘arias’: Hoffman – melodramatic, Brodsky – self-pitying, Christoff – envious, and Gustav – plaintive, each with his different verbal repertoire and tone. Ryder, even now in his early, middle years, is beset by a cyclic phantasy that his parents, who have never heard him play, are, *this time*, coming to hear him.

⁴⁸ The post-Kleinian view of Freud’s *nachträglichkeit* and the French *après-coup*, is that: ‘...the patient’s present behaviour is an expression...in part, of his past as it lives in his internal world now, and his view of the past is partly a statement about his present...’ (Spillius, 2007:20-1).

The overt plot is lean. In this three-day visit, Ryder is to arrive, check the concert hall, rehearse, speak on the culture 'crisis' to the Civic Support Society, perform, and then fly on to the next concert venue. He seems unsure but perhaps he is to reconnect with his possible family and settle on a permanent home to buy. But as the narrative unfolds, the plot question becomes not what his performance will be like or the parents attend, but whether or not he will perform at all.

The action as a whole is hypertrophic and without causality because of Ryder's endless digressions, driven by the repetitious and circular, latent (psychic) 'plot'. Ryder is so haunted by his need to perform as a top celebrity for his parents that he actually believes, in phantasy, that they will soon arrive, magically love him and love each other. He allows himself to be under-rehearsed and beset by the acquisitive, 'celebrity' demands of others by fulfilling the continual favours, private and civic, expected of him. The 'attacks on linking' are realised in the action which is diffuse, with half-completed activities melting and merging, unboundaried, into one another, so that any progress towards self-knowledge, as in the connected, forward progress of the traditional plot, is subverted.

Imagery of disconnection (attacks on linking) and experiences of discontinuous time and space in Ryder's internal world are paralleled in his external world. External time is compressed into three days but expanded by digressions in Ryder's memories and physical visits. Space is often the 'non-places' of transit (Augé, 1995:75-83) – airports, hotels, rehearsal rooms, halls and vehicles of all kinds, as Ryder passively travels *disjointedly* on sectors of flight paths, bus routes, roads, walkways, tramways, alleys, corridors and tunnels. Rooms, roads, tunnels and doors are frequently disconnected or misconnected. They either dissolve or 'jump-cut' filmically into another setting. There is even a brick wall across the road to the Civic Hall, treated as a tourist attraction, but which is also a profound obstruction to Ryder's ego-function. Doors or cupboards often lead back to his hotel in a loop, compressing time, while circular corridors and paths, or the Morning Circuit tram, can extend it.

Inter-textuality adds to the hallucinatory quality of the 'dream furniture'. People materialise, unbidden or Ryder arbitrarily abandons them. The film, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968), to which Ryder takes Sophie and then abandons her, is also

trance-like. The characters float, walking upside down or drift between time periods, as if this were normal. Ryder's internal world, too, is furnished with odd people from the past, and contains hallucinatory routes through broom cupboards that magically cancel distance and bring him back to his hotel room.

The blindness of narcissism is conveyed through dramatic irony as the reader sees Ryder's complacency and the mismatch between his grandiose, delusory assumptions and the sad reality. Failures are conveyed through verbal irony, wit and word play such as puns – 'Helsinki, Christoff', parodies of musicological terms, and evocative verbal allusions like 'Kasimierz'⁴⁹. Echoes of T.S. Eliot's emotionally barren *The Wasteland* slide into the settings. Perceptual distortion is indicated by the grotesque humour of the 'attacks on linking', such as the amputation of the *wooden* leg or the backless cupboard, fixed high on the wall at a *distorting* angle, to view the concert platform.

The novel is structured in four parts after the typical four-movement shape of a classical symphony but in the 'deficit' model, since the themes do not work through to a harmonious resolution. The calm order of the external form is analogous to the rigid narcissistic defences that structure and 'process' the psychic chaos within.

An overview of Ryder's re-enactments

Day 1

Musically, the first movement presents a first and a second subject. Ryder, the first subject, in perpetual motion, arrives late at the hotel from the airport, missing the linkage with the Press and the hotelier. The narrative modulates into the complementary second subject: Hoffman and Stephan, Brodsky and Christoff, with their broken hopes as musicians, and the unresolved, cultural needs of their city.

Ryder, the travelling performer, emphasises the long flight, the exhaustion, and the forgotten, three-day schedule. He appears to be the outsider, too disorientated to recognise his family, Sophie, Boris, a possible step-son, and Gustav, the grandfather.

Ishiguro establishes early how Ryder's protective defences, narcissism (control and denial) were installed. Ryder, drowning in his hotel room, sees a tear in the carpet, fuses

⁴⁹ A musician but also the Jewish quarter in Krakov, near Auschwitz (99).

the hotel room in memory with the sanctuary (psychic retreat) of his childhood bedroom, remembering his parents' ferocious rows, raging on downstairs. Then, telling himself it was *nothing*, he would set up his toy soldiers, (like young Banks, WO) in his playroom, regarding the tear simply as 'bush terrain' to be crossed.

'This discovery – that the blemish that had always threatened to undermine my imaginary world could in fact be *incorporated* into it – ... [was] a key factor in many of the battles I subsequently orchestrated.' (16-7, my emphasis).

The secondary characters begin their demands. During the impossibly extended lift-ride on arrival, Ryder patiently listens to Gustav, the hotel porter, who wants public respect given to the outstanding performances of all porters, rather like Stevens on butlers (RD). Then he wants Ryder to talk with his daughter, Sophie, not having spoken directly to her for years. As a performer, Ryder's replies are courteous and accommodating to others but brusque to Sophie, attributively projecting his refrains of irritation, anger and panic into her, for example, when she tries to get him to inspect a new flat as a home for them all:

'...I know how much you were depending on me',
'I've never depended on you....As far as I'm concerned, it isn't a major issue'.
(88).

Next, there is the performance-hotelier, Hoffman, fussing over trivia: Ryder's room, the journalists or Ryder's viewing his wife's albums of news-clips. Then, in the hotel bar, Ryder sees himself framed in the mirror with Stephan Hoffmann, the hopeful, young pianist and possibly an earlier version of himself.

Disconnections and attacks on linkage are inescapable. Ryder walks to the Old Town, to a meal with Sophie and Boris in her flat but loses her down a dark alley (35). Saunders, an old school friend, arbitrarily slides into view, attacking Ryder for not turning up to tea, reminding him of how he had been ridiculed at school. Stephan materialises en route, in a car, to beg Miss Collins (Mrs Brodsky) to encourage the ex-drunk, Brodsky, to conduct the orchestra. Ryder's surreal, observing self floats into her house, while his body remains in Stephan's car.

Back at the hotel, Stephan wants a piano tutorial, lamenting his failure so far to be an outstanding pianist and therefore, a terminal disappointment to his parents. His cultured mother, Christine, needs vicarious contact with great artists after her disappointing

marriage to Hoffman, the failed composer. Stephan harbours a fantasy of a last surge of brilliance to surprise them, followed by applause and triumph (76), prefiguring Ryder's own waiting for a burst of recognition on Thursday night, culminating in acceptance, acknowledgement and triumph from his cheering parents and audience.

Very late on this first night, the accumulation of new commitments accelerates ludicrously. Having 'lost' Sophie earlier, Ryder, in another time-loop, accidentally ends up taking her to the late-night cinema by the hotel. Significantly, they watch the film, *2001; A Space Odyssey* where the temporal and spatial boundaries dissolve. The action is controlled by Hal, the robot, just as celebrities are 'controlled' by their schedules and hosts, and Ryder's behaviours are unconsciously 'controlled' by his narcissist's psychic organisations. As Ogden (1992:217) argues, (after Segal):

'With limited capacity to distinguish symbol and symbolized, that which is perceived is unmediated by subjectivity (a sense of oneself as a creator of meanings). The upshot of this is that perceptions carry with them an impersonal imperative for action... What the person cannot do is understand.'

But of course, Ryder leaves her before the robot is disabled and the characters free to assert themselves, and arbitrarily drifts to the back of the cinema to meet some senior Councillors debating the unifying role of music in the community. Pedersen explains how *they* had created the celebrities themselves, out of their own need, starting with Mr. Christoff, whom they turned into something of a robot:

We celebrated him, flattered him, made it clear we looked to him for enlightenment and initiative. ... They forget that he never asked to be put in such a position. ... My point ... was, it was *we* who pushed *him*'. (98-9, original emphasis).

Ishiguro ends Part 1 in a surreal mode, highlighting the torment and unreality of unsynchronised time zones and sleep deprivation, with Ryder repeating his complaint about 'travelling' four times. In yet a further time-loop, Ryder is woken up and obliged to go with Hoffman as the surprise guest to a formal dinner, already running two hours late. The principal guest is Brodsky, whose dog, Bruno, has died. In a crescendo of hyperbole and 'dream furniture', Ryder describes himself attending in dressing gown and slippers, and listening complacently to the overblown rhetoric, in the burlesque of condolences for the 'bereaved' Brodsky, their new cultural hope: '... we're all looking to him, depending on him.' (129).

The inflated speeches on the dead dog satirise the disproportionate fawning of celebrity worship. But Ryder, expecting to be smothered by flattery himself (125), remains socially disconnected, since no effort is made to introduce him to anyone. He attempts to give a speech but his dressing gown falls open; he is aware of some clamouring fans but only the opening phrases of his speech which he tries to give twice, but then abandons. It would, he says, have been a humorous anecdote about the mishaps during his last concert in Rome: ‘Collapsing curtain rails. Poisonous rodents. Misprinted score sheets.’ (136), ironically anticipating the concert to come.

By the end, Ryder’s dominant sense is of ‘walking in slow circles’ (125) and he knows only that he is back in the hotel atrium via the back entrance, where he is further hijacked by Stephan. Narcissistically unaware of his own failings, he advises Stephan to assert himself; ‘make a stand’ (148). After listening to some of Stephan’s playing *outside* the closed drawing room door, Ryder slips away to bed.

Day 2

Musically, the second movement is usually slow, lyrical, nostalgic or tender. Here, some intimate family time is planned but as ever, cut short; pre-empted by something else. The core episode concerns Ryder’s past, painful, childhood trauma and his protective defences. Then in parallel, his current family links are ‘attacked’ and progress with causal links, foreclosed.

Ryder sleeps late and is woken by the telephone. The serial, travelling motif continues, with the external and emotional attacks on linkage. Day two is to be given over to Boris and Sophie, and checking the Civic Hall. The same serial, circular episodes follow: anticipation, delay, disconnection, and complacency. Ryder will walk Boris to the bus to their old flat to find his lost toy, and see the journalist and photographer briefly en route, in a café.

Once inside with Boris, Ryder is easily seduced by the journalist, who claims that the café would not do justice to ‘the unique charisma Mr Ryder carries around him.’ (168). Ryder, self-idealising, is swept off to a hilltop location, where, unknown to him, there is the compromising Sattler [Stalin/Hitler] monument. Boris is left in the café with a cake.

Oblivious to their shameless cynicism, Ryder blindly relays both journalists' gushing and abusive remarks about him:

'With these types, you just have to keep up the flattery...Don't stop feeding his ego...I'll bluff my way.... Remember he's a touchy bastard.' (167).

Bizarrely, their tram conductor is 'childhood' Fiona. She tells Ryder how now, just by knowing him as a celebrity, she has been treated like a 'princess' by her friends but his failure to turn up has destroyed her reputation, especially as her group is deputed to look after his parents. She ignites Ryder's memory of his childhood trauma – exclusion with denied love and containment. Fiona had warned him:

' "You'll get lonely...No-one likes being on their own."
"I do. I like it...I do. I just do." ' (171).

Ryder's memories encapsulate his efforts through 'training' to defend himself from the savage arguments between his parents. He must control his mounting panic through delay – by waiting and waiting. At an unconscious level, Ryder attacks emotion by denial and control until any vestige of dependency feelings have been split off. This core episode is a microcosm of all his narcissistic control, delays and deferrals; the last minute wild hopes and refusals to acknowledge disappointment, which are re-enacted throughout the novel as a whole.

'My 'training sessions' had come about quite unplanned. I had been playing by myself out in the lane... – absorbed in some fantasy, climbing in and out of a dried-out ditch... – when I had suddenly felt a sense of panic and the need for the company of my parents. ... – and yet the feeling of panic had grown rapidly until I had been all but overcome by the urge to run home at full speed. ...But for some reason – ... I had forced myself to delay my departure. There had not been any question in my mind that I would, very soon, start to run across the field. It was simply a matter of *holding back that moment with an effort of will* for several more seconds. The strange mixture of fear and exhilaration I had experienced ...transfixed in the dried-out ditch was one that I was to come to know well in the weeks that followed.

I would remain standing for several minutes, fighting off my emotions. ... There was no doubting the strange thrill that had accompanied the growing fear and panic of these occasions, a sensation which perhaps accounted for the somewhat compulsive hold my 'training sessions' came to have over me.' (171-2).

This panic or 'nameless dread' (Bion, 1967, 1984:116) dominates Ryder's emotional life and rigid defences. Was he responsible for his parents' unhappiness because he had *never* performed adequately and therefore not worth 'containing'? He remains

impervious to his ‘retaliatory’, sadistic, attacks on his links to Sophie and Boris, who try to love him. Even after the collapsed concert at the end of this visit, Part 4, he says, walking into the abandoned auditorium:

‘...it was my duty to perform on this evening at least to my usual standards. To do anything less – I suddenly sensed this strongly – would be to open some strange door through which I would *hurtle into a dark unknown space.*’ (518, my emphasis).

With the photo session over, Ryder notices Christoff, the cast-off musician, and together, they struggle down the steep steps on the other side of the hill and drive off to the musicians’ lunch on the outskirts of town. Boris is still sitting in the café but Ryder’s self-idealisation leads him to take seriously his role in solving the ‘cultural crisis’. Ishiguro satirises their pretensions by inventing a parody of musicological jargon, as Christoff declares that people are:

‘...out of their depth. They can’t distinguish a crushed cadence from a struck motif. Or a fractured time signature from a sequence of vented rests.’

A question is raised: ‘...we can’t at any cost abandon the circular dynamic in Kazan?’

Ryder responds with lofty, disparaging omniscience:

‘My own view is that Kazan never benefits from formalised restraints. Neither from the circular dynamic, nor even a double-bar structure. There are simply too many layers, too many emotions, especially in the later works.’ (201).

And he cannot resist repeating Christoff’s hyperbolic praise about himself:

‘...you’re a brilliant musician, one of the most gifted presently at work anywhere in the world.’ (186-7).

Christoff, a secondary character, complements the motif of celebrity, needing to idealise himself, whose protégés, ‘...always found their meanings through me.’ His marriage to Rosa seemed to have hinged only on celebrity: ‘Ah, but if only I had your talent, Mr Ryder! Then Rosa and I, we could grow old together.’ (191). Perhaps aware of the ambivalence of celebrity, Christoff can acknowledge that, although he was no genius, he made his valuable contribution, yet that seemed to be insufficient. The seminar dissolves and Ryder melts back through a small cupboard into the café where the disconsolate Boris is still waiting. An extended time loop.

Together, they re-start the visit to their old flat in a bus full of cake-sharing passengers who idealise a welcome from Ryder's former neighbours. But Ryder cannot identify the flat from the *circular* walkway (213) with its multiple staircases. It is found by Boris. Unrecognised by their old neighbour, Ryder hears the 'other' version of his and Sophie's recent home-life there, with all the shouting, drinking and rows. They hurry away, with Ryder trying to explain his absences and constant travelling to Boris, including his delusion that one crucial performance will secure his celebrity once and for all.

'...I mean that very special one...not just for me but for everyone, everyone in the whole world. ...you see, once you miss it, there's no going back...it won't matter how hard I travel afterwards, it would be too late. Other people, ...they get bitter and sad. By the time they die, they become broken people.' (217-8).

Ryder is moved to reach out and embrace Boris (217), but can only lightly ruffle his hair in the tentative way that all the characters who might have loved, do in this story.

As they leave the flats, a disturbing, 'cyclic' passage follows in which Ryder floats into the role of omniscient observer and describes Boris and Gustav, enacting a battle against the 'thugs' who are the destructive forces, attacking their former home (220). The helpless, weeping children who must be protected are Ryder himself and Sophie, both of whom have suffered childhood, emotional deprivation.

A further series of circular time-bulges follow, as Ryder moves, trance-like, through the convoluted day, anxious about running out of time but powerless to stop its onward current. Sophie simply appears at the flats and is planning the perfect, cosy, family evening at home – dinner and a board game. But there is the Karwinsky reception to go to and Ryder has not organised transport or knows the way or invited his family or been in touch with Miss Stratmann about his schedule. The property Sophie has inspected for their home has a 'flimsy roof', and she is fraught with anxiety about her own 'performance' at the reception:

'I know I can do well at it and Boris, too...and then we'll have something to celebrate when we get back [a family meal]. The whole evening.' (246).

However, Fiona, who has missed her celebrity moment with him at her Women's Arts and Cultural Foundation group, is also at the flats, expecting to present him in triumph to her friends, and must be attended to, as promised. In another time-loop, Ryder visits

her, further delaying Sophie and Boris. Ishiguro critiques the acquisitive smugness of her celebrity-chasers, who in this case, have just come from seeing Brodsky and Miss Collins exchange a smile at the zoo, asserting that the stranger there was *definitely* Mr Ryder. The real Ryder, sitting amongst them, is simply not recognised. Although Fiona gives Ryder several chances to identify himself, all he can do is grunt like a pig and, glancing in the mirror in a hasty exit, believes he looks like one (241). And so Ishiguro satirises the way celebrity figures are treated like exhibits in a zoo, where their private lives and their time are public property.

Sophie, after all the ‘attacks on linking’, is still waiting in the car, gazing *emptily* out the window. Ryder is dozy and cannot take initiative. Finally, at the wheel of Aunt Kim’s car, he passively follows the red car heading out to the countryside in the same direction as the Karwinsky Gallery. All he has to do is follow. When his driving becomes erratic, they stop at a service station café, which Sophie desperately tries to turn into a family time for Boris, whose childhood is fast disappearing. But Ryder spends most of the time on the phone to Miss Stratmann over the missed arrangement to hear Brodsky’s recordings at the Countess’s, their neglect to prioritise checking the Civic Hall, the meeting with the Citizens’ Mutual Support Group, and the arrangements for his parents.

Overwhelmed by the demands on his time, Ryder’s fury gathers; they must go, and he strides out ahead without a backward glance at their distress. His anger explodes and his familiar refrain is projected into Sophie for, ‘bringing chaos into his life’ (see also 179, 243, 245, 256, and 258, 288, 289). Magically, the red car is still in view after their stop but the mountain route to the Gallery is, physically and emotionally, as difficult to navigate as family life.

