RESEARCH ARTICLE

ISHIGURO AND THE ABANDONED CHILD: THE PARODY OF INTERNATIONAL CRISIS AND REPRESENTATION IN *WHEN WE WERE ORPHANS*

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ABSTRACT

Returning to Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *When We Were Orphans* (2000) from a current period of crisis in international responsibilities, the abandoned child at the novel's centre gains renewed significance. Here, as in modern history, this child is peculiarly effective in activating such responsibilities, apparently transcending national borders. Reading *Orphans* through Ishiguro's persistent engagements with international crises and his reception as a transnational author, this article ties two major strands in studies of Ishiguro — his complicated internationalism, and his critique of politics based on affect and identity. *Orphans* emerges here as a sustained parody of the failings of affect as a basis for both political representation and international action, prefiguring themes in Ishiguro's later novels. Christopher Banks, the protagonist, is received as both the abandoned child *and* as that child's Western rescuer, which leads to his ludicrous attempt to resolve a global crisis. Ishiguro's parody of the culture that generates this attempt suggests that the collapse of aesthetics and politics into one another, even in the compelling figure of the abandoned child, perpetuates the very crises it seeks to resolve. This not only requires rereading *Orphans* within Ishiguro's oeuvre; it emphasizes his renewed significance for a contemporary period struggling to avoid repeating the political and humanitarian disasters of the twentieth century.

Keywords: aesthetics, ethics of representation, globalization, international crisis, Kazuo Ishiguro, the child in politics

Ishiguro and international crisis

Kazuo Ishiguro's works and life have been repeatedly received as embodying anxieties over globalization, migration and international conflict (Sim, 2006). Ishiguro's writing, haunted by the disasters of the mid-twentieth century, resonates powerfully with a con- temporary situation increasingly perceived (including by Ishiguro himself; Devlin, 2016)as having failed to learn sufficiently from those disasters, thus risking their repetition.

Ishiguro's reception has often mediated these themes through a persistent interest in the author as a child who moved with his parents from Japan to England, and as an adult writer allegedly still caught within that migration; as Rebecca L. Walkowitz pointedly notes, "Ishiguro has lived in England since the age of six, was educated in England, writes in English, but he is regularly compared with 'modern Japanese novelists' all the same" (2001: 1054). This assignment of an essential Japanese identity (discussed by Karni, 2015: 321) does not preclude framing Ishiguro as a representative figure for later twentieth-century globalization; instead, accounts of his "Japanese" and "global" identi-ties merge through the assumed trauma of his childhood migration (which he refutes; Ishiguro et al., 2005). Such criticism also often gestures to that migration's presumed context: the then-recent war, and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, in which Ishiguro's mother was injured (Wroe, 2005: n.p.). Ishiguro's novels are often read as providing aesthetic representations for international crises not only through their content, but through assumptions about Ishiguro's transnational childhood: a dominant theme in his reception since 1982 — one increasingly challenged (Beedham, 2009), but persistent.

I shall argue that Ishiguro *parodies* this in the (mis)uses of the protagonist's childhood in *When We Were Orphans* (2000), targeting the collapse of affective and political signifi-cation underpinning the author's own reception, and implicating it in crises of global responsibility. Christopher Banks' childhood in the early twentieth-century Shanghai International Settlement is subject to constant reinterpretation by Banks himself and by others, following the disappearances of his parents, his migration to England, and his adult career as a private detective. Throughout, Banks is treated as the aesthetic and political embodiment of a moral demand made by international crisis (a role arising from his moment as an abandoned child and culminating in his return to Shanghai), and of its poten-tial resolution. The excessive expectations on Banks parody Ishiguro's own reception, clarifying his deliberative response to that reception as a sustained element of his writing (Karni, 2015: 325; Luo, 2003). They also emerge, as I shall argue, as generative of his later critiques of a politics conditional on aesthetics (Black, 2009) and affective identification.

From interwar England in *The Remains of the Day* (1989), to traumatized post-war Japan in *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), to the uncanny counter-historical post-war Britain in *Never Let Me Go* (2005), aesthetic ideas repeatedly determine political actions in Ishiguro's work, to disastrous effect; *Orphans* makes a disturbingly compelling case that they also underpin failed responses to crises in the global economic and political order. Following Sim (2006) and Bain (2007), I read *Orphans* as responding to such crises during its late-1990s composition, but also as fore-shadowing the current largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II (Martin, 2016:5), a crisis sometimes represented as a hostile invasion given cover by images of children