At the venue, disconnection dominates. Ryder spies an abandoned car wreck. In a brief time loop, he climbs into what he believes is the old family car in Worcestershire, where, as a child, he would seek a retreat, psychic and concrete, from his raging parents. The Karwinsky Gallery is architecturally significant – semi-circular, with unlabelled doors. Once inside, Ryder promptly abandons Sophie, who, he knows, feels socially inept, and becomes preoccupied with the unflattering news-photo of himself beside the Sattler Monument, and wonders why he had been manipulated to go there. He is angry

that he remains unrecognised by the guests and has become a casualty of capricious celebrity-seekers. He projects his wounded narcissism attributively into them:

‘Look’, I shouted, ‘Just for one second stop this inane chatter...and let someone else from outside say something, ...from outside... outside this closed little world you all seem so happy to inhabit.’

‘Look at the way you treat each other. Look at the way you treat my family. Even myself, a distinguished figure, your guest, look at you, far too concerned about Oskar’s art collecting...too obsessed, obsessed with little internal disorders of this thing you call your community, too obsessed even to display even the minimum level of good manners to us.’ (271).

Later, chatting with Miss Collins, Ryder believes that she, too, is locked into a kind of residual, waiting for her estranged husband, Leo Brodsky.

‘...deep down you’ve always been waiting and waiting for your old life, ... you’ve nevertheless looked on it [work] essentially as something to be getting on with while you waited.’ (276).

But she cannot quite agree, and since time has passed so quickly, she prefers to let things end the way they are now, static and indeterminate, separated but not divorced.

Ryder and Sophie leave the gallery. Kim’s car is, of course, abandoned, and attacks on linkage prevail. Along its circular corridor, he chooses the wrong exit door – a broom cupboard – leading to a lower corridor which becomes a tunnel, where the claustrophobic, labyrinthine quality intensifies, and where the aging Gustav struggles with heavy suitcases – the ‘family baggage’. They exit on a side street, up some stairs and back into Sophie’s flat. Distancing himself from the carefully planned family supper, Ryder can only bury himself in his newspaper, complain about the food, ignore the child and the board game set up for three, and project his anger into Sophie – that she had reduced his ‘carefully planned programme to chaos’(289-90). He cuts the evening short and walks back to his hotel room. Another circular day.

Day 3

Musically, this is usually a 3-part dance movement: Minuet – Trio – Minuet. It opens with Ryder and Gustav and closes with Ryder and Gustav and the terrifying Porters’ Dance. The central Trio concerns the dysfunctional ‘family trios’: Brodsky with Miss Collins and Bruno; Hoffman with Christine and Stephan; Gustav with daughter, Sophie

and grandson, Boris. Brodsky and Hoffman give monologic accounts of their static, musical and relational hopes, as if they were repeating dance routines.

Minuet

The perpetual motion and demands for favours continue. Ryder awakes late to find that he has missed breakfast. It is the day of the concert but no arrangements have been made to rehearse on a piano, check the hall or prepare his talk on community affairs. Constant references to where the sun is in the sky are what now guide him as to the time of day, since his normal body-clock has collapsed.

Ryder is in 'icy panic' at being ill-prepared for his performance and remembering nothing of his pieces (328), yet he starts the day by walking with Gustav to research his speech with the comforting, motherly, woman counsellor, Miss Collins. She apparently reassures him, that as an 'internationally recognised genius... A town of this sort would be grateful for virtually anything I had to offer.' (301-2).

Dream-like, he finds an old university friend, there, Parkhurst,⁵⁰ still imprisoned in his fixed role of university *clown*, ritually performing the same, sneering, comic acts when wound up by braying students. He recalls Ryder as:

'...the haughty creature ...using a preposterous tone...pleading piano practice . Then they all make the retching noises together and do their piano-playing in the air.' (305).

'You can't afford to forget your old friends any more than I can. It's right, you know, some of the things they say. You're downright complacentJust because you've become famous! ...What arrogance!' (328).

He, like Ryder, is entrenched in a particular narcissistic character structure. (302-3).

With Miss Collins, Ryder's thoughts turn to performance and Brodsky's resurrection as a conductor. Brodsky is a *puppet* (316), manipulated by the town councillors. He is absurdly dressed and, anticipating his new, delusory self as the brilliant conductor, is courting Miss Collins again, after twenty-two years. Brodsky's garrulous monologue recycles his loneliness, self-pity, and sexual fantasies. He is still locked into a tenuous attachment with his former wife, and she, more distantly, with him. Brodsky has been a drunk for the past two decades, yet although now 'sober', he quickly slides into his old

⁵⁰ Parkhurst is a prison on the Isle of Wight, formerly a military hospital.

routine of criticising Miss Collins. Ryder (again in the role of omniscient narrator), 'recalls' her ritual humiliation at the last minute: the 'fat ankles' and the 'bad shoes'. There was Brodsky's studied indifference to her, and in turn, her deliberate failure to give an immediate response to him, just when he needed it:

'– such shows of indifference had still been the principal feature of any contact between them.' ... '...she had experienced a *triumphant* glow at having stood her ground.' (321-2, my emphasis).

And so the dance resumes: she goes after him this time, agreeing to meet in the Sternberg Gardens later, having imagined that scenario countless times over the years. Another time loop.

But Ryder, without the research, walks back alone to the hotel to practise. When a waiting Boris tries to apologise, Ryder feels, narcissistically, that he might have been manipulated (335) by Sophie's pressure, which would count as a *triumph* and vindication for her. Another circle.

Perpetual motion continues. Time is short; he must have a piano but the drawing room is busy. Hallucinatory 'dream furniture' intensifies, as Hoffman leads Ryder to the staff toilets, indicating the wider (*disabled*) one, into which a piano has been jammed. A childhood experience floods over Ryder. It is not private. He cannot perform. Hoffman drives him out to the piano in the annexe which is *not* linked to the hotel but is a garden-shed on a hill in the countryside.

Trio

En route, the garrulous hotelier's monologue is also made up of repeated motifs from his life story. Hoffman had dreamt that his and Christine's marriage would be like choosing exquisite things from a supermarket. Music to him was like that; you just took it, without the work. He is an '*actor*', like the clown, the puppet, and the robot. Hoffman, unable to compose, had masqueraded for two years, calling it all a misunderstanding, and waited for Christine to see through him. Then, for twenty odd years, he has tried to win her love as a music impresario. He aptly remarks, 'I performed my role as her husband quite magnificently.' (350). Hoffman is a self-dramatising, narcissist; abject, conceited, verbose and posturing.

He only wearied her, however. She came to life only when, for example, sharing her passion for Baudelaire's poetry with a pianist. Hoffman tries to retrieve the love of Christine by using Ryder, the celebrity, as a theatre prop, urging him to view her press clippings and unaware of his own triviality and smugness.

Finally alone, rehearsing in the shed, Ryder's only thought is which piece could not fail to move his parents, ironically settling on *Asbestos and Fibre*. The sad section magically serves as funeral music for Brodsky, burying his dog slightly downhill, still lamenting his musical decline, and that he never was this 'nobody' (363). He projects his contempt into Miss Collins, who, he claims, left him to waste her life (as a counsellor). Ryder goes further downhill in all senses, merging into a stranger's funeral, where he is oddly fêted with whatever food can be found, and then, on a whim, just as oddly jeered at by the celebrity chasers. Unperturbed, Ryder is led away to be driven back by Hoffman to the concert hall. It is late afternoon.

Again, en route, Hoffman reveals he has projected his own hopes of musical genius into his son, Stephan, but has already written him off as talentless and an embodiment of Christine's mistake in marrying him. The young Stephan mirrors the younger Ryder and like him, is also locked into a controlling, psychic drive to astound his parents with his virtuosity. As concert promoter, Hoffman's hopes for Christine's love are riding on the success of Ryder's playing and Brodsky's conducting, which will vindicate him entirely, as he glows in reflected glory. Hoffman launches into a hyperbolic, delusory fairytale of Ryder's parents' arrival that evening in a horse-drawn carriage, repeating the pattern of the long wait and the last minute triumph.

Hoffman's delusions of applause become more and more ludicrous with the cumbersome question and answer, electronic scoreboard, as if music were like a competitive sport. Notably, the words are to be read out by an *actor*, emphasising the stagy contrivance and ulterior motive of the evening. Ryder, more soberly, worries that his parents could leave; one might have a seizure but once he has started to play, '...my mother and father would be united in astonishment...' (386), but might put on their old, calm, show behaviour, kept for visitors. It is now growing dusk.

Close to the concert Hall, Hoffman halts the car at the brick wall blocking the road; figuratively, a massive attack on linking. Ryder tries to walk the rest of the way but loses himself, wandering in circles in narrow alleys, ending up opposite the Hungarian Café, where he is rescued by Gustav. This external journey replicates his many psychic journeys that culminate in a psychic wall, because to confront it, might bring unbearable reality and catastrophic disappointment.

Minuet

In the café, the Porters' Dance is about to begin. Ryder is welcomed enthusiastically by porters and gypsy fiddlers and, yes, he will mention the porters in his speech. Gustav is a celebrity performer among porters and his dance performance is the climax to this caricature of celebrity. He too, is at the mercy of the demands of his supporters, as they project their insatiable expectations into him. Only Boris senses the destructive implication of Gustav's increasing pile of heavy suitcases and his desperate efforts to please. This scene prefigures the destructiveness of celebrity for Ryder and performers in general, when Gustav weakens and collapses, later to die. The motherly café-owner's wife, like another Miss Collins, gives the exhausted, deprived Ryder the cosy, back room where he sleeps on a sofa in foetal position (409).

Early evening. The concert hall remains unvisited.

Day 3-4

Musically, the Finale is often *presto* (fast), revisiting the main themes, building to an exciting climax and ending with a dramatic flourish – in this case, one of utter bathos, both comic and poignant.

Ryder awakes, thinking it is morning. His psychic condition is precarious, as he relives his panic and his terrifying vision of utter abandonment, 'hurtling into outer darkness'. His physical disorientation is outdone by his increasingly bizarre perceptual capacities and theatrical 'dream furniture'. With only one hour to curtain up, Ryder heads across Main Square to the performers' entrance. As he walks, the cultured Christine Hoffman joins him to speak of emotional aridity, of fleeting moments of possible tenderness (416-7), and the difficulty of 'dismantling' the rigid mechanics of her dried-up relationship with her husband.

Reaching the *half-circular*, curving corridor, with its rows of unmarked doors, steps, and staircases, he finds an anonymous dressing room where the dying Gustav is resting. But Ryder is possessed by the delusion of his parents' imminent arrival, which slowly dominates all other forms of awareness. His emotional panic, loss of control and despair are repeated (413), and projecting his rage into Sophie, and Boris, he contemptuously throws away his gift to which Boris was so attached – ironically, the DIY solutions book.

Later, driving Hoffman's car, Ryder still must pick up his waiting family, but the reader has been warned; this car 'veers to the left'. He is persistently delayed, side-tracked – 'de-linked' – by critical, physical events, which represent psychic ones. He meets a drunken Brodsky, fallen from his bicycle, with its wheels twisted and no longer going round in circles. Brodsky needs an amputation. A hacksaw is found and applied to the wooden leg, as a grotesquely comic version of attacks on linking.

Ryder's old school-friend, Saunders, materialises, mirage-like, with camping gear and has a distressing memory of being *abandoned* on holiday by his father. Although his mother had acted as if it were a joke, Saunders was bereft, and even now, his knees tremble and he feels tired and faint. When Ryder sees the crushed metal bike, he too, thinks of warring parents and wonders if he 'has caused this wreck' (439). It is all the fault of Hoffman who gave him the whisky, claims Brodsky, projecting responsibility into another. Then he repeats his refrain five times about waiting for Miss Collins over the years.

Ryder's phone-call to Sophie is clearly a repeat of many similar ones (444-7) where he expresses his potential for tenderness to her and she him. Their efforts are constantly attacked by his persecutory feelings about underperforming for his parents:

'...I've still not had a second to inspect the concert hall. ... My parents, they're coming tonight. They're coming at last, tonight! ... They expect everything from me....They'll probably turn on me tonight...Or my parents might leave.' 'But don't you understand... This isn't just any night...if they turn on me tonight... it will be...it will be...' (444).

Sophie reasons patiently:

'From all over the world you phone me to say the same thing. ... a few hours later... you're calm and very self-satisfied.'

et they try again. Ryder promises, 'I won't be travelling much longer now.' They will find a comfortable house together. (446). But enclosed in narcissism, he omits the primary point of the call, that Gustav, her father, is dying.

As Ryder approaches the concert hall 'at an angle' (435), he hallucinates, hearing his parents arriving, fairytale fashion, in 'glittering triumph.' (398):

'I heard...the beat of hooves, a rhythmic jingling, the rattle of a wooden vehicle.' (435-6).

Finally, at the Hall, it is young Boris, with a briefcase, who calmly deals with his mother and the dying Gustav, while Ryder, in an odd reversal of roles, is demanding attention and reassurance. Sophie has left her reconciliation with Gustav 'too late' and is still entrapped in her atrophied relationship with him. She has to get Boris to do her talking for her, with only the pointless gift of a winter coat, by way of linking and reconciliation before he dies. Ryder has no empathy, no linkage, and slips out. The auditorium and piano remain un-inspected.

Further along the half-circular corridor, he finds Hoffman, posing, actor-like, before the mirror, wearing make-up, his hair glistening, practising his speech. He has no idea where Ryder's parents are. A tailor is still fitting Brodsky's suit, with Brodsky assuring another mirror that his wound is 'nothing'. Neither mirror-gazer can 'see' his posturing as others might. With fifteen minutes to go, Hoffman is dismissive about his son's talent while Ryder is flattering.

Ryder disconnects himself from the other performers by viewing the stage, up more steps, from a high, detached perspective, in a backless cupboard *at an angle* to the stage – in his current state of mind, effectively 'off the wall'. This seems entirely reasonable to him, observing smugly that 'everyone hurried to make way for me.' (476).

Stephan begins to play but Hoffman and Christine walk out of the auditorium, abandoning linkage with their son. Stephan exits but is pushed back on stage to try *Glass Passions* again. There is shock, exhilaration and cautious applause. It is a triumph, and, thinks Ryder, might help save the community (476-80) but the envious father sneers that it is a 'hilarious pantomime.' (480). The local poet recites '*Brodsky*

the Conqueror' which, as pretentious doggerel, evokes laughter and is deemed a 'cabaret', (487).

As Brodsky starts to conduct *Verticality*, Brodsky, with his wooden leg amputated, his ironing-board crutch and flapping trouser leg, is a parody of a performer and delivers a 'circus act' (491). He soon crashes forward, from the vertical to the horizontal, face down on the floor, and the evening collapses in flamboyant disarray. Ishiguro suggests that a disturbed inner world of perverted celebrity has been unveiled. Brodsky has ignored the tonality, melody and structure:

'...to focus instead on the peculiar life-forms hiding just under the shell. There was a slightly sordid quality ...something close to exhibitionism...' (492).

In Miss Collins's view, Brodsky is nothing but a 'charlatan'. Your wound is 'the one true love of your life', and as to the community, 'you care nothing for their lives.' (499). As far as she is concerned, he can go alone, 'to some dark lonely place.' (500). This debacle is also the demise of the anticipated triumphs of Hoffman with Christine. Projecting his fury attributively, Hoffman attacks Ryder for not attending to Christine's albums. Christine is appalled; can feel only a wave of sympathy but cannot touch him (508). Even his abject, serial apologies to her become *theatrical* melodrama, as he gazes at himself in the mirror, hand to brow, in another travesty of the performance culture:

'No talent, no sensitivity, no finesses. Leave me, leave me. I'm nothing but an ox, an ox, an ox!' (507, original emphasis).

Ryder himself does not even get on stage. There is no community speech, no tribute to porters, no piano performance, no parents to stun, no applause, no triumph. Impasse.

Much later, somewhere in another office, Miss Stratmann makes it clear to Ryder that they had checked all possible transport and hotels for his parents but found nothing. All Ryder can do is to plead:

'...surely it wasn't unreasonable of me to assume they would come this time? After all, I'm at the height of my powers. How much longer am I supposed to go on travelling like this? Besides, I heard them...in the woods.' (512).

He collapses in a chair and sobs.

Miss Stratmann, like a consoling, primary schoolteacher, tells him another fairytale about a happy visit his parents once made there long ago. And when Ryder recovers, oblivious to time passing, he departs ready to perform but finds the auditorium oddly deserted and the chairs tidied away: ‘... before me now was just a vast, dark, empty space’, like Ross’s ‘zone of nameless loss’ (Ross, 2009: 550), mentioned earlier.

Among the guests who have stayed on for breakfast in the conservatory or on the lawn, Ryder is already unrecognised and a ‘nobody’. Despite his willingness, he clearly has been dumped, ignored by the waiters and the remaining patrons. They, as cultural and breakfast consumers, are enjoying their food, ‘greeting one another in delight’. For Ryder, the scene resembles a ‘reunion’ (523), with an atmosphere of mutual celebration. They had been here before and perhaps their misgivings all along, about this concert, had been realised. Ryder is dispensable; another celebrity will no doubt be found (522). Another local figure to represent cultural values will be selected, although Christoff is not quite it. The town may or may not be in cultural crisis. The essential point is that the group of citizens in the town believe it is and have set up their celebrities because they need them. They still, with all their disappointments, remain unconsolated, and as in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1956), will continue waiting.

And now, as at the beginning, Mr Ryder, the concert pianist, tells his story as an outsider, with little memory of his family or connections. It has become clear that the whole narrative is to do with his fragile and troubled relationships as an insider, from which he is severely disassociated, and about which he has very little insight.

He can say, protected by his complacent grandiosity:

‘... As ever, my experience and my instincts proved more than sufficient to see me through. ... After all, if a community could reach some sort of equilibrium without having to be guided by an outsider, then so much the better.’ (524).

Gustav, his probable father-in-law, whose death-bed he has recently left, is dismissed with:

‘I had only known him for a few days but he had been very kind to me, assisting me with my bags and so on.’ (525).

Ryder follows Sophie into the tram, at a distance, where he, in turn, is dismissed.

Sophie: 'Leave us. You were always on the outside of our love. ... On the outside of our grief, too. ...Go away.' (532).

With no Sophie and Boris, no new home, no parents and no performance, dimly aware of his own tears, he watches the closeness between her and the sobbing Boris. He asks the stranger beside him – an electrician and *connector of circuits* – if he had seen his mother that time she had visited. He thinks he might have. But Ryder, now an isolate, is on the Morning Circuit tram, stuck on a circle line, safely enclosed in the blindness of narcissism, chatting, eating breakfast and vaguely aware of having to be at an airport en route to Helsinki. He can say, heading for 'hellsinky' in a downward spiral:

'I could feel my spirits rising even further. Things had not, after all, gone so badly. Whatever disappointments this city had brought, there was no doubting that my presence had been greatly appreciated – just as it had been everywhere else I had ever gone.'

Ryder makes a last attributive projection into the stranger:

'And with the train running a continuous circuit, if the two of us were enjoying our conversation, he was just the sort to delay getting off until the next time his stop came around. ...I could look forward to Helsinki with pride and confidence.' (534-5).

His psychic trajectory is also circular and his narcissistic organisation just as entrenched as at the beginning. Ishiguro's writing strategies, especially the repetition-motif of minimalism, have embodied the repetitious circularity so characteristic of unresolved trauma from childhood failures of dependency. Ryder is beset physically and psychically by persistent memory-fragments of exclusion, compounded by the relentless celebrity-circuits through different time-zones, on tour as a concert pianist. He has lost his identity: the sense of himself as 'a historical subject and creator of meanings' (Ogden, 1992:217), through excessive attributive projective identification and the acquisitive projections of others into him. He lives, always 'waiting' in a borderline world of narcissistic phantasy.

Chapter 8

When We Were Orphans (2000)

Christopher Banks:

‘But when I said before that Osbourne’s words had somewhat offended me, I was not referring to his raising the matter of my “interrogating” him all those years before. [But] ...that I had been “such an odd bird” at school. ... my own memory is that I blended perfectly into English school life. During even my earliest weeks at St Dunstan’s.⁵¹

...I recall observing a mannerism many of the boys adopted when standing and talking – of tucking the right hand into a waistcoat pocket and moving the left shoulder up and down in a kind of shrug ...so that none of my fellows noticed anything odd or thought to make fun. ...I rapidly absorbed the other gestures, turns of phrase and exclamations popular among my peers, as well as grasping the deeper mores and etiquettes prevailing ...’ (7).

This passage signals early that Christopher Banks, obsessed with having connections, reveals his own desperate need to fit in, be connected and belong, but fears ridicule and exclusion.

After the study of disconnection, projective identification and repetition (U), Ishiguro explores a more primitive form of connection after trauma, adhesion, and then, the long struggle to arrive at a modest sense of identity and self-knowledge. Again, Ishiguro takes up the idea of fragmentation in terms of socio-historic, and psychic displacement in the international (WO), global (U), and domestic spheres (RD, PVH, AFW, NLG).

Although Banks appears confident, he is blind to his oddity, isolation and need to copy others through the narcissism of *adhesive*, rather than projective identification. This is ‘sticking *to* an object as opposed to projecting *into* it.’ (Hinshelwood, 1991:215).

Ishiguro, on the first page, has Banks assert that he takes pleasure in his own company, and by implication, his adhesiveness, as he admires how,

‘even in... such a great city [London], creepers and ivy are... found clinging to the fronts of fine houses.’ (3).

Meltzer (1975:289-310), working with Bick, identifies the importance of skin contact in creating a sense of three dimensions, and finds a form of identification, *adhesive*

⁵¹ St Dunstan’s is an Institute for the Blind. A dominant trait of narcissism is emotional blindness and failures of inter-subjectivity.

identification with its two dimensionality, as the most primitive form of identification. Hinshelwood (1991:215), summarising, states that if the first object and first introjection with the baby fails or partly fails, the earliest stages of development are weak, and normal introjective or projective identification cannot function properly, 'because of an absent sense of internal space' and a lack of the 'holding' capacity in the ego to accommodate it. As a consequence, the baby relates to objects in a shallow, two-dimensional way.

As I shall argue in the case of Christopher Banks, this creates difficulties of relating to the 'other' with attentiveness and true reciprocity, and leads to a weak sense of identity. Meltzer et al (1975: 223-244) argue that, within each dimensionality – two, three and four – the subject has a characteristic grasp of time: circular, mostly circular, or linear and forward looking. With three and four dimensionality, relationships with others become possible, depending on the extent to which narcissism is active. The fourth dimension, of time and memory, connect with Ogden's concept (1992: 98-9) of the 'historical subject' – someone who has integrated the past with the present and takes responsibility for it.

Banks's narcissism is essential for his survival. The name, Banks, suggests a defensive wall, an 'embankment' and metaphor for the narcissism needed to keep unbearable feelings of abandonment outside the conscious mind. Banks has endured his parents' bitter relationship: their failure to talk to each other and to him; their unpredictability; his mother's constant preoccupation with her 'cause'; her exhilaration with Uncle Philip and cold hostility towards his father. He had much affection for his mother but remembers that he often had to struggle to get her attention and that she had a rather frightening authority. Banks sensed his father's despair, false cheeriness and vague exclusion.

Friendship with his young, Japanese neighbour, Akira, became the source of reliable, sustaining connectedness up to the age of nine. Each boy had some insight into the other's anxieties and behaved with affectionate reciprocity until it ended. For Banks, this end was the triple trauma of two separately disappearing parents, followed by the calculated abandonment by Uncle Philip. Orphan-hood was followed by his removal to a new country, England.

The historical setting of the novel is the flux and disruption in Shanghai, China, and the London during the uneasy inter-war years, 1930-1937 and after. This period saw the emergence of Nazism in Europe, the invasion of China by Japan, then in 1958, the Britain after WW2, faced a disintegrating Empire. These tensions are reflected in the corresponding relational and psychic tensions in the characters in this novel. Banks's childhood up to the age of nine has been spent in the expatriate, International Settlement in Shanghai, where there was disquiet over certain British companies that were calmly trafficking opium into China and paying off local warlords to enable distribution.

In domestic terms, Banks's family is 'displaced', living in a Settlement of transitory, working exiles in Shanghai, using a corporation-owned house with occasional lodgers, including 'Uncle' Philip. The journey to England for the homeless orphan, Christopher Banks, is arranged by the father's firm, and leads to an unknown Aunt, and thereafter, to successive institutions: public school, Cambridge University, and the London of gentlemen's clubs and 'connections', where, as a gentleman of private means, he becomes a gentleman detective, intending to find his parents and the 'criminals' who kidnapped them.

The ironic subversion of genre is one of Ishiguro's powerful, narrative strategies, as proposed in my critical framework. Here, the traditional, English detective story, such as those of Arthur Conan Doyle, with the imperturbable, gentleman detective, Sherlock Holmes, is undercut. Ishiguro recasts this model in its deficit, failed form. Traditional detectives typically operate in a world which believes that crime is controllable and is solved by rational deduction, swift action, the magnifying glass, reliable clues, and reliable train timetables, ahead of the perceived 'incompetence' of the local police. The action takes place in a secure world of closed communities; the crime is committed by a single criminal or gang leader, so that he can be found guilty and punished, leaving the rest of society uncontaminated.

Ishiguro locates his detective fiction in the real, violent, unpredictable world: the shifting residents of the International Settlement, some of whom are uncomfortable with the drug running of the British and the Chinese war-lords, or ill at ease with the unknown Chinese districts of Shanghai, and anxious about the invasion of China by the Japanese.

Banks follows a course far removed from rational deduction. His is a world in which time has little meaning and where, unperturbed, he follows a narcissistic, emotional logic of his own. The ‘crimes’ are not those that might interest the police nor is his magnifying glass of any use. The failures are the human, emotional ones of love, betrayal, moral narcissism, envy, and sexual jealousy that rupture the connectedness of being.

Ishiguro also sets up a dark, inter-textual parallel with Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860), another journey towards self-knowledge involving hopes, disappointment and the painful acceptance of reality. Both Pip and Banks are orphans who find themselves in London as young gentlemen of private means, only to discover that their assumptions about money and love have been narcissistically misplaced. The money – the basis of it all – is an outcome, in both cases, of some appalling inhumanity and degradation that has been suffered by the donors. There is Sarah, a shadowy ‘Estella’, also an orphan, and the ironic allusion to *Wuthering Heights* and its stormy passion, which conveys the thinness of Banks’s romantic attachment, abandoned right at the point of elopement, as if he, himself, could not risk further abandonment.

J. G. Ballard’s *Empire of the Sun* (1984) provides a further layer of latent inter-textuality with the WW2 setting: the boy and his parents in the International settlement, the wounded, Japanese soldier and the dead water buffalo, although Ballard presents the reader with a more concrete, brutal and visceral external world.

The surface plot question in the detective genre is ‘Who dunnit’ – who captured the parents? The suspense and excitement of clever deduction and swift action, leading to a brilliant unmasking of the criminal who ‘kidnapped’ the parents and caused his removal to England, does not eventuate. Instead, the action is delayed by two decades and then evaporates, as Banks, in his blind, grandiose mind, entertains the vainglorious notion of ridding Shanghai of all warmongers threatening peace in the West. The climax, where Banks would find and seize the criminal and rescue the parents, collapses in hubristic failure, for it is he who has to be rescued in the war-zone by the Japanese ‘enemy’.

Some days later, Banks is taken to meet the ‘criminal’ in a guarded house – the dreaded Yellow Snake is none other than his Uncle Philip. He is a bathetic figure, with his

theatrical gestures, and his petty emotional, moral and financial compromises. In a reversal of the normal expectations of crime fiction, he offers his gun for Banks to kill *him*. The facts about 'Uncle' Philip and the absent parents are now made clear, and Banks abandons him in contempt. The rest is silence. A last chapter, dated 1958, two decades later, serves as an epilogue, with Banks, circular-fashion, alone and back in London. It reveals the truth about his mother, his self-recognition, his ageing and his acceptance of his impoverished emotional life.

The psychic plot beneath is more to do with what has been 'dun' to Banks. His earlier history involves the triple trauma of sudden orphan-hood in losing his father, then mother, then Uncle Philip, followed by dislocation to a strange country, and a life spent largely in institutions. Years later, back in Shanghai, there is more trauma, and Banks's breakdown in the active war-zone. Time in his two-dimensional mind is 'mostly circular'. Was he truly loved by this mother? Was Uncle Philip really a benign presence? Who is really the lost object, Akira? The physical collapse of the structures in the badly-shelled war-zone mirrors Banks's own psychic collapse. Where, now, is his emotional home and his home in the external world? Not until he finds his mother and can integrate the realities of his fractured history over a long process of mourning and acceptance, does he achieve self-knowledge.

Trauma, as mentioned already, drastically damages the sufferer's ability to symbolise. Segal (1957, 1981:52-8) argues that it inhibits flexible thinking which can transform inassimilable material into something more modified, so that the sufferer can acknowledge change, accept what has been lost and allow for mourning to take place. Banks, with his cumulative trauma, weak, adhesive mode of relating to others, is susceptible to concrete thinking. His narrating voice, with his 'forensic-speak', is pedantic and de-emotionalised like that of a police report. Words like 'interrogated' (5), 'witnessed' (123,117), 'investigate' (80), 'ascertained', 'surmised', 'briefing', (91), 'hypotheses', (98) and 'counsel' sit oddly in the context of personal relationships and dialogic exchanges.

In Banks's earlier language, Ishiguro shows that selective memories have merged in unconscious phantasy. His memories 'blur' (67); the schooldays are 'foggy'; and he comes to 'shape' a painful memory (87). In a highly controlling narcissistic phase, he

speaks of ‘restructuring’ (186); and in the next desperate phase in the war zone, he fuses his inner and outer worlds in ‘a strange sense of unreality’ (218). Then, at the height of his ‘forensic’ examination in the house opposite *blind* Yen Chen’s, he declares things are ‘no longer very clear’, with ‘cobwebs’ (272-5). By the epilogue, two decades later, with reality accommodated, Banks can speak with sober clarity and wry humour. The shift into more flexible language shows flexible thinking and even a critical awareness of the sterile language of an old letter from his lost, phantasied wife, Sarah.

Ishiguro engages in play on the controlling conceit of the word *blind* and its extended sense of shutting out the light of perception and the unseeing, self-enclosed state of narcissism. Young Jennifer’s blind game with Banks, prior to his departure to Shanghai, anticipates his limited perceptions there, where he, in a burst of ‘magical’ thinking, seizes blindly on blind Yen Chen’s house as the landmark for the house holding his captive parents. Connectivity between self and ‘other’ is represented by the twine that should link the slats in the window-*blinds*. Connectivity includes the ‘containing’ eye contact and dialogue, or not, of the parental figures in all the novels.

Other ways of seeing are found in the use of the mirror. Here, Banks tries to make connections at the gentlemen’s club but finds himself talking to a mirror reflection, in which he sees the back of a gentleman regarding him – a relation of surfaces and an image of two-dimensionality. Banks’s emblem of detection, his magnifying glass, cannot help connect or ‘read’ clues, and to emphasise his peculiar blindness, he needs a second magnifying glass to read the maker’s hallmark on the first.

Spatial settings, such as buildings covered in clinging plants, are metaphors for psychic adhesion. The smashed up tenements and resulting ‘tunnels’ in the War-zone represent a kind of psychic, labyrinthine underworld, where Banks sees the emotional wreckage of his family and finds his injured friend ‘Akira’. The metaphor of view in the epilogue features Banks and Jennifer, now considerably older, looking down from a hill, from which a clear perspective of the realities of their lives can be seen.

The narrative is structured fairly chronologically. It begins and ends in London and in between, there are flashbacks within a seven-part, external framework, ranging from 1931 to 1937, with the final section in 1958, twenty-one years later. Banks narrates

retrospectively: firstly from the viewpoint of the young London gentleman of means, recalling his childhood in Shanghai, his schooldays and adult life in London to 1937; then the disturbing period in Shanghai, 1937; and finally, back in London, 1958, retired, and ruefully reconciled to living within time.

Ogden (1992: 214-27) formulates four distinct phases of symbolic dysfunction, which, along with adhesive identification and elements of narcissism, provide a framework for examining Banks's traumatic experiences of exclusion and abandonment. I have summarised Ogden's four modes as follows:

- Healthy exchanges between reality and phantasy collapse in favour of fantasy which becomes as powerful, dangerous and gratifying as reality, causing an inability to differentiate external reality.
- This may collapse in favour of reality, which is used as a *defence* against fantasy but strips it of vitality and shuts down imagination.
- Reality and fantasy become dissociated – split to evade unwanted meanings.
- Extreme separateness makes experience so unbearable that extreme defensive measures are employed – meaning to experience is no longer given. 'It is not so much that fantasy or reality is denied; rather, neither is created.'(215).

The novel opens in London, with Banks just down from Cambridge University, hoping to make connections, yet Ishiguro, on the first page, has him assert that he takes pleasure in his own company. Banks has determined on a career in crime detection (to find his parents) and reviews his earlier life. In the interests of clarity, I discuss the action in chronological order – with childhood – and demonstrate how his narcissistic states of mind and adhesive modes of relating originated and then played out in the rest of the novel.

Childhood in the International Settlement in Shanghai

Christopher Banks's early relationships concern cumulative trauma, involving his mother, father and 'Uncle' Philip, at a time when non-verbal communication is most significant. During his early years, he is vaguely aware of the dissonances between his parents: his mother's violent mood-swings, his father's sense of defeat, the accumulating trauma of his parents' silences and unhappiness together, and finally, their sudden separate disappearances. His mother is remembered affectionately but as

preoccupied with her moral cause and Uncle Philip who is somehow connected. She is moody, explosive and demeans his father. Yet he remembers her laughter, the gentleness around the eyes and that she was considered beautiful.

There was her exhilaration associated with her anti-opium meetings, which Uncle Philip attended on the apparent understanding that his father would not.

‘My mother’s mood would invariably lighten, as though the meeting had swept away every one of her cares.’ (62).

There was, too, the odd atmosphere at breakfast on those mornings, with Mother regarding Father, his voice ‘infected by a forced joviality’ (80), almost with disgust. Afterwards, she, singing and laughing, would ride higher and higher on the swing, but it was not until he performed headstands to catch her attention, that she would come down and play. Similarly, on campaign business at Uncle Philip’s office and garden, her ‘mood would lighten visibly’ (74), and afterwards, they would laugh and play chase. Those times without Father were vaguely apprehended by the child but not articulated.

Young Banks, without enough approval and affection, recalls his failure to impress her with his improved running and, as Likierman notes (2001: 150-1), exhibiting ‘the frustration, envy and grievance, characteristic of the narcissistic mode of relating.’

‘I still recall my fury at her, and my sense that I had suffered a grave injustice...[and]... pushing into the wind with all my might, my mother’s laughing presence beside me; the rustling of her skirt and my rising frustration, (196).

He remembers, aged three or four, her humiliating his father most painfully.

Outside his study:

‘... She suddenly stopped and became very still. My first thought was that I was about to be scolded...It was not even unheard of for my mother to switch moods abruptly in the midst of a harmonious exchange ...I fell silent in readiness for just such an explosion...’ (86).

They burst in upon his father who was slumped across his desk, sobbing in helpless despair at being unable to change their life without staying on with his company, Morganbrook and Byatt, which traded opium to the Chinese. Father is humiliated and admits defeat in front of them both.

Christopher still recalls her scorning self-righteousness, living as they did, in one of the firm's houses:

‘Are you not ashamed...How is your conscience able to rest while you owe your existence to such ungodly wealth?’ (60).

And as he listens by the dining room, he hears Father's tone of ‘terrible resignation’ commenting: ‘It's too bad! I'm *not* Philip.’ (70, original emphasis). At these times, young Christopher feels abandoned, even by his amah, and like the young Ryder (U), seeks sanctuary, ‘psychic retreat’, with his toy soldiers in his playroom.

His mother was indifferent to the brave stances Father had tried to take up to support her (82-30), and ignored his modest pride at being known as one ‘not to back down’ and called ‘honoured hero’ by the Chinese dock workers. He felt he was betraying his father when he chose to go along with her and Philip to the races, instead of staying with Father. Yet it was to Uncle Philip rather than his father that Christopher appealed, as a bewildered boy looking for a thinking mentor, saying:

‘... Sir, I wonder if I might *copy* you sometimes. ...just so that I learn to do things the English way.’ (77, my emphasis).

He remembers Father's comments that his mother, with her strict standards, had made him a better man, ‘Someone...you'll one day be proud of.’ (84). This is the same wish years later, that Banks has internalised in relation to his adopted daughter, Jennifer:

‘...how will Jennifer ever be able to love and respect a guardian who she knew had turned away from his most solemn duty when the call finally came? She'll come to have only contempt for me...’ (146).

Yet, in England, he does abandon her in a boarding school and depart for his mission in Shanghai, justifying himself with his delusory comment:

‘Don't you see how very urgent things have got? The growing turmoil all over the world. I have to go!’ (146).