Children floating in the world

Christopher Banks, the protagonist of *Orphans*, is the son of British parents, a business-man father and a politically activist mother. After his parents' consecutive mysterious disappearances, Banks is taken to England. Years later, having become a private detec- tive, he returns to Shanghai to search for his parents, a project that curiously merges into attempting to resolve a developing global conflict, where Banks ultimately acts as the abandoned child exiled from his homeland *and* as that child's European saviour. Yet rather than endorsing his protagonist's representation of either figure, Ishiguro intensi- fies their perversity. It is the excessive and *literal* qualities of this representation that turn Banks' story into parody; he is not only a child abandoned in a globalized place, to be readopted by his "homeland", he must later return abroad to heal the homeland's moral borders, even if this requires the adult Banks to abandon an actual child (his ward, Jennifer). Once there, an official demands to discuss a ceremony welcoming Banks' parents before they have even been found; the aesthetic resolution takes political prece- dence over material and bodily reality. Yet as with other seemingly absurd institutions created by Ishiguro (the over-ritualized Darlington Hall in *Remains*, the civic society that demands Ryder perform but never lets him rehearse in *The Unconsoled* (1995), the com-plicit Hailsham in *Never Let Me Go*), this is an uncanny parody, closer to real history than is comfortable.

As Shameem Black (2009: 790) observes, Ishiguro explores "failure[s] of representa-tion to encourage action on others' behalf", reflecting anxieties surrounding the apparent global expansion of "Western" political

and humanitarian responsibility in the later twentieth century (Bain, 2007; Walkowitz, 2007). In *Orphans*, written whilst Western interventionism was politically dominant, this theme is embodied in the image of the abandoned child. In modern and recent history, this image is an aesthetic representation that produces political action, seemingly even transcending the fraught modern boundaries of acknowledged responsibility — ethnicity, nationality, and their territorial borders, as made visible in recent cases: after three-year-old Syrian Alan Kurdi died in September 2015, a widely-reproduced photograph of his body lying on a beach provoked significant acceleration in promises of safe channels for refugees. UK Prime Minister David Cameron cited Kurdi's image: "[Like] anyone who saw [it] I felt deeply moved by the sight of that young boy […] Britain is a moral nation and we will fulfil our moral responsibilities" (Dathan, 2015: n.p.). In August 2016, the image of another boy, five-year-old Omran Daqneesh, sitting in an ambulance in Aleppo, covered in dust and blood from a head wound, was similarly reproduced across international media.[2] Sitting alone as though already being exhibited, he embodied the awful vulnerability of children in war. As Vicky Lebeau (2008: 136) observes, the child's body becomes both an aestheticization of pain and a limit to that aesthetic, demanding action. Yet the image through which the demand is made — and through which affect is ambivalently both generated and contained — becomes a *precondition* for action.

The images of Kurdi and Daqneesh follow a long tradition of using the abandoned child to compel a global responsibility, based on the child's recognition as a deserving object for affective identification (Cameron identified with Kurdi for "a moral nation" and "as a father"; Dathan, 2015: n.p.). Here, affect seems to be working in the sense argued by Jacques Lacan (2007/1969–1970): the apparent primacy of emotional and embodied investment in the image that provokes it — as in the abandoned child, with his seeming transcendence of territorial, ethnic, and identitarian limits on responsibility. Affect *appears* as uniquely unrepressed; however, Lacan claimed, affect actually does arise from a repressed signifier, but attaches itself so perfectly to a new idea that the repression is invisible. Here, affect arises from the abandoned child's body, but is instantly reattached to the image of that body as rewritten by (in this example) Cameron, in a rhetorical adoption that erases the material fracturing of territorial borders that the floating child has produced.

In that rhetoric, a national identity permits the expansion of affect, whilst the child's supposedly universally legible demand for affect permits the expansion of national iden-tity: here, affect and identity are each constitutive of the other, each permitting the other to be recognized, conferring a right to some form of political representation, but in a form undifferentiated from the aesthetic. This aesthetic depends on the child being utterly passive, vulnerable, abandoned, and ends by restoring the coherence of national and ter-ritorial identity, resolving a disturbing border fracture. This child is the object of defer- ence, yet denied agency, a position Ishiguro ironically visualizes immediately after the elder Banks' disappearances, with the young Christopher amongst powerful men delib- erating his fate:

> I was sitting in […] the centre of the room. I could sense it was a chair reserved only for the most important of personages, but on this occasion, owing to the gravity of the circumstances, or perhaps as a sort of consolation, it had been given to me. […] No matter how I tried, I could not find a dignified way to sit in it. (Ishiguro, 2000: 24)[3]

"Gravity" and "consolation", yet no dignity, accompany the abandoned child. As Lebeau notes, "the rights of the child to protection" — across borders — is a "fundamen-tal tenet of post-war international society" (2008: 135). In fact, as early as the Second Boer War, images of dying children were used by anti-war campaigners to compel inter-national action (Hasian, 2014: 68–89). Later, Nick Ut's photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phúc, a running nine-year-old girl, badly burned in a napalm attack, would become an infamous image of the Vietnam War. Similarly, images of 12-year-old Ali Ismail Abbas, who lost both limbs and most of his family in a botched US bombing during the 2003 Iraq invasion, led to Abbas's treatment and eventual settlement in Britain. When then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump declared that he would "look Syrian children in the face" and deny them entry to the United States (Revesz, 2016: n.p.), he acknowledged the storied moral imperative in the image even whilst refusing it.