Christopher's most solid relationship is with Akira, his young Japanese friend, through their often wordless exchanges. Akira, too, fears Mother's angry authority, her contempt of Father and their bouts of ‘not talking’. The boys share anxieties and become a source of understanding and comfort to each other. When Akira was to be sent back to Japan to school, Christopher never forgot Akira's look of gratitude, as he quietly passed him rotten logs to throw into the canal. (100 & 104).

It is Akira who explains when Banks's father goes missing, that children are like the twine holding the slats of the blind together – they ought to be integrated with their parents rather than adhering to them. He tries to assure Christopher that the reason the parents are *not talking* is that Christopher is not English enough; he disappoints them. Christopher should copy being English to bring his parents together. Perhaps this dysfunction is Christopher's fault; a recurring theme in the novels.

Together, they fantasise about the imagined terrors of the Chinese quarter, where giants with swords indiscriminately lop people's heads off or the unknown territory of the servant's room and the horror of his dark magic, turning hands into spiders.

‘We'll join arms again, ...we do it together like that, then we'll be safe, nothing bad can happen to us. Nothing at all.’

Terrified but together, linking arms, they enter his room.

These are the same powerful, internalised resources of affection and loyalty which sustain Banks in later life, as no others do, and anchor him when he breaks down in the war-zone many years later, when he ‘finds Akira’ again in the wounded Japanese soldier.

As Christopher's home life disintegrates, he leans towards a world of phantasy as in Ogden's first mode (above). Akira gets Banks to play fantasy detective games which restore his ‘kidnapped’ father, who, they fantasise, had noble motives for disappearing, is alive, respected, living in great dignity and comfort, and will gloriously return. Banks is also silently absorbing his mother's cool, functional exchanges with the police and is heartened by her brisk assurances that the very best detectives, headed by Inspector Kung, are on the case. It is not surprising that these games, and his mother's confidence in detectives, determine Banks's choice of career and life mission.

As a child, Banks has registered the wordless, emotional currents about his fragmenting family through tone of voice, instinct, atmosphere and presentiment. By the end, he is shocked by his mother's final and sudden loss of control in screaming abuse at the Chinese gentleman in the chauffeur-driven car, later known to be the warlord, Wang Ku. Now, his Uncle Philip, whom he has tried to copy, is no longer the same man; his touch and manner have changed. He takes Christopher to the Chinese market district,

where some great horror rose from the pit of Christopher's stomach, just before he was abandoned there. He 'knew' as he later ran home alone, 'that the thing had finished long ago.' (123). Mother was gone, the maid was sobbing and the front door bolted.

England, St Dunstan's boarding school

Bereft and isolated after this traumatic shock, Banks, aged nine, is escorted by Colonel Chamberlain to a new country, England, where he moves on to an unknown aunt, then to an institution, a boys' public boarding school. Narcissism becomes his essential, psychic protection and in the adhesive mode. Phantasy now dominates in the dialectic with reality, as in Ogden's first mode (above). Banks cannot accept that, according to the Colonel, he had been the 'snivelling little squirt' (28) on the boat journey over.

Alone with his aunt in Shropshire, he re-enacts the detective, rescue-father games with Akira in Shanghai but with himself playing both parts. Although these were stopped by the aunt as too much 'introspection', they continue as part of Banks's internal-object world, until he returns to Shanghai to find the parents, about twenty years later. It is astounding to Banks to learn that at school, he was considered a 'miserable loner' and part of 'a matching pair' with Morgan. Banks projects the criticism attributively as '...simply a piece of self-delusion on Morgan's part' (184-5).

The epigraph shows how adhesive and two-dimensional Banks has become at school. With the copying, goes an inability to see other dimensions beneath literal, surface meanings, and hold them together in his mind. He does not understand jokes – banter being slightly baffling, as with Stevens (RD) or grasp the sympathetic remarks of others:

'I had not been at all upset. In fact, it had become a matter of some irritation to me that my school friends, for all their readiness to fall into banter concerning virtually any other of one's misfortunes, would observe a great solemnness at the first mention of my parents – indeed, any close kin... [who] had by then ceased to be of any great inconvenience to me.' (6).

He does not 'see' that his friends teased him as a 'Sherlock' and that the birthday gift of an old magnifying glass, excessively wrapped in layers of paper, was really a joke (8-9), and he has to pretend to enjoy the laughter. Some years later, when he is being insulted at a wedding and the groom's brother tries to apologise, Banks has been blind to it anyway:

‘Those drunken oafs...I’m sorry, old chap, it must have been awfully upsetting.’ Banks replies, ‘Well, really, I think you’ve got the wrong end of the stick. They didn’t mean anything. In any case, I certainly took no offence. A fellow’s got to take a little joke sometimes.’ (141).

The London gentleman

On the first page (3), Ishiguro foregrounds Banks’s adhesiveness and solitariness as a young gentleman of means in London. Banks admires surfaces, especially the clinging plants on the exteriors of buildings. He values the shabby, Victorian furnishings that make him appear established and well-connected and ‘copies’ the style with a Queen Anne tea service. Christopher’s language has started to take on the restricted, formulaic style of the detective report, as a way of keeping anxiety at bay. Reality, in a literal, concrete form (clues and evidence) as a defence, now dominates, as in Ogden’s second mode, above. Banks takes pleasure in his own company, walking, and reading in the British Museum, and establishing his career as a society detective.

A school acquaintance, Osbourne, takes him to a gentlemen’s club but despite ‘following’ his behaviour, Banks finds himself adrift, expecting to meet the leading detectives of the day, with one of them, as a mentor, taking a ‘fatherly’ interest in him. In spite of copying Osbourne, the evening does not go smoothly. Banks, in a burst of self-idealising, narcissistic contempt, thinks, in line with Likierman’s comment on grievance, earlier:

‘I have every right to despise the people around me; that they were, for the most part greedy and self-seeking, lacking any idealism or sense of public duty.’ (13).

On the fringe of the crowd, he sees an older man in a mirror and himself reflected behind him.

‘I noticed a silver-haired man of perhaps seventy smoking with his back to the room. It took a moment for me to realise he was gazing into a mirror, and by then he had noticed me looking at him.’ (13).

This mirror image conveys his two-dimensional mode of functioning by showing him in a relationship of surfaces, and in a deficit version of Winnicott’s idea of the mother’s ‘mirror role.’ (see Ogden 1992: 208-9).

Without turning, the man understands Banks’s grandiose ambition, ‘to be the great detective of the day...to root out single-handedly all the evil in the world.’ (16). But

Banks does not 'see' the gentle irony and nothing can help him modify his inflated idea of his 'calling'. Later, Banks, working on the Mannering Case at a grand house, is found lying on his front with his magnifying glass, by the swimming pool, searching for clues, but four weeks *after* the murder, as if time were irrelevant.

This anticipates Banks's approach to his ultimate project, the literal rescue of his 'kidnapped' parents from two decades ago. His notion of time is still 'mostly circular', and although his plans are not in a realistic time-frame, researched, or even thought *about*, Banks still thinks that there will be hard evidence available:

'On the contrary, it's never too late to ...pick up the scent.' (33).

Banks, the gentleman detective, soon believes himself to occupy a place in one of the fashionable, London sets and, as in detective stories, is ready for the romance in his life. It has an uneasy start. He meets and is fascinated by Sarah Hemmings, a fellow orphan and an adhesive pursuer of distinguished celebrities, with her shoulders 'hunched like a bird of prey.' But she by-passes *him*. This is felt as a deep, narcissistic wound, which Banks admits, he never fully shook off, since she seemed unaware of the 'self-evident brilliance' of his investigation of the Mannering case.

Banks is also talking about himself when he views her as a 'terrible snob of a new sort', yet still determines to impress her with his detective triumphs and what he believes to be his developing 'renown', (as in AFW). Oblivious to the irony of his behaviour, he savours his moral narcissism in:

'My intention was to combat evil – in particular, evil of the insidious, furtive kind – and as such, had little to do with courting popularity within society circles.' (21)... 'cleansing' the public at large of wickedness.' (30).

He imagines that he seeks fame through solid achievements rather than social connections.

Banks is not displeased to find himself picked out by Sarah after he has become famous. She, too, is narcissistic and they share some sympathetic exchanges on being orphans. He is not seriously deterred when she exploits him by insisting on being his partner at a socialite dinner, on the grounds that she should be married but will not waste her life on someone 'morally worthless' (46). She pays attention to the guest-of-honour, Sir Cecil

Medhurst and his moral platitudes about rooting out the evil in the East. And by the next time she and Banks meet, she has married him and is about to depart for Shanghai. Banks and Sarah, Lady Medhurst, have orphan-hood, social ambition for connections, and moral narcissism in common, although Sarah is by far the more ruthless. Banks's adhesion and his protracted aim to find his parents lead him to follow her to Shanghai within the year.

Banks's need for social connections – Lady Beaton's charity, for example, and his natural sympathy for orphans – has led him to adopt an orphan of ten, Jennifer, and give her a home and education. But this Uncle Christopher is as contradictory as his own Uncle Philip had been. Banks has insufficient internal space for parental love to develop into full dimensionality. Part of him wants to offer stability, while at the same time, another part casually abandons her, just as he himself had been abandoned. Suddenly, it is imperative that he attend to the case of his parents in Shanghai, and will be absent *indefinitely*. Although Banks says that things there will have changed, he does not believe it. Time for him is 'mostly circular', and Akira, after all, he decides, will want to show him around and they will go to all the right places *together*, re-enacting their early friendship.

Before he leaves London, Banks is surprised at the lack of gushing gratitude for his detective work. He self-idealises in stale rhetoric about defeating the serpent of evil in German Rhineland and the Far East. Copying Akira's childhood metaphor in which children are the twine holding the slats (the parents) of the blind together, he positions himself, heroically, as the twine that holds society together, so that morality does not disintegrate. Banks, in full narcissistic register, complacently predicts his success in Shanghai as a 'triumphant memory' for Jennifer.

The Return to Shanghai

From this point, Banks slides further into Ogden's third mode of functioning, in which reality and phantasy become dissociated. Banks is split in order to avoid thinking and deny any understanding that might be unbearable. 'Reality and fantasy [phantasy] no longer inform one another and instead, stand isolated in a state of static co-existence.' (Ogden 1992:222). The motif of blindness constantly inflects the action, from his time at St Dunstan's School, and London, where he is blind to the manipulation or the

ridicule of others, to Jennifer's 'blindness game', prior to his departure for Shanghai, and to the false lead to the blind actor's house in the war zone.

In the Settlement, Banks is smugly contemptuous of those who get into his 'view' or obstruct his will, despite his own failure to see clearly. Then, unaware of his own complacent, grandiosity, he says:

'Here...at the heart of the maelstrom threatening to suck in the whole of the civilised world, is a pathetic conspiracy of denial ...which has turned in upon itself and gone sour, manifesting itself in the sort of pompous defensiveness I have encountered so often. And here they were, the so-called elite of Shanghai, treating with such contempt the sufferings of their Chinese neighbours across the canal.' (162).

He is just as blind to the piles of desperate Russians and Chinese refugees, sleeping on the pavements, and the absent, hotel dance-band players, fled or killed, have been replaced by porters, *copying* their playing: 'They do a fair impersonation, don't you think?' (181). Blind to the irony, Banks condemns the hotel guests, who are viewing with opera glasses, the spectacle of the Japanese shells crashing into Chapei, as they would a fictional charade.

Banks now moves in a world of his own fiction, oblivious to the absurdity of his inflated, self-appointed role of world expert in crime detection. His manner becomes condescending and peremptory. He ignores the British Consul's advice not to meddle with crimes that are the province of the Chinese, but Grayson, in the Municipal Council, thanks to Banks, is now bent on preparing a lavish reception, with a band, for the 'new-found parents'. The controlling Banks expects the officials in the Settlement to supply his every requirement for what he calls his case of 'great magnitude', despite the Japanese invasion. He demands an appointment with the so-called Yellow Snake, the communist informer, under Chinese protection.

Banks believes that from time to time, he glimpses Akira's face in the crowd and before long, comes across Sarah with Sir Cecil, in a dingy gambling den. Sir Cecil is losing money, is drunk and abusive of Sarah. The expectations of the job have been simply unrealistic. Sarah is excessively cheery but hints at 'rescue'. Then, in a conservatory, suitably covered in adhesive, 'trailing vines', Banks notices that amidst the uproarious

laughter of the other guests, Sarah is alone and, while appearing to laugh, is in fact, weeping.

Another house in the French Concession is, he believes, his former home but 'restructured' with a new façade. Here too, the climbing flowers and creepers, adhering to the walls, emphasise his adhesion, as he omnipotently re-structures the place to fit his own phantasy, fully expecting the house to be returned to him. As in the other novels, time has barely moved: Sarah will be there as his wife, along with Mei Li, his amah of twenty-two years ago, and Jennifer. Banks tracks down the ancient Inspector Kung in a doss house, ravaged by alcohol and opium. Kung finds him an address from a kidnap case in 1915, which Banks magically determines to be that of his parents.

The romantic thread in the detective story develops when Sarah asks to meet Banks alone. She has plans in place to abandon Sir Cecil the following day, and urges Banks to go with her to Macao. She is the strong, clear-thinking organiser, with 'a huge authority' for him (212), and he adhesively agrees. She, feeling as an orphan that love and respect have to be earned, has tried to find self-worth by doing 'enough to deserve it' but has recognised that her time with Sir Cecil has been wasted. Somewhere there, Banks finds relief and excitement. Authoritative Sarah seems rather like his lost mother and could become a wife. There is a possibility of forward development.

And so he turns up at the rendezvous for the fast exit. They kiss, he notes, like copying a couple on a cinema screen. There is a celluloid unreality to this scene, since Banks is dissociated from the two entirely uncoordinated projects in hand. Contrary to the reader's expectations, the elopement, as a turning point in the plot, collapses. Although Banks is ready to depart with Sarah, he also has the chauffeur standing by with a map and instructions to the house in the war-zone, opposite blind Chen's, which, decades later, 'contains' his missing parents. Internal time is already winding backwards. Now Sarah, along with Jennifer, has been abandoned in an unconscious, sadistic impulse.

The War Zone

Ogden's fourth mode of dialectical dysfunction, in which meaning to experience is no longer given, emerges. 'It is not so much that fantasy or reality is denied; rather, neither is created.' (Ogden, 1992: 223). Banks enters the war-zone where the physical chaos

parallels his psychic chaos. He grandly demands assistance from the soldiers, passes through a tunnel and the holes in the brick walls of shelled tenements, known as 'the warrens'. Machine guns and rifles are exploding as he stumbles, first through the Chinese lines, then to the house, taking his bearings from the East and West Furnaces in the hellish, blasted remains of Chapei.

He records the horrors that he sees and smells but cannot think about or feel their reality. Banks is aware of the scuffling of rats, prolonged screams and gibbering of dying soldiers, of the stench of suppurating wounds and rotting corpses, including that of a water buffalo. As Ogden (1992:223) notes, '...perception remains raw sensory data that is not attributed meaning. Meanings are not denied, they simply are not created.' Delusory narcissism slides into 'dream furniture' and psychic collapse, as the 'warren' becomes both a re-enactment of the run home after abandonment by Philip and an Underworld in which to re-unite with the past, so that a 'strange meeting' with Akira seems perfectly normal.

The hallucinatory moment occurs when Banks, at the limit of the Chinese lines, alone and lost, comes upon the body of a Japanese soldier, wounded but still alive. For Banks, it is Akira, the lost object of childhood. He pointlessly inspects Akira's wounds with his magnifying glass for clues. The 'Akira' soldier leads Banks behind the Japanese lines to the house opposite blind Chen's, both repeating the childhood mantra, 'the two of us together' (255), 'together, arm in arm.' (267).

Only hubris can follow. Inside there are no parents; no gang leader; just three dead Chinese and a little girl, trying to comfort a dying dog. Ishiguro has Banks record the scene with the logic of forensic precision but devoid of appropriate emotion: limbs blown off, charred flesh, and Banks assuring the child that he, as a detective, is just who they need; the perpetrators will not get away. In a meaningless burst of detection, Banks inspects the dead mother's remaining stump of arm with his magnifying glass. It looks 'particularly clean...the bone protruding out of the flesh was a shiny white, almost as though someone had been polishing it.' (272).

The plot resolution is unheroic and indeterminate: the guilty not found, nor war in the East restored to order. By now, Banks has begun to laugh and then to sob. In an ironic

twist, *he*, as a foreign civilian, is the one who must be rescued by the Japanese and handed over to the British. 'His' Japanese soldier is reckoned to be an informer and likely to be shot as a traitor. The Colonel in charge mentions Dickens, *Wuthering Heights*, Beethoven and Mendelssohn and believes that war is necessary if Japan is to become a great nation as Britain once was. 'The entire globe' he declares in a tone of both triumph and sadness, 'will be at war.' The dissociated, other part of Banks, operating in circular time, now wishes to be taken back to Sarah at the rendezvous in the gramophone shop, to elope.

After a rest, Banks has another view on 'the case'. As a concession to his insistence, the British arrange a meeting in the French quarter with the Yellow Snake, kept under Chinese military protection. But there follows for Banks, the narcissist's shame of recognition, starting, spatially, with the bleak, shadowy unreality of a barely-lit, guarded mansion, like something from a film noir. Inside, the dreaded Yellow Snake is none other than the banal Uncle Philip, who had been tricked into informing on one of his anti-opium colleagues.

The reality about Banks's 'kidnapped' father is even more banal. Having run away with his mistress, he died of typhoid two years later, in Malacca. Uncle Philip and Diana (Banks's mother) had colluded in not telling young Christopher. Wang Ku, appearing to agree with stopping the Opium trade, was colluding in it. Diana, outraged and insulted, actually hit him, and this had to be avenged. She refused to marry Philip, who had her kidnapped to become Wang Ku's concubine at Hunan. Banks feels the darkness of annihilation envelop him:

..'an odd feeling came over me that behind my back the darkness had grown and grown, so that now a vast black space had opened up there.' (290).

The money paid would be channelled through Morganbrook and Byatt, and under Philip's management, go to maintaining her boy, 'Puffin'. Although Wang Ku had Diana whipped in front of dinner guests as 'taming the white woman' (294), her only interest had been that her son was doing well in England, otherwise she would have killed herself. Philip explains, 'Your real benefactor all these years has been Wang Ku.' (293).

Just as in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, where Provis, alias Magwitch, the convict, had been Pip's benefactor all along and thought of Pip as a son, Uncle Philip has done likewise with Christopher. The expectations of all four have come to nothing:

'You've despised me all these years, Puffin, the closest thing I ever had to a son, and you despise me still. But now do you see how the world really is? ...your comfortable life in England...a celebrated detective? A detective! What good is that to anyone? Stolen jewels, aristocrats murdered for their inheritance. Do you think that's all there is to contend with? Your mother, she wanted you to live in your enchanted world forever. But ... In the end it has to shatter.' (294).