This imperative also applies retrospectively. Anne Frank's *Diary* (1997/1952) is almost always published with her image on the cover, as though embodying the central imperative from her story. W. G. Sebald's novel of the Holocaust and the legacies of modern colonialism, *Austerlitz* (2001) is also structured around a photograph of an abandoned child (reproduced inside the book, often also on the cover), as though only this could provide an appropriate aesthetic representation for political failures that otherwise frustrate all representation (an expectation, ironically, frustrated in Sebald's novel; MillerBudick, 2015: 218).

It seems to be *only* the child, *as* child, who is automatically recognized as deserving rescue. The reassurance Cameron carefully telegraphed was that (implicitly, unlike an adult refugee) there's nothing to fear about the child — no private intentions. Saving this child even retrieves the nation's own interior identity against a traumatic crisis encroaching upon its borders. Compassion is permitted because the child, imagined as a blank vessel of raw suffering, can be aesthetically drawn within the nation's vision of itself. However, this affective image is not always reliable in effect, as shown in October 2016 when British tabloids published photographs of individuals supposedly brought under the Dubs Amendment (legislation for transfer of unaccompanied child refugees) who looked like adults, not children.[4] This reflected a fundamental ambiguity in the function of the abandoned child's image: it seems to transcend nationality and evoke a global responsibility. However, this responsibility is immediately reconciled back to a national identity, precisely by imagining the child as a vulnerable blank, a neo-Romantic child (Higonnet, 1998; Lebeau, 2008: 61–69), open to identification by and with the Western nation. When the age of the child's body and the innocence of his or her inten-tions are called into question, however, so is that identification.

The image of even the accepted refugee child functions as aesthetic *revelation*, not as a potential change to political representation, remaining within "a chronically one- sided dialogue" that the other is rhetorically "invited to join but not change" (Morey and Yaqin, 2011: 2). But what if the "global" — that is, displaced and unhomed — situation of the abandoned child risks providing not a blank mind that the receiving state can adopt, but something else? Not merely the unhomed, but the *unheimliche*, some uncanny sign that the child already has an interior life that cannot be made transparent. Curiously, such signs of the mind recall how this child initially appears — as an unknown yet material *body* that has fractured a border. Resisting secure identification, this child can then only be read as abject, in Kristeva's (1982) sense of the breakdown of meaning before an awkward and unwelcome material body, the limit of the symbolic order — here the limit of the simultaneously political and aesthetic representation in the abandoned child's image.

Such a body reappears when the adult Banks travels by car through Shanghai towards, ironically, his (alleged) own childhood home:

> The pavements were filled with huddled figures […] of every age — I could see babies asleep in mothers' arms — and their belongings were all around them; ragged bundles […] mostly Chinese, but as we came towards the end of the street, I saw clusters of European children […] when once I thought we had run over a sleeping form, and glanced back in alarm, my companion merely murmured: "Don't worry. Probably just some old bundle." (182–83)

Here the child complicates the foreign nature of the refugees, a potentially but ambiguously "European" presence, like Banks himself. The uncertainty over whether the car has hit a child, another refugee, or merely a "bundle", emphasizes how the abandoned child's materiality is both at stake in and secondary to the extension or withdrawal of affective identification (the "bundle" also echoes the lost possessions of Banks' ward Jennifer, with their uncertain relation to her interior life; 132).

Ishiguro has often made children the objects of violently alternating celebration and paranoia — in *The Buried Giant* (2015), where a boy is exiled for being contaminated by an "ogre bite" (2015: 189), and in *Never Let Me Go* (2005), where cloned children are ultimately abandoned by a system designed to cultivate a liberal aesthetics of affect (Black, 2009). This theme already emerges in *Orphans*, where it is manifested in the reactions of other characters to Christopher Banks, and in qualities they ascribe to him that are *not* empirically visible, but nevertheless visualized as existing within him. These presumed narratives, which appear *inter alia* as

responses to the sight of Banks, echo theabandoned child's role in modern visual–political culture. Banks, like the abandoned children described above, is aesthetically constructed as occupying a particular represen-tational position towards the nation threatened by global crisis; yet he also becomes an object of anxiety when his actions fail to fulfil this aesthetic. Banks' reception parodies assumptions that Ishiguro's own childhood, whilst not "abandoned", was both traumatiz-ing in its transnationality and yet gave him special insights into "themes of global signifi-cance" (Waugh, 2011: 15). Ishiguro makes this reception encompass both ethnic and quasi-psychoanalytic versions of the child as the root of an essential identity. Ishiguro'suncanny echoes of his own reception in Banks emphasizes how the use of the abandonedchild reflects not only moments of "crisis" but also the broader conditions of economic globalization and transnational migration.

In these conditions, the uncanny and abject qualities of the migrant child's body are never fully dispelled, as the tabloid panic over Dubs confirmed. Ishiguro (writing*Orphans* before 9/11) associates paranoia towards the abandoned child with the sus- pected embodiment not of a Muslim migrant enemy but of the denial of all ethno-nationalidentity: the Jew, as imagined in modern anti-Semitism as signifying an abject gap or discontinuity between the formal institutions of political representation and the ethnic nation (Snyder, 2015) — the gap always risked by "globalized" economies. Ishiguro hadalready dramatized this in *Remains*, when two young Jewish servants at Darlington Hall are dismissed because of their presumed endogenous link to international "Jewry" (1989: 158). Both Stevens and Lord Darlington refuse the extension of affect and responsibilityto these Jewish women, who are not to be identified with the ethnic nation, but rather perceived as foreign bodies using economic mobility to compromise the coherence of territory and identity.

This anti-Semitic logic haunts *Orphans*. As Sir Cecil Medhurst tells Banks in 1930:

"There'll always be evil lurking […] they're busy, even now, even as we speak, busy conspiringto put civilization to the torch. […] The evil ones are much too cunning for your ordinary decentcitizen […] we'll need to rely more than ever on the likes of you, my young friend. The few onour side every bit as clever as they are. Who'll spot their game quickly, destroy the fungus before it takes hold and spreads". (43–44)

Note the curious equivalence between "clever" Christopher and "the evil ones". This rhetoric of conspiracy as a bacterial growth clearly suggests anti-Semitism, yet it unexpectedly echoes the language directed towards the Chinese workers of Shantung earlier in the novel, cast by a company official as biomedically and morally dangerous (59). Ishiguro, then, evokes particular paranoias surrounding globalization and migration, including interwar anti-Semitism, but then uncannily renders them in general or *formal* terms, marked by persistent repetition even as their objects change, even becoming applied to Banks himself through others' readings of his childhood. In this slippage, themorally-elevated abandoned child becomes the uncanny mirror of the abject figure whoembodies all that is unacceptable in a globalized economy, "international settlement"— or international crisis.

In *Orphans*, then, the affective identification mediated in the abandoned child is a means of appearing to address global crises that ironically evades the revisions to repre-sentation that such crises demand. It also evades even such demands when made prag- matically by the normal bodily co-presence of different nationalities in globalizedterritories, like the Settlement of Banks' childhood.

Hannah Arendt argued that a genuine "politics" aims to negotiate and potentially *revise* the future (1958: 55–56); yet in modernity, Arendt claimed, this is actually a rarething, replaced by a quasi-aesthetic "fiction" that forecloses the future, embodying it in a present that requires mere management, not political representation (1958: 32–33; 44–45). In this fiction, politics repudiates its own basis in created institutions governed by the public decisions of human agents with private lives, which are recast as mere organs of an essential reality with no distinction between public and private: now, Arendtnoted, bodies cannot be banal; they must be meaningful, open to reading, which means that politics necessarily becomes aesthetic, with visible bodies always assumed toembody invisible but essential realities. Hence the physical coexistence of bodies in globalized territories (of which the abandoned child washed up on a beach is an extremecase) causes problems.

When economic globalization demands new institutions, as with the governingarrangements of the International Settlement in *Orphans*, they operate only as contingent mechanisms to maintain an uneasy equilibrium ("settlement") between rival essentialist national identities. They are haunted by the repressed possibility that children present in such places might *not* be reconcilable back to an ethno-national identity, that they might demand that international institutions function as political in Arendt's terms, rather than evading the future even when they appear to embrace its embodiment, the child himself. Hence the adult Banks' actual words are repeatedly dismissed by others; he is to be *read* as an aesthetic representation, not to speak for himself.

Interiors and others

Christopher's mother Diana, upper middle-class British campaigner against the opium trade, creates a small international community within her home, to the chagrin of her husband's employer (58–60). Her hospitality disrupts the Settlement's political norms, which make an individual's status conditional on acknowledgement of some essential "interior" identity, site of either affective identification or of abjection. Hence the parents of Christopher's friend Akira maintain a deep interior within their house, where behind "the outer, 'western' side" with oak panelling, lies an inner, "Japanese" room of "delicate paper with lacquer inlays" (72) — an aesthetic, interior *vision* of essential identity given political power, paradoxically, by its removal from external visibility.