The brittleness of Banks's hard, narcissist's psychic structure has to shatter in the face of sordid reality. Now, instead of a dramatic arrest or a shoot out or a revelation in the library of a country house, Philip, in a theatrical gesture, offers Banks a gun to shoot him with, but to play-act it, as if he, Philip, had accidentally shot himself in a tussle. Banks pushes him off; it is too absurd.

Bathos of a more shabby nature follows as Philip finally comes to the core of the mystery; the narcissistic wound, that Diana did not see him as her new husband. Revenge was easy. Philip confessed that it excited him: 'All those years I lived vicariously through Wang.' (296). He too, has lived in kind of vicarious adhesiveness.

Banks begins his journey towards self-knowledge. Expectations and assumptions, driven by trauma and narcissism, stray easily from reality and can lead to a lifetime's disappointment. As Banks quietly leaves, he does not oblige Philip by shooting him, but then, as Philip admits, there are plenty of others who would like to perform that role.

Epilogue

The final chapter is set in 1958 and serves as an epilogue, twenty-one years after the sobering revelation of the betrayals and compromises that made up the reality and complexity of the past. Perhaps the years have given Banks space for mourning and time to reintegrate the adhesion he has 'projected' on to others and see himself as he truly is.

Not until 1953 does Banks find his mother, Diana Roberts, depleted by dementia, in a nursing home in Hong Kong, where he seeks forgiveness for his neglect.

' "Forgive Puffin? Did you say forgive Puffin? Whatever for? "

Then she beamed again happily. “That boy. They say he’s doing well ... Oh, he’s such a worry to me. You’ve no idea.” ’ (305).

She sings quietly to herself; the same song he remembers her singing years ago on the swing, laughing as he had tried to gain her attention. He had been dearly loved all along.

The mood is autumnal and elegiac, underlying Banks’s sense of time wasted and the failures in love and relationships. But now Banks has self-knowledge enough to come to terms with a life that has become less two-dimensional. He thinks tenderly of his mother’s accepting state of mind in Hong Kong, seeing no reason to take her away from there, even after her death.

‘She did seem, somehow, contented. Not happy exactly. But as though the pain had passed.’ (306).

To Jennifer, he is also tender, saying that he does worry about her, using the very same words as his mother had in expressing her love for him. He regrets wasting time on grandiose projects, instead of being with her growing up. Banks and Jennifer stand *together* on a Gloucestershire hill, enjoying the view as they talk thoughtfully, putting both their lives in perspective. He and Jennifer have grown to support each other with reciprocity and understanding, since both have travelled through their separate ‘dark tunnel’. There has been the long silence, then the long journey to Hong Kong to find his mother, and Jennifer’s attempted suicide after her failed love affair. Banks can say:

‘I am grateful for Jennifer. We understand each other’s concerns instinctively, and it is *exchanges* like the one that frosty morning which have proved such a source of consolation for me over the years. But then again, life in the countryside [near her] might prove too quiet.’ (310, my emphasis).

He sadly notes her shabby boarding-house lodgings, her loneliness at thirty-one but encourages her hopes for another start. His is the ‘sadness’ of Ogden’s historical subject (1992:89) involved in mourning and the renunciation of narcissistic omnipotence and the unknown, sadistic impulses that went with it. Things cannot be magically restored or one’s longings and expectations fulfilled as once expected. He has suffered multiple losses, been abandoned and abandoned others, and endured a psychotic episode. He has found, late in life, three and four (time) dimensionality.

He ruefully admits that he knows several women who would have him to lunch but nothing more. He thinks back to the brief intimacy with Sarah many years ago, lost, along with his delusory mission in Shanghai. He is aware of her death in the Far East after internment by the Japanese. He thinks of her marriage with her French Count and dared to ask her friend if Sarah had seemed happy. She seemed so. He doubts it, since she, too, was an orphan, with a 'mission' that could not be evaded, 'chasing through long years, the shadows of parents' (313), and committed to abolishing the evils of the world. Her single letter in 1947 had been brisk and unemotional, admitting her disappointment in him but appreciating his 'mission' had to come first. He is even critical of her empty, clichéd language, now that he is no longer locked into the arid world of forensic jargon.

Controlling his rheumatism is his main objective these days. Aware of his ambivalence, he sometimes feels a kind of emptiness and is tempted to find a cottage near Jennifer. He is no longer driven by destructive narcissism – omnipotent, controlling, denying and blind to the priorities of others. He is no longer adhesive in conforming to the expectations of others with apparent authority. Banks, quietly aware now that he could sound smug or foolish to others, muses that his real home might after all be London, circular-fashion, where he likes to stroll in the parks or re-read the reports of his successful cases in old newspapers at the British Museum Reading Room. He needs to sustain a little, rightful self-regard. As a historical subject, he has a wry grip of reality, a firmer identity through exchanges and connections with his mother, and Jennifer in the country. While he can acknowledge her separateness, he is essentially alone, without mature love or the mutuality of close, object relationships.

Chapter 9

Never Let Me Go (2005)

Kathy H.:

‘...I’d grabbed a pillow to stand in for the baby, and I was doing this slow dance, my eyes closed, singing along softly each time those lines came around again:

“Oh, baby, *baby*, never let me go...”

...something made me realise that I wasn’t alone, and I opened my eyes to find myself staring at Madame framed in the doorway. I froze in shock...she just went on standing there, sobbing and sobbing, staring at me through the doorway with that same look in her eyes...like she was seeing something that gave her the creeps. Except this time there was something else, something extra in that look I couldn’t fathom.’ (71).

Kathy, now thirty-one, is recalling her first experience, at about eleven, of being made to feel repellent and pitiable in some strange way, by the school director. At some level, she has sensed the deeper significance of the incident, although not fully ‘registered’ it.

After the adhesive narcissism of Banks and his slow recognition of reality over a lifetime, Ishiguro turns to young people, un-parented, and bred as clones for body parts and premature death. This time, he explores life-giving forms of restorative narcissism to recover identity in childhood and adolescence, but which also awaken the human drive for relating to one another, connecting with origins, and arousing hopes for futures.

Now that Kathy H. knows that, as a clone, she has no mother and is programmed to be sterile, she can link this incident (see epigraph) with the swift disappearance of her song tape. As she is now about to retire as a carer and start donating her organs, in the full knowledge and acceptance of her approaching death, she reflects on her short life.

In this novel, Ishiguro devises a fictional England in the late 1990s, in which a sequestered, ghost culture of biotechnology and human cloning for organ transplants is split off from the parallel, mainstream culture. Mass-produced human clones are bred to provide the mainstream human beings with human organs to satisfy their preoccupation with staying young and living longer. The prevailing assumption is that ‘normals’ can try for unlimited deferrals of death and extend their life-spans indefinitely. The clones, imagining that they might secure a deferral of death for just three years, cannot, for theirs is a compressed life without its middle years.

Inside the clone world, young Kathy. seeks to know exactly what their lives are for – love and work as their literature studies have suggested? The outside world seeks *not* to know about them at all. Ishiguro exposes the ethical dilemma through the humanity and relational nature of Kathy H. in her memoirs, and her route to self-knowledge.

He also takes up the sub-theme of replication, consumerism and disposability. In Part 1, the clones, with their videos, tapes and books which might be second-hand or remaindered or recycled, are only vaguely aware of themselves as copies but by Part 2, this is explicit but not understood. Here, the human clones engage, as copies, with imitative adhesiveness in parallel with the commercial replication of media products such as posters and TV programmes. By Part 3, they are allied with a hulk, marooned in a swamp, with loose balloons, drifting away into the ether, and empty, disposable, plastic bags, blown up against a fence-line.

Psychoanalytically, Symington (1993:34-7) draws on the concept that although an infant is born physically, ‘it does not necessarily mean it has been born psychologically or emotionally.’ This is the defining concept underlying all of the novels but foregrounded here, with young Kathy and her cohort caught between the two poles and set up for short lives by some unknown bureaucracy. Symington argues that if another object other than the self *can* be chosen as an object that is emotionally alive and a ‘source of creative, emotional action’, it becomes the ‘life-giver’.

Kathy H., along with the other donors, does not have a historical past: she is born without parents, is not even related to the dead, has no family name, cannot reproduce, and has no future. She has just a variable space between birth and giving the last of the four organ donations when she is at the peak of physical condition. What preoccupies the whole novel, given the absence of parenting, is what connectivity, what quality of object relationship do the young people form in the face of such relational impoverishment and narcissistic fragility?

I have argued that the humanist model of progress toward self-knowledge and emotional fulfilment over a life is found only in varied ‘deficit’ models as proposed in my critical framework. While the trajectory of NLG accommodates self-knowledge, a whole, fulfilling lifespan is not available. The reader, positioned outside Kathy’s story, sees,

through dramatic irony, that the *destructive* narcissists are in the mainstream world, dehumanising the young people by relegating them to the zone of technology, thereby making their humanity and their deaths (murders) unthinkable.

Ishiguro, in *NLG*, takes up the restorative side of the defence of narcissism, with phases of adhesive identification and disavowal as part of the developmental process. Waddell (1998:163), writing on the development of the personality in adolescence, argues for a constructive form of attributive, projective identification. She comments on Emma, in Jane Austen's humanist novel of the same name:

‘... individuals may investigate who they are by projecting aspects of themselves into others and relating to them there, whether with acceptance or rejection.’

And although Kathy H. cannot be an ‘Emma’ or a ‘Fanny Price’, she is able to develop. She ‘splits off’ her absence of parental dependency, denies it, lodges it through attributive projective identification into others in her cohort, addresses it there and becomes the *one to be depended upon* and something of a life-giver. This capacity is seen first informally at school, in her increasing empathy with the humiliations of others at risk of exclusion; then at the Cottages, where she is sensitive to betrayals of trust or understandings; and finally as a full-time carer, looking after anxious donors in their various recovery units, and aware of her own imminent death.

Unlike the more pathological end of the spectrum of narcissism, where, in the previous novels, distance, self-enclosure, self-sufficiency, blindness, grandiosity, smugness, and the annihilation of the ‘other’ dominate, the model Ishiguro has his character, Kathy, adopt is a more developmental and restorative one. It complements Freud's (1914: 98-100) necessary self-regard which includes object choice; and Klein's core ‘good object’. Grunberger (1991: 224-5) writes of the infant being:

‘... loved and understood, being like a restoration to the fetal and first narcissistic state or *regaining the value* connected with this state. Any narcissistic restoration achieved with the aid of people around them, provides a subsequent foundation for hope.’ (my emphasis).

The psychoanalytic theme of this work is underpinned by images of ‘holding’, implied by the title, *Never Let Me Go*. This song, first misunderstood as a lullaby, expresses a yearning to be *held* – a cry for continued anchorage and connection of both a physical

and emotional kind. Winnicott (1960, 1965: 37-55), with his concept of dependency and the 'holding environment' sees the mother figure as the central 'other':

'The main thing is 'physical holding', based on reliability, consistency, the sense of a 'three dimensional space relationship in which time is gradually added' ... and in this way each infant is enabled to build up a 'continuity of being' [and] 'memories of maternal care' ... 'the important thing... is that the mother, through identification of herself with her infant, knows what the infant feels like and is able to provide almost exactly what the infant needs in the way of holding and the provision of an environment generally.' (44-54).

The kinds of holding one might consider are those of skin and touch, gaze, and holding-in-mind. Freud's (1923:26) observation that the ego is a 'bodily ego', necessary and integral to the sense of self, suggests that the loss of body parts must result in a corresponding terror of psychic annihilation.

Bick (1968, 1987:114-18), observing babies, went further, crucially linking skin contact with providing the sense of psychic coherence and identity for the infant. The first step for the baby is to gain a concept of a space that holds things, by experiencing an object that holds the personality together:

'...in its most primitive form the parts of the personality are felt to have no binding force amongst themselves and must therefore be held *together* in a way that is experienced by them passively, by the skin functioning as a boundary.'

The nipple in the infant's mouth provides this by filling the mouth and provides the first physical and psychic introjection. The capacity to cohere psychically and introject at all, she says, must also depend on an:

'...*internal* function of containing parts of the self. This is itself'... 'dependent upon the introjection of an external object experienced as capable of fulfilling this function' [a loving parental figure]...

'Until the containing functions have been introjected, a concept of a space within the self cannot arise.'

'The need for a containing object would seem in the infantile, unintegrated state to produce a frantic search for an object – a light, a voice, a smell or other sensual object which can hold the attention and thereby be experienced, momentarily at least as holding the parts of the personality together.'

Images of holding become the dominant motif throughout the novel, connecting pivotal parts of the action, starting from the initial one of Kathy's holding the 'pillow' baby and ending with the image of Kathy and Tommy holding each other in a current of water, which is too strong for them. Even Hailsham School, as an institution, and architectural

metaphor, is a weak 'holding environment' in the way that the later Cottages and bedsits are not.

Ishiguro signals the clones' weak identities metaphorically early in the novel, when Kathy, as Ruth's Carer, comments on the recovery centre:

'Everything, the walls and floors – have been done in gleaming white tiles. ...It's almost like entering a hall of mirrors. Of course, you don't exactly see yourself reflected back loads of times, but you almost think you do...you can feel this pale, shadowy movement all around you in the tiles.' (17).

They have never experienced the loving gaze of a mother's eyes at the beginning of their infant development, when mother is still undifferentiated from the self, so that baby sees *herself* mirrored in mother's eyes (Winnicott, 1967, 1971, 1980:130-138). Ideally, on her way to finding the separate self, the same becomes true of the gaze of the father and siblings. In NLG, 'siblings' of a sort do exist. Rhode⁵² mentions twinning and sibling behaviours, functioning as the parent replacements, during the transitional phase to adult identity.

Ishiguro's interest in deficit models of human identity has again led him to subvert traditional genres. Besides the autobiographical memoir, he recasts the English boarding school and the science fiction genres in NLG. From Enid Blyton to J.K. Rowling, the pupils typically exist in an enclosed space, without parents to control or interfere. They have autonomy and resourcefulness, even wizardry, to establish their independent identities. Instead of the power, agency and self-determination typical of such characters, Ishiguro's Kathy H. has a very human story of ultimate *powerlessness*, despite her lively hopes and phantasies.

Autobiographical memoirs of ordinary people, such as Margaret Forster's *Hidden Lives* or Alan Bennett's *Untold Stories*, concern close-knit generations of families and friends with long, solid, unglamorous relationships that give meaning to life. They have networks. The clones at Hailsham, however, do not rebel, break out and start new lives outside. They have no access to the mainstream world: no relatives, no training and no money. Their health and education are watched and controlled; all forms of art are

⁵² Personal communication.

encouraged, although they are never sure why, and they easily become susceptible to the trends and rumours of the monoculture at Hailsham.

Ishiguro sidelines science fiction, with its futuristic settings and super-magical machinery, with the power to travel and see beyond earthly time and space. He sets the novel, more chillingly, in the recent past, as if the biomedical cloning of humans were already a resource, quietly normalised into the sphere of public health. The optional, 'ethical' experiment, run by the Hailsham directors, to see if their clones, given their childhoods, had souls – revealed through their art – was never completed.

The surface plot question is whether or not Kathy and the others can have the ordinary, human aspirations of long, fulfilling lives, with both careers, and love, even a three-year deferral for love. The plot, at the unconscious level, has Kathy gradually coming to understand the 'unthought known', as formulated by Bollas (1987:278). As Kathy says, of the pillow incident, it was 'unregistered' at the time. But then, she is aware of *waiting*, waiting for something more sinister – what they really are for, why 'special', and why the facts of their de-humanisation and premature deaths have been suppressed.

Symbolisation of a dialectical, thinking nature with Tommy (Ogden 1992:217) is what young Kathy discovers to be the main route for seeking the truth – talk. Kathy H., herself, is reliably consistent in her search for what is truthful. Her narrating voice is a student-like, chatty idiom; youthful, intimate, inquiring, fair-minded and colloquial, for example, 'mind you', 'okay', 'like' and so on. She reasons with Tommy:

'So I'd say Miss Lucy had it about right when she said...we'd been 'told and not told'. And what's more, now I think about it, I'd say what Miss Lucy said to us that afternoon led to a real shift in our attitudes...if anything, the donations went back to being a subject to be avoided. ...This time round it wasn't awkward or embarrassing any more; just sombre and serious.'
'It's funny,' said Tommy... 'None of us stopped to think about how *she* felt, Miss Lucy herself...The idea that the guardians had differences between them, that never occurred to us.' (87).

Ishiguro uses the irony of word-play for the reader by means of euphemisms and abstractions or through infiltration by opposites or derivations. The pathology of the institution does not allow the clones fully to know their destiny or be known by the outside world, while the 'guardians', in the ambiguity of their language, are denying,

ambivalent figures. The deceptive school name, Hailsham, has a prefix 'hale' meaning whole and healthy, and a suffix, 'ham' – home but there is also a 'sham', duplicity in Hailsham. Kathy's 'alma mater' or 'soul mother' is an ambivalent parent.

The 'students' are not a cohort, developing knowledge but are batches of clones, without family names, attached to an initial, as if they were part of a catalogue. The 'guardians' are the teacher-supervisors and are 'normals' but guard them *from* truthfulness. The 'Cottages' are derelict, the caretaker, uncaring, and the 'possibles' (genetic parents) never are. *close-up*. The 'carers' must prioritise caring that the organs are in the best shape for surgery; a 'donation' is not given but taken, and after the fourth donation, they 'complete' their programme and die. The young people typically create a private language such as 'deferrals' for a three-year life-extension or the 'gallery' where they imagine their chosen art is exhibited.

Kathy, now in her final phase, allows some measure of 'golden', idealising narcissism in her memories, to give her 'continuity of being' and to protect her from her losses. She starts her story, by defining Hailsham days as 'a kind of golden time' (70), giving it a haloed, cohering potency. Describing her youthful career, she shows her rightful narcissistic investment in achievement, performance and admiration, saying:

'Now, I know my being a carer so long isn't necessarily because they think I'm fantastic at what I do. There are some really good carers who've been told to stop after just two or three years. And I can think of one carer at least who went on for almost fourteen years despite being a complete waste of space. So I'm not trying to boast. But then I do know for a fact that they've been pleased with my work, and by and large, I have too. My donors ... recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as 'agitated', even before a fourth donation. Okay, maybe I *am* boasting now. But it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well, especially that bit about my donors staying 'calm' ... 'I can understand how you might get resentful – about my bed-sit, my car, above all, how I get to pick and choose who I look after. And I'm a *Hailsham* student. They say ...no wonder she has a great record.' (3).