The spatial "interiors" created by the Settlement's inhabitants accordingly remain primarily *imagined* spaces, separated from the bathos of material contact: when Christopher and Akira dare each other to enter the room of Akira's Chinese family serv-ant Ling Tien, whom they imagine practises dark magic, they finally enter only to find the room empty of anything untoward, yet nevertheless subsequently maintain that they braved great danger. Their vision of a dark ethnic interior depends on the actual, empty room *not* being seen, though it must be constantly visualized. In Kristeva's sense of the abject as that which cannot be assimilated symbolically, the banality of the room the boys enter, its failure to reveal *anything of meaning*, exposes this fear, which mirrors the Settlement's structural logic: the potential *political* question raised by the material presence of the Chinese, and their simultaneous absence from political representation, is resolved by their *aesthetic* representation as abject, maintaining an equilibrium that leaves their spatial and human interiors closed but securely known, rather than dangerously open, as in Diana's home.

There are two versions of the abject here: the dramatization of it as monstrous, and the more feared version that the latter covers for, the version that is embodied but banal, which fails to deliver transparent meaning, and which the boys find in the nondescript contents of Tien's room. This provokes a question concerning who can be represented as human, and on what terms, as betrayed in Christopher and Akira's story about Tien turning severed hands into spiders, contaminating the human with the non-human (91–92). Tien's room, in its very banal materiality, exposes the Settlement's latent instability in its answer to this question, in the curiously aesthetic political order that seeks to prevent disruptive and traumatic claims of responsibility, and of any right to representation, for the other by imagining both abject and affective "interiors". This finds echoes in Lacanian thought, in its connections between affect, aesthetics, and control:[5]

> [For Lacan] all "feeling of Self" is immediately captured, captivated, by the "image of the other" (1961: 181). Out, then, with the feeling of "self", since now it is seen in the other, instead of being *felt* in him, as him; and theorised or reflected affect [...] is no longer lived affect. (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991: 59)

According to Lacan, then, the eruption of affect is always instantly subsumed by an order that produces affect in images, available on demand — and thus makes affect predictable, but changes its nature. This is pertinent for the history of the abandoned child, and for Ishiguro's dramatization of this history in his Settlement, which makes "theorized" affect the basis for its political system — itself a system of images — in order no longer to "live" it, curtailing the unbearable expansion of responsibility in a globalized environment, and curbing disruptive transnational hospitality.

When affect is "theorized" in this way, its acceptance is made *dependent* on the image that reveals the other's essential ethno-national identity, his "interior"; the burden subtly shifts to him to maintain such an image,

as Akira's parents do. The only alternative is abjection, which attracts either containment (as with Ling Tien) or deportation (as attempted upon Diana Banks' servants). The instability demonstrated during the penetration of Tien's room, itself an alternative deep interior to that of Akira's Japanese parentsin the same house, shows affect functioning as the doppelgänger of the abject in this political order. The equivalence of psychic and spatial interiors in *Orphans* indicates howthe right to be inside the Settlement's territory is conditional on providing an *image* of one's "interior", a condition Diana Banks' migrant servants (her "friends"; 58) fail to meet. Ishiguro's Settlement realizes the conditions described by Arendt, when a politicalorder allows no private life, no banal existence, beyond its gaze.

Christopher faces demands to reveal his own interior later in life, which he ultimatelymeets, ironically, through his return to Shanghai — where Banks' "recognition" of the interior of his old home, and of much else, is highly questionable. These later dubious identifications echo the premium on *affective* identification in the Settlement of Banks' childhood, where the individual's ethno-national "interior" is considered *more real* than the material circumstances and physical proximities established by the Settlement's globalized economy.

This aesthetics of interiority code an essentialist biopolitics emerging as *Orphans* builds towards the genocidal conflicts of the mid-century. Here the possibility of changing political representation through the encounters created by globalized economies is eliminated; yet the Settlement's order is nevertheless undermined in the relationship between Christopher and Akira: an extended transnational encounter and each boy's first major relationship outside his own Oedipal triangle, this comes under threat from the boys' reidentifications with their "home" nations (72–73); the latter turns traumatic in itseffects — temporarily when Akira goes to Japan, then permanently when Christopher istaken to England.

This friendship, emerging before Banks' own place in an aestheticized political order becomes thoroughly internalized, has an easy creativity Banks struggles to replicate in his adult relationships (most notably with Sarah Hemmings). Banks' richest interior lifeemerges from his play with Akira, but its significance only emerges decades later, in a miniature global crisis caused by Banks diverting himself, and the military resources ofothers, to assist someone he calls (but who probably isn't) Akira. In Akira, Christopher finds (and retains) *felt* affect, outside the Settlement's order, though — ironically — a product of its material spaces. This friendship's legacy shows that the abandoned child isnot a blank for easy adoption into a "home" culture, nor is such adoption a solution to global problems — a powerful trope that Ishiguro devastatingly parodies through presenting it to Banks as a literal demand.

The global scene

Years after his rescue mission to Shanghai collapses, Banks apparently finally finds his mother, institutionalized in Hong Kong. He has already been told that she was sold, enslaved, to the warlord Wang Ku, in order to protect his own life and financial support.Yet this "reunion" turns out not as an explanatory and affective resolution of Banks' childhood abandonment, but rather an encounter with a disruptive alterity embedded in the meeting's conditions, as Banks' description of arriving in an increasingly globalizedHong Kong, a "vague echo of Shanghai", betrays: "It was as though I had come upon a […] cousin of a woman I once loved; whose gestures, facial expressions, little shrugs nudge the memory, but who remains, overall, an awkward, even grotesque parody of a much-cherished image"

Banks lives an Oedipal life: his loving relationship with his mother is disrupted whenhe is "orphaned" and exiled. He becomes a detective — like Oedipus, a solver of riddles— before eventually returning to his parents' city. Yet Banks seemingly gains what Freud's Oedipal subject is usually denied — the mother's retrieval — but nevertheless ironically retains what that subject struggles to escape: the traumatic disruption of recognition, specifically the psychoanalytically foundational (Lacan, 2007/1949; Winnicott, 1971: 111) recognition of the mother's face as *she* recognizes her child. *Orphans* paro- dies the appropriation of such recognition as a precondition for political representation, in the presumed and internalized narratives about essential origins directed towards Banks, which combine the ethnic and the psychoanalytic, converging on a retrieval of themother expected to fulfil the promise of the novel's title, resolving Banks' orphaned status and

the rupturing of borders in which it is implicated. However, this woman fails to deliver, and in this brings back the material body and uncertain interiority either washed up from a crisis or present because of an economic imperative that does not servea transparent essential identity. The Diana in Hong Kong combines both.

The significance of these ironies is shown by a reading that partly overlooks them: Alexander M. Bain reads *Orphans* as a dark parody of Western interventionism (2007: 242–45) concluded by the revelation of Banks' financial support from his mother's self-sacrifice to the warlord Wang Ku, and the amoral corporation employing Banks' father, with the deal brokered by the liberal globalist, Philip. Reading the interlinked revelation encompassing both Banks' return to Shanghai and his later journey to Hong Kong, Bain says:

> The introduction of Diana Banks and Wang Ku as the joint financial spectre of Christopher's life is more than an eruptive moment […] rather […] a story about accumulation through invisible labour. What's in the darkness behind Banks is a process — an ongoing, unending history — that has made a product. The product is, of course, him. (2007: 256)[6]

Here, Bain concludes, Banks has discovered "the never-ending and unpalatable condi- tion that will always underwrite his intentions and his resources" (2007: 258): Banks is indeed a special representation of the heart of a globalized darkness, not its saviour. Diana's failure to recognize her son, Bain suggests, confirms his representational func- tion; *she*, the victim of the system he represents, may not recognize him, but, ironically, *we* now fully do so.

Bain's reading of *Orphans* is a rich and rigorous one, rightly situating the novel as parody of late twentieth-century "Western" responses to globalization, always compro- mised by a history of colonialist and capitalist exploitation. Yet Bain does not quite rec-ognize how Ishiguro's parody extends to the idea of revealing the heart of global crises through Banks as representational figure. As Christopher Ringrose observes, it is danger-ous to take Banks' "final reflections (and Uncle Philip's revelations) as non-ironic and stable" (2011: 173). In this instability, *Orphans*' conclusion parodies the central revela-tion in Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) and builds (in an allusion Bain does discuss)on the ambivalent revelations in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), with its famous framing suggestion that "the meaning […] was not inside like a kernel, but outside" (2007/1899: 6).

Bain claims that Banks' invisible position in an order of global exploitation wholly encompasses not only his resources, but his *intentions* too. Certainly, the representationalfunction ascribed to Banks has overwhelming effects on his sense and performance of self; yet even during this performance, Banks repeatedly gets distracted: by searching forAkira — now possibly an enemy combatant; by his relationship with Sarah Hemmings;and even by the man who apparently now owns his childhood home. All these are obscure"intentions" that don't fit Banks as solely "produced" representation, legacies of his moments of growing sideways.

In Ishiguro's layered irony, the historical repetition of violence and exploitation is notonly the product of globalizing capitalism characterized by hidden coherence, as Bain argues, but arises from repeated *political* failures to extend representation other than oncondition of aesthetic revelation and affective identification. As these politics require elements of globalization (its production of material wealth) but abjure others (the fracturing of territorial borders), the results in *Orphans* seem marked less by fundamental coherence than by constant attempts to violently impose coherence where it is lacking, which include the aesthetic treatments parodied in *Orphans*' use of the abandoned child.Such aesthetic coherence, for political ends, marks damaging treatments of Banks from the right-wing Moorly to the apparently utopian globalist Philip.