Kathy relates the puzzling and often humorous struggle to make sense of her past and give value to it. But the reader, positioned outside the world of Kathy H., sees, in dramatic irony, the gap between her glowing, idealised views of her life and conditions, and how meagre and cruel they really were. She is convinced that, compared with other clones she knows of, she has had a privileged life. She still rhapsodises about her schooldays when now, unlike Tommy, the one who sees the horrors most clearly, she

finds some ‘necessary’ narcissism to keep her sense of dignity and self-worth. She recalls:

‘...our own collection chests under the bed, the little path, the duck pond... the view from the art room over the fields on foggy mornings.’ and in particular, ‘...those pavilions, little, white prefab buildings ... those sweet little cottages people always had in picture books.’ (5-6).

Hailsham is so ‘golden’ that she is even implored by a dying donor from another centre to describe it, so that it becomes installed into his memory too, and serves as a comfort to him in his last hours,

‘...to remember Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood.’ (6).

The novel is structured in three parts with three settings in which the architecture also represents states of mind. Part 1 is Hailsham, the sequestered school, self-enclosed like narcissism and protecting the ambivalent, nurturing environment; Part 2, The Cottages, are an unstructured, straggling cluster of buildings, used as a training and non-holding ‘holding’ centre, with ‘culture briefing’ and more independence. But it is also a place where hopes can straggle unchecked. Part 3 features viewless, functional, recovery centres where donors eventually ‘complete’, or lonely bed-sits for carers, driving between centres. I shall track the three stages of the narrative, exploring Ishiguro’s use of restorative narcissistic behaviours, and stylistic devices which intensify the themes.

Part 1 Hailsham

As Kathy recalls her ‘student’ days, she tries to explain what she took for granted and what was left unsaid. Hailsham, the sham school, is ‘split off’ from the mainstream world, buried in a remote enclosed valley, just as the ‘normals’ want it, and just as the thinking of the clones is expected to be. Outside the secure boundary of the school, there is a ‘wild’ wood – out of bounds, where transgressive behaviour occurs. In the mythology of the school, this wood is a dangerous outside world and the ‘students’ frighten one another with stories of physical and psychic mutilation, such as that of the boy who ran away but was found tied to a tree with his feet cut off or the girl who went out, tried to get back in but was refused, so her ghost kept wandering about, pining to be admitted. Later in the story, these mutilations will not be far from their own fates as organ donors.

The clones live in a capsule and although they hear of other centres, they never know who the 'they' are who run the national system. They are institutionalised into thinking that they are *special* but become aware of the repulsion on the faces of the few visitors from outside, such as Madame Director, who know their origin. She, they perceive, is afraid of them, because when they crowded her briefly, she froze, avoided their gaze and suppressed a shudder, as if they were spiders which might 'accidentally brush against her.' (35). Madame calls only rarely, to take away some of their art work but no-one knows why.

Staff members are confusing. Madame Director is remote, and during the 'pillow baby' incident, she, as the adult, Kathy thinks, should have said or done *something*, instead of just hurrying away in tears. Miss Emily, the Head, tends to avert her eyes at times of tension, claiming they are *special* but if disorderly, they are being 'unworthy of the privilege'. She is sometimes seen walking about alone, talking vehemently to herself, as if wrestling with a problem. Questions about organ donation are not directly addressed nor are the regular health checks and anti-smoking rules. The guardians act more as a barrage than a filter to information and understanding. As professionals, they cannot be partial or provide a comforting or reassuring touch.

But they vary: Miss Geraldine, for example, attracts fans who want to be special to *her*. The only direct gaze Kathy recalls is that of Miss Lucy, the one who provides 'light' and wants to communicate the truth. Kathy notes that Tommy could 'look people in the face and talk in his open, good-natured way' after the truthful talks with Miss Lucy. But when she abruptly disappears, Tommy's eyes look 'empty' (109). His only route to truthfulness has been officially removed. The 'concerned mother's eyes' and their mirror-role have vanished (see Winnicott, 1972:130-8), as in U and WO.

Beneath the ordered surface at Hailsham, much goes unrecognised: the unspoken group rules and understandings, the secrets, the vagueness about donations or the adolescent preoccupation, sex. Kathy focuses on the untold that should be told, the paths that could or could not be used, the undercurrents of silences, the weekly medical checks, the 'rule' not to mention the gallery in front of the guardians or whether they have smoked. Kathy feels claustrophobic at all the *watching* or surveillance. She notes the places to avoid if not to be overheard, and that privacy was really only to be found in the midst of

the lunch queue. You could not have a secret talk, for ‘the whole place seemed to sense it within minutes’. (22).

Nonetheless, Hailsham as an institution has elements of Bion’s ‘containing’ function, with order, hierarchy and ritual. The director and guardians see that ‘students’ are housed, fed, clothed, taught in a pleasant building with dorms, a billiard room, library, sports grounds and a pavilion. But the reader can see the gaps; how erratically they are educated. Geography is missing, for example, and although they have discussions and culture – literature, tapes and videos – it is experienced vicariously, at second-hand. As the reader soon sees, their vital organs, removed for transplant, will also be second-hand.

The institution has some ingenious ways to fulfil the emotional and holding needs of the students, through systems designed to substitute for the ‘containing exchanges’ of childhood. A life-giving valuation of the self is fostered. Emphasis is placed upon the seasonal Exchanges of their own art and craft products which earn exchange tokens. Likewise, the weekly second-hand Sales provide for a restorative, nurturing narcissism through things as emblems of emotional connection, and these create intense excitement.

Grinberg (1991:9-100), writing of narcissism and object relations, says, as I have summarised:

Consolidation of the ego depends on self love in a satisfactory form directed towards himself as in his own achievements and mother’s contributions, without which, the narcissistic equilibrium is fragile and needs constant external relations with narcissistic objects to feel alive and real.

At Hailsham, the ‘narcissistic objects’ have to be representational artefacts made by the students themselves. These are felt to encapsulate something of the personality or soul of the maker. Each student has a personal collection box containing ‘treasures’, made up of exchanged items – poems, drawings – which bear or ‘hold’ the freight of the huge, emotional, ‘containing’ value ascribed to them, and represent the loving exchanges of people in normal life. The box becomes a visible, dependable store of personal connectedness, value and esteem for that ‘other’ who created it. As Kathy says:

‘One is simply honour-bound to be creative...being dependent on each other to produce the stuff that might become your private treasures – that’s bound to do things to your relationships.’ (16).

The Craft Exhibitions occur about twice a year so that the mysterious Madame can visit and choose some pieces to take away. Being *chosen* is regarded as an honour and the atmosphere is manic. As the students develop, they find it unfair that their works are just taken and so tokens become the currency and groom the clones to be acute ‘pricers’, on the lookout for ‘marketable stuff’ (38-9). The Sales too create huge excitement, because of the weekly delivery van from ‘outside’. It comes, bearing cheap, surplus goods, like unused, craft scissors, which could become treasures for around the bed, like family photographs. For the reader, Ishiguro implies another level of values at work; the world of commodities and marketing, of which the clones, as batches of organ donors, are a part.

Kathy H.’s most significant memories focus on her late adolescence where a separate self is emerging and where libidinal narcissism is essential. She projects her lack of parental dependency and anxieties into others to address them there, as the one to be depended upon. She is increasingly intent on engaging with the emotional and thinking lives of others. Kathy is the one who ‘notices’ everything (23), is discreet, and is the one that students trust and confide in.

Kathy values connectedness in individual and group forms; through exchanges of ‘things’; through gaze, listening, thinking and talking. Twinning can bridge the gap towards adult identity. Kathy makes a close personal friend, Ruth, with whom she talks, exchanging thoughts and feelings each night, sitting on the bed, drinking tea, and later with Tommy, exploring the clues as to the purpose of their lives. Especially important for the fragile adolescent identities is the intense group identity and group narcissism, with its fluidity of allegiance. As Waddell (2010: 64-8) has written, the adolescent narcissistic organisation is *developmental*. It demands a narcissistic investment of the self in order to deal with the separation from the primary carer,⁵³ here, the institution, and the normal, adolescent, separation process itself, as the individual moves into

⁵³ Of the mythical Narcissus: ‘...needing to bolster his self-esteem by seeking a relationship with someone who looks like himself. Could this not be with a mirror image which might restore a fragile self-conception ...a twinning relationship, by serving as a defence against feelings of isolation ...smallness or humiliation?’ (67).

adulthood. Kathy tells of narcissistic group behaviours, showing an acute sensitivity to the intolerance of difference, where the 'different' ones are expelled.

Never having had the loving gaze of a parent, Kathy becomes acutely conscious of gaze, for watching is everywhere. She is sensitive to the desire to be the chosen one and aware of its painful counterpart, the excluded one, recalling that Ruth first chose her by gaze – without words – to be part of her fantasy horse-riding game, with named horses and set routines. She is grateful. In turn, Kathy pretends not to notice that Ruth cannot actually *play* chess despite her show of it. Kathy is also intended to be impressed by Ruth's smug implication that her mysterious pencil case was a personal gift from the favoured Miss Geraldine. It was never explicitly claimed but Ruth omnipotently says, 'Let's just agree. Let's *agree* I got it in a sale'. Then she gave us an all-knowing smile'. (56-60). Kathy generously ignores her pretence, which is then matched by Ruth's gift of another tape to replace Kathy's missing favourite, *Never Let Me Go*, which is, now:

'... an object like a brooch or a ring, and especially now Ruth has gone, it's become one of my most treasured possessions.' (75).

Kathy moves in and out of groups and cliques. She is briefly chosen to be part of the secret protection gang that looked after the favoured Miss Geraldine (unknown to Miss Geraldine), only later to find herself expelled for no apparent reason. Kathy is vulnerable to group pressure and can watch, jeer and laugh like the others. She describes, for example, a group of boys choosing a football team, among whom Tommy is known to be the best player by far but he is too eager, too open, shouts, swears and flails his body about in tantrums. He is excluded because he does not conform to the group's ideal of languid nonchalance. The girls in their watching group, Kathy included, laugh and mimic Tommy. Then, suddenly, the *carer* in Kathy – her capacity for concern – is able to identify with his humiliation as the excluded one. She bravely offers him understanding and sympathy, which is gradually accepted, and a friendship develops outside the group.

Kathy regards the talk at the pond with Tommy as a 'kind of marker between two eras' (76). It is a turning point towards a serious object relationship which can accommodate the separateness of the 'other'. It is significant in two further ways: she and Tommy have a one-to-one close friendship which will eventually flower into love, and she starts

to question the blurring evasions and mysteries in their current lives (72). Looking back, she suspects that they probably all had secrets – ‘little private nooks that were created out of thin air where we could go off alone with our fears and longings.’ (73). But such things would not have been admitted to, and seen as letting the side down. They now start looking for the links that will help them make sense of ‘being creative’ and ‘donating’.

The indignant, outspoken Miss Lucy insists on the truth.

‘Miss Lucy was now moving her gaze over the lot of us... “The problem as I see it is that you’ve been told and not told. ...but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I’m not....None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. ...your futures, all of them have been decided... You’ll become adults, then before you’re old,...even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs.’ (79-80).

By the following day, she has disappeared and is never mentioned again. Information about donations, thinks Kathy, was just smuggled in with that on sex, for there was surprisingly little discussion. By the end, the clones would just say, ‘Well, so what? We already knew all that.’ (81). Much protective distancing is achieved through humour. Boys pretend to unzip their organs and drop them on to dinner plates or they play WW2 prisoners committing suicide by touching the electric fence, as if death were an amusing option. Death is still just a game, for the choice of suicide would be a transgressive act of self-determination for the clones.

A general myth has it that a lot more sex is going on than actually is. Skeletons (no organs) are used in biology lessons, and emotions are mentioned as a *warning*, along with diseases. Kathy does not find books and films very helpful. The developing friendship with Tommy is stunted for some time, however, when Ruth, who has been close to Tommy, secures the trusted, dependable Kathy to get Tommy back with *her* after their break-up. Kathy does but the carer in her insists that he not be hurt again (102). Kathy decides that sex is really for after they leave; it is too much hassle for the guardians, who would rather not know.

Kathy H. comes to understand the difference between ‘knowing about’ and ‘knowing from experience’: how, at six or eight years old, with pleasant people around, ‘donations’ are not real. Now, she clearly sees what ‘special’ means.

‘There are people out there like Madame who don’t hate you or wish you any harm, but who ...shudder at the very thought of you – of how you were brought into this world and why...The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it’s a cold moment. ...by the time a moment like that comes along, there’s a part of you that’s been *waiting*...so you’re *waiting*...even if you don’t quite know it, *waiting* for the moment you realise you really are different to them.’ (36, my emphasis).

Part 2 The Cottages

The setting, with its straggling, run-down buildings and unkempt grounds, prefigures the reality-drift to come, as the clones, in disavowal, adhesively copy the gestures of the ‘normals’ from TV, and project phantasies of finding their ‘possibles’ (parents) and work in the mainstream world. The Cottages are not cosy, village homes but a disused farmhouse with a cluster of derelict barns and outhouses, set apart, in rural semi-seclusion. There is a pervading air of neglect, with cast-off, broken equipment everywhere, far removed from their precious, second-hand things at Hailsham.

This is the transitional, 16-18 phase of ‘training’. Here, there is no attempt at the ‘holding’ environment of Hailsham, with its structured but ambivalent life. Kathy and her small Hailsham group feel the loss of home, as they huddle fearfully together, not knowing the seniors or the clones from other feeder centres, and ‘unable quite to let each other go.’(118). There are no guardians and the single staff member is a non-resident, non-caring caretaker, Keffers, a ‘normal’, who regards them with aversion.

At first, Kathy is entranced at the long grass, the unstructured hours and the freedom. She accepts the frozen mud, the dirt, the insufficient heating, and that the extra bedclothes in winter might well be old curtains and carpet. Although Kathy’s sense of the clones’ disposability has not yet taken hold, the outhouse, where Kathy and Tommy talk and he draws, is also the dumping place of abandoned, household goods like fridges, notably, without their functional, internal parts.

The old Hailsham group are to finish their essay projects as a transitional link to this new phase of their lives. Ironically, Kathy's is on the Victorian novel, full of generations of family relationships: lost parents, aunts, orphans, foundlings, wards, marriages, wills, property and commerce – all the ingredients of life-cycles which the clones can never have. They have a fantasy that the number of books read indicates how well you are settling in. Kathy's efforts on *Daniel Deronda*, ironically the story of a Jewish boy finding his roots, soon seems to lack purpose, given that the projects will never be read nor ideas exchanged. As the old continuities start to break down, the projects are abandoned, and the clones feel bewildered but excited.

The Cottages are managed by the 'veterans', including one older couple, who Kathy, unsure of her dependency, says are like 'a real mother and father' and get people to behave like 'normal families'. Kathy is sensitive to the flux of mood, atmosphere, and feelings. There is a shift in the pattern of relationships: fewer groups and more couples, such as Ruth and Tommy. Sex, as she describes it, seems perfunctory, commensurate with the impoverished emotional dimension of their lives and dislocated from hopes of future homes and children.

Kathy perceives that Ruth behaves differently with the 'veterans'. She needs narcissistic control in order to manage, because she is 'struggling to be someone else', a sort of leader, believing she is 'doing it on behalf of us all.' (128). Even Kathy's loyalty fluctuates, for despite being in Tommy's confidence, she sniggers at his drawings but later, pauses responsively and sees just how appealing they are.

At the heart the novel, there is Tommy's art, and a 'metaphor for expressing his experience of life as a clone. The drawings are of tiny, helpless, imaginary animals.

'If you make them tiny ... then everything changes. You'd have to think about *how they'd protect themselves, how they'd reach things.*' (176, my emphasis).

Kathy, responding to him in her thoughtful way, comments:

'The first impression was like one you'd get if you took the back off a radio set: tiny canals, waving tendons, miniature screws and wheels were all drawn with obsessive precision, and only when you held the page away could you see it was some kind of armadillo, say, or a bird. ... For all their busy, metallic features, there was something sweet, even vulnerable about each of them.' (184-5).

Tommy's drawings convey the sense of being mass-produced, mechanical, dehumanised, insignificant and trapped, without the power to reach out to participate in the real world. He feels more like a set of components or useful 'organs' than an integrated being of body, mind and spirit. He draws a vulnerable, helpless self, in need of some restorative, narcissism to sustain his identity.

They all notice the heavy silences that fall when a veteran departs to donate, and Kathy notices the urgent swing to copy the 'normals' that they see on television or on outings. The trend is led by Ruth, using, in a two-dimensional way, models from TV programmes, posters or advertisements. Couples or friends might, for example, give each other a pat or punch on the arm when they separate for a time. Kathy, although pointing out its inauthenticity, does it herself as part of her group identity. In their freedom at the Cottages, they fall into a narcissistic denial of their clone-hood and in an adhesive way, think that they can *be* 'normals'.

Kathy describes the next phase as a cosy suspension of reality, involving three narcissistic phantasies. Based on a rumour that if you find your model or 'possible' in the outside world, you, as a copy, could 'get some insight into who you were deep down', and learn what your own future might have in store (137-8). The second is finding work outside, such as an office job. The third is a 'deferral'. If, as a couple, you truly love each other, you could get a three year exemption and live together. For the clones, the yearning to *belong*, belong to a family, to a work group, and to a loving partner is as seductive as it is delusory.

The reality of entering this other world is sobering and beset with obstacles. How do you apply; where are the forms to fill in; your model could be of any age, and the current view is that clones come from 'trash': '... junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps, ...convicts ...so long as they aren't psychos' (164). Kathy scans the faces of the people in porn magazines, searching for 'possibles'. Ruth finds a muddy fragment of an advertisement for an office job, and the furniture, plants and busy people lure her into speaking straight from the poster, as if she were shortly to join them, describing her colleagues as 'dynamic, go-ahead types' (142). Then two of the veterans believe Ruth's 'possible' has been spotted in an office nearby in Norfolk, and their hopes are high as they set off to find her. But 'close-up', the woman does not match; they are mistaken

and Ruth's disappointment is acute and humiliating. In the end, she has to concede that there is no 'way in'.

Kathy sees that there is no point in rebelling. The students are not equipped to survive an independent existence, despite their 'culture briefings' on behaviour with the Police or waiters. They have no recognisable qualifications or vocational training; no CVs; no money, no family connections, and no friends in powerful places. Yet it is still difficult to accept that *their* work lies elsewhere.

Kathy becomes aware that their relational world is reconfiguring. Tommy, with his direct, independent mind, begins, with Kathy, to diverge from Ruth's control and continues their truth-seeking about clone-hood, which had started at the pond in Hailsham. They understand that finding a 'possible' makes no difference whatsoever. Kathy records that Tommy had almost stopped shouting and kicking in rage and frustration. Instead, they are talking and thinking as 'interpreting subjects' (Ogden 1992:217).