Rehearsing this treatment of Banks as an inevitably aesthetic representational figure for a political system, endogenously marked since childhood, Bain sees the novel con- verging on recognition, in and through Banks, of a "single source" of which "crises leapinto focus as the unwelcome offspring" (2007: 256). Yet as Daniel Pick argues, the rev-elation of someone as "a mere product of 'the age', the empty recipients of historical discourse" (2012: 251) can, counterintuitively, *de facto* function to aggrandize that figurewithin an essentialist frame.

Arendt describes the "temptation of recognition which, in no matter what form, can only recognise us *as* such and such, that is, as something which we fundamentally are *not*" (2003: 13). Such recognition deprives the individual of the private life she saw as necessary for his genuine political representation: in reading Banks as ultimately a figure for — and only for — recognition, whilst the vision of the global thus exposed is a dark one, its darkness is wholly known in Banks, not truly hidden or private (echoing, ironically, the abject and affective "interiors" in *Orphans*). Thomas Docherty, noting how Arendt counters the belief that "action […] necessarily derives from an essential self-hood" (2016: 3), argues that "the bonds that we make in the past" via such an aesthetic basis for political representation are "actually a means of avoiding our bonds with the present" (2016: 20). Banks' representational status (always identified with his own past: his childhood) encourages such avoidance — and thus fulfils the use of the abandoned child's image observed earlier, in restoring an anxious coherence to identity and territory fractured by the migrations arising from international crisis and economic globalization, and thus avoiding any revision to political representation.

However, Banks himself begins, though ambivalently, to drop this avoidance in the meeting with the "Diana" of Hong Kong. He begins, instead, to attend precisely to the bonds of the present — to the woman actually sitting before him, withdrawing from a rejected physical embrace of her as mother in favour of conversation with her as a distant but welcome companion (304–05). The true identity of the woman Banks calls his mother, which has rarely been questioned, is in fact ambiguous.[7] Banks has made several irrational identifications already by this point: he sees "Akira" first as a businessman (166) and then a wounded soldier (249), ignoring the sightings' mutual incompatibility; he thinks he remembers seeing Wang Ku, but this is probably the power of suggestion (117); he expects to find his (presumably long deceased) childhood *amah* still living (195). Though Banks never acknowledges it, logically his parents may well have died too between their disappearance (as he left Cambridge in 1923 (3), this presumably occurred c.1908–1912) and his 1937 return to Shanghai.

This renders his 1958 identification of Diana (whom he last saw approximately 48 years ago, when aged ten; 93) in Hong Kong deeply suspect, though this has not been much acknowledged in criticism of *Orphans* thus far. This woman does not recognize the man before her as her son; she seemingly recognizes "Puffin" as Banks' childhood nick-name, but this is hardly unambiguous from an author known for portraying unreliable memory through unreliable narrators, a long-running Ishiguro theme that Gillian Harding-Russell (2002) reads as most fully realized in this novel. Banks' own repressed doubt is betrayed in his framing metaphor about "the distant cousin of a woman I once loved" in describing the visit. Following these hints that the woman in Hong Kong *may not be Banks' mother at all*, the whole meeting turns the revelation it initially appears to confirm on its head.

Whilst we began with the "blank" abandoned child as aesthetic resolution of global crisis, this elderly woman is a wholly opposite figure for the global, one of irreducible private history, who *cannot* be securely identified. This woman could be his mother, or anyone in the world. Bain notes that the revelations about Banks' background pose the question of "what if" the victims of the globalized economy "were not someone else's parent […] but your own?" (2007: 256), yet this is only half the effect: the "Diana" of Hong Kong demands an encounter that cannot be reduced back to Banks' (or anyone's) affective identification; such identification is in crisis at the moment it "ought" to be affirmed by the abandoned child retrieving his mother. Nevertheless, Banks is actually consoled by the encounter. Is this just because he clings to his identification of the woman, repressing all logical doubts? Possibly — yet he copes with the woman's failure to recognize him, and continues the conversation.

Good manners and globalization

Banks describes the scene later to his ward:

> "Do you really suppose", Jennifer asked, "she had no inkling at all who you were?"

> "I'm sure she didn't. But she meant what she said, and she knew what she was saying. […] If you'd seen her face, when I first said that name, you'd have no doubt about it either." (306)

Banks leaves confident that the Diana of Hong Kong "meant what she said" — but whatdoes that mean to *him*, given her failure of recognition? Diana's face is the source of reassurance about the meaning of her words; Banks is still trying to read her. Subtly, though, this dubious identification allows him to have a conversation with the woman who does not herself recognize it. Ishiguro, commenting on globalization in an interview, once countered a critical desire to read the "internal" lives of others by proposing rather externalized "manners":

> I should talk to people in a way that they understand. If you're talking to someone who just flew in from China or Rome you will talk to them in a slightly different way than to someone who has grown up alongside you […] It's just good manners, really. (qtd. in Groes and Lewis,2011: 2)

Ishiguro's pragmatism indicates a higher ethical imperative than one for affective identification — for, instead, dialogue through "good manners". This is the mode of dialogueBanks accepts in Hong Kong. He accepts, also, this Diana's refusal of his physical embrace, and of the claim about affect, identity, and originary ownership it (literally) embodies; Banks continues the conversation, even though this claim is no longer its precondition. Though this Diana's body is not given to him for affective identification, he does not treat it as abject, but rather accepts the formality of listening to her words, reaching the assertive yet ambiguous conclusion that she "meant what she said". This isalso to accept his own status as abandoned child all over again, finding a consolation even as the globalized gap between body, institution, and identity reopens. Banks' iden-tification of this woman as his mother may have produced the sort of accidental encoun-ter that globalized spaces have given rise to throughout the novel, and now also a dialoguethat the other is invited to join *and* to change; the Diana of Hong Kong *does* change it, by withholding recognition.

Banks is granted access to the institution housing "Diana" without explaining their "true" relationship, in a striking reversal of how visible affective identification conditioned access to spaces in the Settlement. When Banks himself decides not to demand that "Diana" recognize their relationship, her asylum becomes an ironic yet suggestive version of an international institution offering not a utopian space of shared identity,but an opportunity for a dialogue, without demanding to know the ethnic or affective interior of the other as a precondition. This reflects the conditions Arendt thought necessary for real politics, and which our contemporary identitarian politics largely refuse in responding to the migrations produced by economic globalization and international crises.[8] Following this example, international institutions might ultimately be concerned with revising current political representation (at its most basic, a matter of whois allowed to speak and on what basis, the issue confronting Banks in the asylum) to avoid repetition of past disasters (as real institutions referenced in *Orphans*, like the League of Nations, once attempted). This echoes Timothy Snyder's account of the Holocaust — one disaster of global responsibility haunting *Orphans* — as produced by withdrawal of institutions, the elimination of the gap between the institution and essential identity, created when an institution allows access to those who fail to embodysuch an identity on demand. This is the violent elimination Ishiguro dramatized in *Remains*, in the dismissal of the Jewish servants, and in the ultimate failure of Hailshamin *Never Let Me Go*. In *Orphans*, it targets the gap to which economic globalizationand international "settlements" give rise.

Orphans parodies the use of an aesthetics of affect as a condition for political represent reflecting both Ishiguro's ironic engagement with international crises and his response tohis own reception. This diagnoses and challenges the reduction of politics to aesthetics not only through the use of visual images, as in the cases with which we began, but in theconditions determining the value of individuals for attention and representation.

This should not be understood as retrieving the utopian narratives of globalization thatBain rightly sees as undermined by *Orphans*. Philip's anti-institutional end of history vision closely mirrors the ethno-national aesthetics it ostensibly opposes. Yet Christopher'sand Akira's childhood relationship, an accidental result of the institutions of the Settlement,shows that such institutions and the encounters within them can create, through the inti-mate and the incidental, precisely the risks of politically consequential disruption that regimes like the Settlement so fear. It is a risk inherent in the globalized conditions neededto produce the wealth to materialize these regimes' aesthetic visions — a risk embodied inthe Jew in the anti-Semitic imagination and the Chinese

labourer in the aestheticized poli-tics of the Settlement. This risk haunts even the children who grow up together in the Settlement, and Banks fulfils it in seeking Akira much later.

Ishiguro's abandoned child, Banks, undermines the use of the abandoned child's image with which we opened: the enduring, though obscure, traces of his childhood demand not affective identification as the condition for crossing borders, but, instead, representation without such aesthetic recognition. In the Diana of Hong Kong's apparent, yet unknowable, recognition of her son's pet name "Puffin" (and throughout *Orphans*) Ishiguro continues to make interiority evident, but not revealed, either to literary scholars or public officials. To extend political representation, the right to speak rather than to be read, and without requiring affective identification as a precondition, is a demand that the politics of our own time particularly struggle to take seriously. Ishiguro shows us the costs of this refusal in his parody of international crisis and representation.

Notes

I. I use "globalization" in reference to when the international reach of economic interests com-plicates and compromises the authority of the nation state, and changes the relations between territory, institutions of political representation, and ethno-national identity. Like Bain (2007), I read *Orphans* as giving the post-Cold War late-1990s globalization and internationalism at the time of its composition an ironic and uncanny history.

II. This image was widely reproduced in major news sources; for example, see Barnard (2016).

III. Subsequent references are to this (2000) edition of *When We Were Orphans* and will be cited parenthetically by page numbers in the text.

IV. This appeared in several British newspapers during October 2016. For example, see Gutteridge (2016).

V. See Lewis (2000: 136–37) on Lacan's relevance for Ishiguro

VI. Bain does qualify his reading of *Orphans* as revelatory; see his note on Baucom (2007: 256).

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