In a key scene in Norfolk, their childhood place of lost things, Tommy finds and buys Kathy a second hand copy of her lost tape, *Never Let Me Go* – another 'copy' and second-hand but weighted with enormous emotional value. In both the concrete and emotional senses, the 'lost object' has been found. Tommy has found the 'other' in Kathy and she, in him, in the original adult, romantic sense of the song. While Tommy repudiates 'possibles', he has a plausible theory for 'deferrals'. The purpose of the gallery, he reasons, based on Miss Lucy's comments that art reveals the soul (160), is to *prove* your love through your art and get a 'deferral'. With Kathy's encouragement, he begins drawing seriously, and fired with hope, determines that they shall find Madame and *know* if deferrals are true.

Ruth's jealousy of the intimacy between Kathy and Tommy causes tension, bickering, and denial by Ruth. Kathy, in her tactful but truthful way, tries to tell Ruth that there has been a shift.

'Ruth, you know, I think sometimes, when you're in a couple, you don't see things as clearly as maybe someone can from the outside. Just sometimes.'
(196).

But for omnipotent Ruth, the search for the connectivity of love is so intense that she pronounces smugly, in narcissistic denial, that Tommy has never thought of Kathy in terms of love:

‘...what you have to realise is that Tommy doesn’t see you like that...He can be fussy.’ (197).

Kathy is not one to destroy relationships and so leaves abruptly to be a carer and restore her feeling of agency, identity and self-worth. She senses the inevitable path ahead and chooses it with dignity.

Part 3 Bed-sit

The setting conveys Kathy’s internal isolation. From her tiny bed-sit, she must drive alone down the long, windy, badly-lit back-roads between the centres, away from the bright motorway, exhausted but utterly reliable. Time is spent in bleak, service station cafés or, for example, looking in at a bright, lamp-shop window, not to buy but just to compare them with hers at home (204). She excels in her physical and psychic drive to work to her highest standards and to connect emotionally with her donors, in their disinfected, tiled recovery rooms, with the high, viewless windows.

Kathy’s losses are acute. Hailsham, by now, has been sold off to a hotel chain and ‘re-cycled’ as a conference centre, so that her former ‘family’ home, with its memories, has disappeared. She is solitary, with her friends variously ‘completing.’ She recalls an image of smiling, balloon faces, then dreams of them all loosening from the clown’s hand and floating away, high into the ether (208-9). Ishiguro infuses the text with emptiness: ‘big grey sky’, ‘windswept’, ‘chilly’, ‘overcast’, ‘vacant’, ‘slumped’, ‘unravelling’, then ‘the light died’. Kathy, in retrospect, thinks there was something too late, ‘ridiculous, even reprehensible’ in their plans to get a ‘deferral’ (237).

What gives meaning to Kathy H.’s life are the ‘deeper links’ (4): emotional and physical holding, connection and containment from her Hailsham friends, two of whom can never be ‘let go’. She deliberately chooses to be the carer of Ruth, doing badly in Dover, after her first donation. It is the time to repair Ruth’s attempt to neutralise the love between Kathy and Tommy. Kathy promises Ruth to give love a try. She arranges the visit to the marooned boat, picking up Ruth, then Tommy in Wales, on the way.

This is their last time together and they must ‘hold’ the barbed wire of the fence for one another. Ishiguro creates a powerful proleptic image of the abandoned boat, stranded in the marsh – between earth and sea – and going nowhere, an image of entrapment and loss. It is intact, bleached of colour and beautiful, although stripped of its vital organs and slowly decaying. It is a hulk, as indeed, they all must soon be, and they are quiet as they watch the vapour trail of an aeroplane, vanishing high overhead (218-9).

The dying Ruth is not ‘let go’ but ‘held’ in all senses by Kathy, who describes the death figuratively, as like her own, strenuous efforts as a carer:

‘...It was like she was willing her eyes to see right inside herself, so she could patrol and marshal all the better the separate areas of pain in her body – the way, maybe, an anxious carer might rush between three or four ailing donors in different parts of the country...I sat with her hand in both of mine...our gazes locked for those few seconds, she’d read my expression as I’d read hers.’ (231-2).

Kathy becomes Tommy’s carer, too, and both hope for a deferral. Tommy’s centre, however, conveys endings and time wasted. It is a disused 1950s holiday camp, which, in a macabre touch of humour, has the swimming pool concreted over but the diving board still intact. Thistles grow in the rough ground outside, and in early summer, Tommy’s high, frosted-glass window casts an autumnal light. Having already had three out of his four donations, his love affair with Kathy has come in the autumn of his life, when he is too aged and tired. They hold each other tightly to suppress their disappointment. Now, even his drawings seem laboured and ‘copied’.

The plot moves towards its turning point, hinging on a ‘deferral’ and the hope that, as in fairytales, true love will prevail. They confront the retired Hailsham directors but the result is a theatrical anticlimax. The women are ageing, in reduced circumstances, shrunken in stature, at times tetchy, self-righteous, civil but more preoccupied with selling the Hailsham antique furniture, than talking with another group of students. Miss Emily has a wheelchair and carer herself.

‘Deferrals’ are a phantasy like finding your ‘possible’ or getting a job. Their art has never seen a gallery nor ‘read’ as soul-revealing. The directors are proud of giving their clones their childhoods, unperturbed by the ambivalence of arousing hope in the vulnerable humans, only to destroy it; ‘You were lucky pawns’ (261). And Miss Emily

explains so reasonably that *family* comes first in the world of the ‘normals’ and organ transplants are crucial. With blind irony, she makes their separateness very clear. Madame regrets the passing of the ‘old, kind world’ *before* human cloning and pats Kathy on the cheek, muttering, ‘poor creatures...but now you’re by yourselves.’ (267), for they are, of course, to be ‘let go’. The narcissistic self-absorption of the normal world tolerates cloning if it means a cure for mortal diseases like cancer or motor neurone disease, but not tolerated if it means breeding human beings who are superior to them (259).

Kathy has no anger; that is left to Tommy. Asking her to stop the car, he stumbles alone into a field and screams out his rage. Kathy goes to him and in emotional turmoil, they *hold* each other as the windy storm thrashes around them. When Tommy recovers, he sits silently in the car, *holding* his drawings close – the part of him which will survive his death. Kathy is composed; she is still the carer, without rage or self-pity, and sees Tommy’s rage in perspective, saying: ‘...at some level, you always *knew*.’ (270). The ‘unthought known’ (Bollas, 1987:278) has come to full consciousness.

Kathy, in full self-knowledge, sees the disturbing undercurrent of the ‘waiting’ that had been there all along. There would be no reprieve. Tommy stops Kathy being his carer, preferring to be with his own kind who understand the horror of the fourth donation, and ‘completion’. On Kathy’s last visit, he shares his secret. He describes his mental image of death as a fast current of water, with two people in it, holding each other, but in the end, the current is too strong and they are pulled apart. He equates this with his successes as a footballer. After he had scored a goal, he would run back, arms up in triumph, always imagining he was splashing through water. Tommy has emotionally triumphed over death and as Kathy leaves, she watches him waving to her, ‘small’, in her rear-vision mirror.

With Tommy’s ‘completion’, Kathy has no more meaningful, object relationships and opts to join the donors. Now, she will depend wholly on her ‘golden’, idealised memories, as she faces her own ‘completion’. She has endured disappointment and accepts her impending death. With her restorative, narcissistic, psychic structure intact and her golden memories, she can connect with her internal objects and loved places as

'life-givers'. She has 'held' Ruth and Tommy, arrived at self-knowledge in dialogic exchanges, become a 'historical subject', and given coherence to her own history.

She allows herself a moment to mourn Tommy in Norfolk – their place for 'lost objects', where they found each other and the second-hand tape, *Never Let Me Go*. The landscape is featureless and grey – 'flat fields of nothing'. She stops the car where empty, plastic bags blow up against the fences. She is dignified, accepting of death, and calm, knowing that she has had a measure of love and work. She ends in sober control, allowing a tiny, mental image of Tommy on the horizon, getting nearer, waving, perhaps calling to her – holding him in mind – before turning back to work, 'to drive off to wherever I was supposed to be.' Kathy H. is, to the last, the one to be depended upon.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

In this study, I have aimed to bring into focus the core aspects of human, psychological survival which preoccupy Ishiguro in his novels. He has particular insights into the question of personal identity when under the threat of breakdown after trauma, in particular, the defensive self-enclosure of narcissism, with its emotional depletion and thin personal relationships. He has astutely identified a psychic mechanism, which he broadly terms ‘appropriation’. Jacqueline Rose (1996:60) calls this a ‘specific action of the mind’, and, after the Kleinian thinkers, projective identification. I have found a voice for all these features in the language of post-Kleinian object relations psychoanalytic thought, with its origins in Klein and Freud. In this field, an increasingly substantial body of knowledge from clinical practice and observational studies continues to develop, as social fragmentation and narcissistic personality disorders persist. While the values of both Ishiguro’s and post-Kleinian thinking have been my principal focus of attention, I have also aimed to support this with an account of communication – the way Ishiguro’s crafted, narrative methods realise the content of the novels.

One dimension of this thesis, then, is the construction of a critical framework as a contribution towards a method of reading prose literature, informed by the wealth of post-Kleinian knowledge of human feelings and behaviours. The critical framework takes criteria from three complementary sources: the traditional, English, humanist novel, its ‘deficit’ version, with some deconstructive, writing tactics, and post-Kleinian psychoanalytic theory on narcissism. This thesis, therefore, makes a contribution to the development of post-Kleinian literary criticism, with particular application to the novel.

Waddell (1992:171, psychoanalyst and critic, sees the fundamental principle of the post-Kleinian model of mental functioning as:

‘...establishing the necessity of placing emotionality at the heart of the matter ... it focuses attention on recognising the place for meaning and value in human affairs – the absolute values of psychic reality as opposed to the relativity of social values.’ ...

‘The dynamic is that ‘thought [should] have its anchorage in feeling. ...with symbol formation being the entrée to thinking about meaning.’

This makes explicit the centrality of the value of emotional experience in the post-Kleinian component, and for a critical approach which is sensitive both to symbolisation and to the presence and absence of different forms of emotional experience in the text.

Ishiguro’s novels, written in an ‘expanded’, humanist tradition, centre on human (object) relationships and human psychic life. But it has been startling to discover the extent of his representations of the human unconscious at work, beyond the vaguer, earlier concepts of the uncanny, repression, identity and projection, used in some literary criticism.

In this study, I linked the following phenomena. Firstly, I identified forms of intolerable trauma as the emotional driving force. Trauma might be cumulative or sudden and devastating: from war, or socio-historic displacement from a fragmenting class system, from globalisation and loss of anchorage, or from a normalised, biotechnology, where people are dehumanised in the service of others more powerful. Typically, in Ishiguro’s novels, there is trauma and a relational dysfunction between the central character when a child and his parental figures, sometimes compounded by other factors. This activates a form of protective narcissism in which the intolerable, traumatic experiences are psychically processed by being split off.

Secondly, I uncovered not one but a spectrum of mechanisms and made them visible as a constellation of narcissistic defences in variant models. The configuration of the particular psychic mechanism in each novel was shown to be principally some form of interpersonal, projective identification, with its inhering quality where personal boundaries dissolve in narcissism. The re-introjected self is a distorted, delusory one.

Thirdly, I identified the typical, unknowing behaviours of narcissism which predominate in each text: denial and emptiness (PVH), triumph and lofty condescension (AFW), control and ‘absence’ (RD), pathological, repetitious action and grandiosity (U), adhesion and blindness (WO), and restorative, emotional ‘holding’ (NLG).

Fourthly, I connected the depleting effect of trauma and excessive projection with each narrator's depleted capacity for symbolisation and their tendency towards formulaic speech, inflexible thinking, weak truth-seeking and a diminished reality sense. Human empathy and object relationships, I showed to be seriously in deficit (PVH and U) but not utterly beyond some form of retrieval (AFW, RD, WO and NLG).

Never Let Me Go unexpectedly brought into view the other end of the spectrum of the defences of narcissism, as opposed to those in *A Pale View of Hills*. Instead of Etsuko's silent denial, absence of connection yet excessive reasonableness, Kathy H. projects her deprivation into others and addresses it there. She gradually becomes a significant, emotional holding force, listening, exchanging thoughts inter-subjectively and valuing friendship. This extends to physical tokens standing in for internal objects, such as a second hand, music tape or some personal artwork, invested with the qualities of the artist. Memories might be selective and protectively deceiving, as in rigid narcissism but with self-knowledge, can also be 'golden' and sustaining until the end of life.

My work on the critical framework began to show the strong link between the moral concerns of humanism in post-Kleinian thought and Ishiguro's concern for ethics – his 'moral helicopter' – and the importance of a clear perspective of reality and responsibility. Given that the characters are partly entrapped by their early traumas, their social circumstances and the limitations of time, they are further entrapped by their inward self-enclosure and the stasis caused by the defences of narcissism, in which time has no meaning. Ishiguro's point is not just the lack of human empathy or the sadistic indifference, but the unawareness of and obliviousness to it.

I have taken up most of the communication strategies, outlined in the critical framework, to show how the traditional novel might be rendered in its deficit form and correspond with Ishiguro's (and post-Kleinian) vision of depleted, human relational values. I found an illuminating analogue in Eagleton's comments on the 'inhering', nature of language, considered deconstructively, through the way in which opposites, contradictions and ironies infiltrate boundaries and convey complexity. This sits in parallel with the 'inhering', excessive projective identification into another person in Ishiguro's central characters. It is implied in Ishiguro's prose in which genres or traditional role-types merge into their failed forms, and settings become the pale views,

mists, drizzle, or shadowy reflections. Similarly, words and names convey this inhering quality through their properties of punning, derivation or euphemism, such as St Dunstan's for myopic vision and copying behaviour (WO) and Hailsham for deception and the 'possibles' for parents (NLG).

More concrete settings, such as roads or tunnels become metaphors for excessive, travel, celebrity jet-lag, as well as the troubled and obstructed pathways of the mind. There are rooms, buildings, labyrinths, sudden doors, and landscapes which similarly render psychic disconnection and emotional isolation. The disposable, plastic bags, blown up against the fences in Norfolk, evoke the clones' disposable bodies. There are emblematic things for *not* seeing reality and being split off or delusory, such as binoculars or a magnifying glass. There might be emblematic postures in the text, such as Stevens senior, collapsed over his trolley as if in the act of prayer (RD), while other images convey physical, emotional and psychic disconnectedness, through, say, the wry humour of the concreted swimming pool with its diving board still intact.

I have drawn attention to genres which present the action in a deficit version of the expected one. The slender plots barely develop, for Ishiguro's interest is on states of mind, shifting memories and indeterminate endings. The structure of the action, with the interplay between present time and past memory, becomes more streamlined as each book is written. The idea of reliable flashback has morphed into the hazy deceptions and the consolations of memory. The narratives show the protagonists, with their forms of narcissism, as 'still walking', rather than collapsing in psychotic disintegration.⁵⁴

All of the action in Ishiguro's novels is set against time and how time *passing* fails to be registered in states of narcissism. The pathos, for the reader, lies in the disappointments which come of not seeing that opportunities, once gone, are gone forever. Indeed, WO particularly emphasises time, the fourth dimension, along with two and then three dimensionality in the main character. Although the novel encompasses Banks's life-span, it leaves a huge gap – years of silence, spent losing illusions, after his return to

⁵⁴ 'Still Walking' is a Japanese film directed by Hirokazu Kore'eda, 2008, in which a mother, whose son has drowned while trying to rescue another, survives by subtly projecting her anger by humiliating the rescued young man at tea on each anniversary of the accident.

London from Shanghai. In *NLG*, the next novel, time has been unnaturally compressed but conveys the same message – that all time is limited. The notion of endless organ transplants to prolong human life into ‘life everlasting’ through the biosciences is another of the wider, delusory, human narcissisms.

Ishiguro’s suite of short stories, *Nocturnes, Five stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009), shows narrators in touch with their feelings only when older and aware of their more quotidian disappointments and emotional pain, as opposed to the traumas of the novels. Here, the characters are caught up in currents of the absurd demands of the celebrity culture of charisma and musical performance. The musician figures need to keep the ego alive and hopeful, despite the passing of time and the gradual loss of virtuosity. They must strive always to stay at the top of their form in body, mind and technique but are frequently disappointed in that precarious profession and might resort to theatrical stunts for themselves or the media, to keep public and indeed, self interest alive.

In response to adverse criticism that the film version of *The Remains of the Day* does not do justice to the political themes, Gillian Rose (1996: 52) argues that nevertheless, it induces active recognition in oneself of the ‘nihilism of disowned emotions’ and the ‘personal and political depredations at stake’ in such failures. In the film version of *Never Let me Go*, what *was* kept – and only a fifth of the book could go into film form – were the object relational values between the three main characters: loyalty, affection, toleration of jealousy, support in illness, love, and careful tenderness, as each faces the collapse of hope, and premature death.

In response to Sim’s (2010:134) comment at the end of the Introduction, I have ‘tabled’ a psychoanalytic analysis of all the novels to date and identified narcissism and its defences as the controlling idea in the six books as a whole. I cover questions of trauma, identity, modes of identification with the ‘other’ and the delusory assumptions and behaviours which form part of this complex of emotional disturbance. The actions of the narcissistic, manic defences have formed entrenched psychic structures in the minds of the main characters, although for four, some projections have been retrieved and a more integrated self, a clearer reality sense and stable identity arrived at, although too late to change the courses of their lives.

Despite Ishiguro's playfulness and allusive wit, he has a serious concern with disappointment, namely, disappointment in the gradual decay of hopes and expectations, the destructiveness of catastrophic change, the need for protective narcissism, and the elusive consolations of memory. He foregrounds truth-seeking, unsentimental, moral concern, empathy with the 'other', and the transience of time.

Finally, I recall in my Introduction, Ishiguro's remark on the adventurous audience of readers who are 'literate in many kinds of ways'. I suggest that in these novels, he is making a statement about the importance of *emotional* literacy and furthermore, emotional literacy in the arena of human (object) relations and the particular kinds of defensive, self-protecting narcissism which he articulates so cogently in his novels.

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Appendix

The Detailed Critical Review of the Literature - on selected novels

1:1 Ethnicity and nationality

These themes dominated the early criticism because Ishiguro is Japanese and his two first novels, PVH and AFW, were published at the time of lively interest in the ethnic experiences of authors writing in English. The early responses to the books with overtly Japanese or English settings and characters made an immediate impression and were all read as ethnic. Japanese and English stereotypes were applied unreservedly to both Ishiguro's content and language style, and to characters and attitudes, such as formality of behaviour, for example, in AFW and RD:

'...the gentle restraint of Japanese culture is an integral feature of his art.' (Mallet, 1996: 19); or 'Stevens's stilted mannerisms implicitly indict Japanese persona and psyche.' (Annan, 1989: 3-4); or *A Pale View of Hills* is, 'Typically Japanese in its compression... its reticence' (King, F. 1982:25); or 'the deft brushwork of Japanese paintings.' (King, B.1991:207).

Connor (1996: 107) comments in 'Outside In' that such readings mistakenly adopt a form of 'cultural repatriation' for Ishiguro. Other writers show responses that are appreciative of nuance and emotion, for example, Lively's account (1982: 90) identifies 'implied griefs and evils' in PVH, while Lee (1990:36-9) argues that there is 'a warning in the first paragraph of this novel (PVH) against reading it as 'Japanese' when Etsuko explains the naming of her English daughter, 'He finally agreed to Niki, thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it'.⁵⁵

The pertinent question was asked by Lewis (2000: 19-22): Just, 'how Japanese is it?' Lewis proposes that a different sort of reading is required, notwithstanding Japanese details such as the kujibiki stand (PVH), or the Miai ceremony (AFW), and draws attention to the themes and narrative technique. He contends that Ishiguro's introduction to Kawabata's novels in 1986, with their universal human themes of love, hate, pride and jealousy, indicates ways to read his own novels. They have almost no plots, and need to be read slowly so as to respond to visual details, atmosphere, mood, and feeling. Ishiguro's inter-textual references, for example to Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly* (PVH) or the Japonaiserie in AFW are to be seen as self-conscious 'constructions'.

⁵⁵ Further examples are documented in Sim (2010: 112-6) and Beedham (2010:1-6).

One Japanese influence which Ishiguro accepts is that of the domestic film genre, with its strong images and its emphasis on intergenerational relationships. This was identified early by Mason (1989, 2008:4). Ishiguro:

‘I’m probably more influenced by Japanese movies... The visual images of Japan have great poignancy for me, particularly in domestic films like those of Ozu and Naruse, set in the post-war era, the Japan I actually remember.’

Lewis (2000: 60-71), alert to other cinematic effects, discusses the liquid nature of Ishiguro’s prose which evokes the way the narrator’s mind slides in and out of the past, and from one person to another, and he relates it to film technique, using terms such as ‘dissolve’, ‘fade’, and ‘jump cut’.

2. Personal Identity in Wider Contexts: multi-culturalism, post-colonialism, and internationalism

2:1 Multi-culturalism

Some readings set Ishiguro in the wider, social context of multi-cultural inclusiveness and signal a shift in the focus, from more inward-looking novels, to broader, British cross-cultural literature.⁵⁶ The writer Salman Rushdie (1991:12) includes Ishiguro in his analyses in *‘Imaginary Homelands’*. He looks at novels from the 1980s sharing themes of dislocation from a homeland and the way that the past remains firmly in the present through memory. Rushdie says of himself, that he is aware of:

‘...the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities.’... ‘The broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also... a useful tool with which to work in the present.’

And for Ishiguro, memory – selective memory linked to emotional trauma from the past – is a central preoccupation.

King, B.(1991: 192-21) does include Ishiguro in his ‘new Internationalism’, along with Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Timothy Mo and others, although Ishiguro’s theme is

⁵⁶ This was stimulated by Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), which won the Booker prize that year and created a lively climate of interest in multicultural and post-colonial experience in fiction.

not the collective, immigrant experience. Nor is Ishiguro himself a returning second generation ‘colonial’, exploring post-colonial themes, for the relations between Japan and the West were not colonial ones.

2:2 Post-colonialism

Most of the post-colonial readings of Ishiguro’s work focus on RD. Tamaya (1992:50-1), for example, considers Ishiguro, ‘unique among post-colonial writers’ because he uses ‘that ...British literary form – the novel of manners – to deconstruct British society and its imperial history.’ Furthermore, Tamaya regards the trusting relationship between Stevens and Lord Darlington as a cruel, ‘comic hoax which lies at the core of the master/servant, coloniser/colonised relationship.’ Finney (2002: 1), in his discussion of WO, declares that rewriting a canonic text [*Great Expectations*] is designed to ‘highlight the colonial spoils underpinning the social mobility enjoyed’ by the protagonist, Banks and provides ‘the cause of the family’s ethical disputes.’

Ishiguro, born in Japan but brought up in Britain, has sometimes been categorised as a post-colonial. Connor (1996:104-112), on RD, argues that, while the nature of national consciousness and identity are present, Ishiguro ‘...does not give the question of divided cultural identity visibility as a subject in his work’. Having access to two cultures, he is a detached and critical observer of the human struggle for identity in shifting national settings of all kinds. He is especially able to perceive that the myths of a national culture might be at odds with the reality.

Stevenson (2004: 492-3) in his chapter, ‘Travellers and Migrants’, sees Ishiguro as atypical in the context of post-colonial writing. Not taking British citizenship until 1982 nor visiting Japan until 1989, Ishiguro, he believes, has a viewpoint that is detached, and resembles that of American-born Henry James. Sim (2010:124)⁵⁷ argues that nonetheless, there is often some element of what he calls, ‘bicultural affiliation and migrant self-fashioning’ in PVH and WO, while Walkowitz (2001:1060) and Cheng

⁵⁷ Sim, W. (2010:125-132) gives a detailed account of post-colonial readings: George, (1996), Griffiths (1993), Cheng, (2006a), O’Brien (1996), Ekleund (2005); the two latter argue that RD is ‘ultimately complicit with the social order that it portrays’ but they miss Ishiguro’s irony.

(2005b:148-86) point out how, within the novels, Ishiguro sets up and challenges the stock, stereotyped view of certain 'national' characteristics.

2:3 Internationalism

Ishiguro describes himself as a bicultural, international, and 'kind of homeless writer', (Oe, 1989, 2008:58). He aims to write about experience that is common and universal: 'It's fine to write about your town...as long as you're aware that you're addressing the larger world.' To Krider (1998, 2008:134) he remarks, 'Often ... international books are rooted in a very small place.' Sim (2010:138-148) embraces Ishiguro's geographical reach to indicate the way his fiction is seen to represent larger social and cultural trends, by being taken up by comparative literature, cosmopolitan studies, US multicultural interests, and Asian, diasporic literature. It has, he thinks, been drawn into, 'middle-class consciousness that considers professionalism to be a new transnational ethic.'

Critics such as Robbins, Fluet, Reitano and Walkowitz also feature this dimension in addressing 'community'. Robbins (1998:3), for example, is concerned about 'turning invisibly determining and exploitative connections into conscious and self-critical ones ...' and finds that the preoccupation with connections in WO could be considered 'a geographical extension' of those in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* and its familiar theme, 'Only connect'.

Cheng (2005:2) balances Ishiguro's position by maintaining that his Japanese background, his Western literary tradition (Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Bronte and Beckett, to name a few key influences), and monumental world events such as WW2, along with his own personal innovative methods, have together 'informed his distinctive authorship.' Critics now see him as an international novelist writing in English and not a novelist working in a second language.

3. Psychological Interpretations: fragmentation and loss of identity

These commentaries have a closer bearing on my own approach, in that they identify elements in the disturbed emotional lives of the first person narrators. The states of mind identified, encompass forms of fragmentation, such as loss of individual identity, weak subjectivity, trauma, dislocation and homelessness, anxiety, and the ethical

demands of globalisation with its dissolving boundaries and a diminished sense of belonging.

3.1 Carpi (1997:183) investigates the construction of Stevens's subjective self in RD, seeing it as emblematic of 'the post-modern sensibility', involving uncertainty, homelessness, and fragmentation.

3.2 Carey (2000b: 163), on states of mind, concludes that U is about 'stress, a problem of epidemic proportions in our culture that modern fiction largely ignores.' Robbins (2001b:426-81) on U, poses the question of whether 'real life' can start only after retirement, and questions how to delimit our 'belonging' within the professional working life, and the cost of neglecting domestic and community life. There needs to be an ethical understanding of stress, metaphysical harriedness, as a trans-national, socio-economic and cultural force, which stretches the human sensibility to accommodate the demands of globalisation for those who work and live internationally, committed to their idea of total 'professionalism'. There is a need for respect and connection to the wider public, and Ryder, he argues, is *right* to listen respectfully to the hotel porter. He concludes that the problem is not the scarcity of time but the uncertainty of borders, slipping into an 'unspecifiable elsewhere' and out of our control. Robbins (2007:291) views NLG as an allegory of unethical extremes: a state welfare system that is necessarily cruel in deceiving the clones. Robbins does not question the narrators' relationship to time or why the protagonists, Ryder and Kathy H., do not seem excessively 'harried' to themselves, remaining oddly tolerant of (defended from) their circumstances.

3.3 A different form of internal disturbance is located by Fluet (2003: 110) in RD. She sees a universal, 'inherent powerlessness', demonstrated by Stevens's efforts in work and desire to be at the centre, which, she asserts, 'applies to all of us and is our lot in life.' Discussing the four most recent novels, Fluet (2007:285) concludes that Ishiguro's narrators, in showing their loss of individual identity, give us:

'access to feelings so often ugly if not always strong that convey not a comfortably agreed-upon idea of humanity but rather what it might feel like to lose one's individual sense of "me" in a collective "we".'

3.4 Walkowitz (2007: 216-239) reads NLG as a critique of the culture of ‘self and identity’ – that individuality is not dependent on originality. Copies *are*, she argues, part of the individual’s emotional experience and relationships, and part of one’s need to find meaning and value in life:

‘Even humans produced through biological reproduction, are in some ways copies and that human culture, [the cassette tape, the magazine advertisement... are all in some sense unoriginal but are part of the] ‘large network ...in which individuality functions.’

Translation, too, does not lead to ‘cultural homogenization’ but to greater diversity and dialogue between world cultures and nationalities.

3.5 Sim (2010: 67, 90) notes Ishiguro’s use of troubled, historical contexts, and the interaction between the public and private events, alongside a psycho-social understanding of troubled minds. He identifies the early trauma in what he terms Ishiguro’s ‘childhood topos’, and briefly comments on the protagonists’ personal losses and denials, citing Freud (1917) in relation to their inability to engage in the work of mourning.

4. Narrative Conventions

4.1 Genre

Ishiguro undercuts the traditional novel’s expected progression from conflict, through development, to resolution. Sim (2010:116-20) finds genre treated ironically, in that the novels set in Japan and China (PVH, AFW, WO), which might suggest the lure of exotic literature, are certainly not stories of happiness. RD mocks English Pastoral writing, which idealises an excluding culture. U is European, high modernism, in a mix of verisimilitude and the surreal; WO parodies detective fiction and NLG is less science fiction than a critique of our throw-away culture. Britzman (2006: 307-18) offers NLG as an ‘allegory for interiority’, with Klein’s epistemological instinct alive in her model of infant development; a ‘comedy for parental wishes’; science fiction or the fairy tale. Her attention to the Kleinian importance of the early phantasy (maternal part-objects and body parts) is apposite in view of the subject of organ donations in this novel.

4.2 External landscapes – place and space as metaphor

Mason (1989: 39-52) shows in an interview, how Ishiguro is influenced by the Japanese film maker, Ozu, who thought that ‘too much action distracted from a full realisation of

character’, and therefore has the camera linger on physical and spatial details, such as passageways ‘to subvert the linear trajectory of the narrative’ and ‘steer away from a dominance of the plot.’ Ishiguro adopts ‘filmic’ depictions of space and place, lingering on city landmarks or a view. He mentions (Mason, 1986/9:334-37) the opening – the steep path – in AFW:

‘I used that device mainly to create a world. ...it helped strengthen this mental landscape mapped out entirely by what Ono was conscious of and nothing else.’

This method focuses on ‘the ‘emotional mood’... wherein the character appears to *drift* from one section to the next...people do tend to talk ...and more crucially, to think like this, as people recall memory for their own ends’. Wood (1998:174-5) takes up the notion of internal landscapes in *U*, rejecting the novel as a record of a dream and suggesting that it is ‘a long metaphor for deferred and displaced anxiety’, referring to the inconsistent geography, the fantastic obstacles, distances and time frames, which, he argues, are not restricted to dreams. ‘The German city is redrawn and re-peopled by Ryder’s preoccupations’.

4.4 The first person ‘unreliable’ narrator.

Lodge (1992:154-7), using RD as his example, clarifies the term as ‘self-betraying’ and points out that no narrator can be one hundred percent unreliable because the reader must be able to discriminate between distortion and reality. Stevens’s impersonal language is inadequate for any emotional life.

4.5 Prose style

Sim (2010: 105) points out that ‘The prose style... is tied to the narrating consciousness that the text seeks to render...’ And Wormald (2003:228) gives an example, PVH, of the narrator’s disturbed ‘consciousness’ in the ‘impulse to reveal and to suppress ... in a disturbing dynamic, which is often ‘contradictory and inconsistent.’ What Wong (2005:70) says of *U* is applicable to all the novels:

‘Method of discourse, not description of situation, becomes the important metaphor for understanding., *how* he [Ryder] goes about it will reveal the implications of that character.’ (original emphasis).

Sim (2010:105-7) and Howard (2001:398-417) define Ishiguro’s core, language style as ‘sparse, elliptical, civil’, with ‘balanced syntax and precise diction...stability ...and restraint.’ They do not link this psychoanalytically to the narrating character’s *need* to

mediate so much order and control nor to the question of symbol formation and limited codes of speech.

5. Psychoanalytic readings – drawing on Lacan

While the theory of Lacan and that of the British Object relations school are both rooted in Freud, they have a different conception of the way that personal identity is constructed. Lacan's mid-twentieth century approach, developed in a climate dominated by Continental linguistic and cultural theory, has been very influential on literary criticism because of the pre-eminence it gives to the text. Therefore, the workings of the subjects' language⁵⁸ in speech or writing determine the nature of their subjectivity. Of most interest to literary critics has been Lacan's concept of the move of the subject from the Imaginary (the child-like, un-boundaried world of desire) to the Symbolic (the world of language). Words function as the connectors to the world of socialisation and the move from a sense of personal identity (the 'mirror stage' with 'alienation') to the rule of law ('rule of the father') and reality.

5.1 Sarvan (1997: 93-101), on AFW, applies Lacan's symbolic order to Ono's 'unreliable' narration with Ono caught up in language, 'and undercutting himself'. Sarvan observes that the 'words attributed to one person in a flashback sequence might have stemmed from someone else or even from himself' and exemplify the 'associative and metonymic qualities of the symbolic order', revealing the evasion, lack of clarity and isolation of Ono's mind.

5.2 Salecl (1996: 179-207), on RD, discusses Stevens in terms of Lacan's ego-ideal: 'the father in the symbolic with which the subject identifies' and how he would like to be seen (184). She argues that Stevens's conflict is not love versus professionalism, since his real desire is the love of the ideal standards of vocation and that this is what he admires in Miss Kenton. In response, Rushton (2007: 109-20) argues that Salecl implies that Stevens renounces 'self-interest' and is therefore not narcissistic. He contends, however, that Stevens is precisely this, because his 'self-sacrifice to the ego-ideal' of the father is 'deeply narcissistic and devoted to the ideal within his own ego.'

⁵⁸ Lacan argues that the unconscious is analogous to the displacement and condensation of experience in Freud's dream theory; is not random or chaotic but a network structured like a language, and the kernel of our being.

5.3 Two essays on NLG: McDonald (2007: 81-2) applies Lacan's idea of the 'subject', linking it to the autobiography. This genre, usually associated with authenticity, is undermined by having a clone as a narrator. He regards the whole novel as representing the symbolic field of the lost, especially the final scene in Norfolk, where all the past losses wash up. In Summers-Bremner's (2006: 146) *Poor Creatures*, death is explored as an aspect usually avoided by science and technology. She argues that the Lacanian distinction between the subjective human being and the biological animal, lies in the impasse between the language we use in dealing with death and the primal impulses in the animal kingdom, which are 'pre-given' and 'unthinkable'.

5.4 Westerman, and Reitano – theme and its realisation in narrative method:

On RD, Westerman (2004:157-170) pursues Stevens's split subjectivity in terms of the unreliable narrator – (Wall's 'struggles on the page').⁵⁹ Stevens's words provide the symbolic order and Stevens senior provides the rule of the father. She argues that Stevens, in trying to 'stabilize his identity', has identified himself with Darlington Hall as both his home (private) and his workplace (public). He 'objectifies himself' by internalising a deep divide in, what she calls, the social stereotype of the English butler. His narrative mode 'inscribes his ever-conflicted subject position,' and she cites Wall, arguing that the narrative frame structure (split in time), and all Stevens's inconsistencies, gaps, repetitions, lies and revisions, 'constitute' the story itself, and that he is the 'reliable narrator of *that* story, only by including the contradictions.' Noting Stevens's introspective nature, she elaborates:

'What Stevens enacts on the page is a personal utterance...an expression of his life within, creating, and created by a symbolic structure – language, texts, mythology and an internalized father.'

Stevens, by 1956, Westerman claims, with historical change and his world in disarray, wants fixity of meaning. He wants repetition to stabilise his self-stereotype. She posits the Lacanian mirror stage of identity formation for him. This, I see as a primary narcissism, running counter to Stevens's changing self, when, late in life, he recognises his need for human warmth with others.

⁵⁹ Wall's idea of unreliability for the narrator is that 'split subjectivity, rather than moral blindness or intellectual bias', gives rise to unreliable narration.

5.5 Reitano (2007: 361-386), using the motif of ‘the good wound’ in *U*, positions Ryder’s state of mind as a ‘crisis of universalization in an international Imaginary’, or Lacanian ‘homogenisation’, found in both the city spaces and the globalised life, so that Ryder’s mind lacks any sense of difference or otherness. She finds that a ‘founding trauma’ underlies the imaginary order in Ryder’s narrative world of disturbed landscapes, and this trauma is an ‘agency’ in the memory for ‘editorial control’ over his own story. The way Ishiguro privileges Ryder’s memory enables him to ‘disconnect, resurrect, banish, restore or revise at will’, and is part of the ‘Imaginary seamlessness between dream and awakening.’ Ryder’s control is ‘megalomania’ and applicable to all the other would-be musician figures. Significantly, she does identify Ryder’s ‘attribution of his weaknesses to others’ (368) but sees it only in terms of Freud’s ‘repetition compulsion’ (Freud, 1920g). She finds trauma wounds from professional failures in all the musicians, who all seek consolation for their own and the community’s wounds, by investing in what she calls ‘aesthetic production’. The whole novel, she believes, is a challenge to the ‘myth of total community.’