

# Postgraduate English

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ISSN 1756-9761

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Issue 33

Autumn 2016

Editors:

Arya Aryan and Douglass Virdee

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**Changing States: Examining Postmodern Concepts of Adaptation in Ali  
Smith's *Hotel World* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go***

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In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) Jean-François Lyotard reveals the complications in the future anterior word 'postmodern' which is understood as 'not modernism at its end but in the nascent state and this state is constant'.<sup>1</sup> Lyotard subverts the linear trajectory of influence (the death and subsequent rebirth of old ideas) to a dynamic of gestation wherein the 'postmodern' precedes its own existence whilst anticipating a future yet to be conceived. If to be modern is to be present, then modernism is constituted by an existence which is forever elusive and serves as a ghostly presence; whereas, to be postmodern is to pre-empt one's own presence and, hence, to be posthumous. This conflict highlights a key dialogue between postmodern identity and the afterlife as exemplifying a new state of being that is both after itself and projected forward. Similarly, adaptation involves (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation which can be conceived of as either a form of transgressive appropriation or appreciative recollection but is, ultimately, a contemplative act that unsettles any stable sense of identity.

The spectres of modernism still linger within the contemporary space where authenticity is inextricably bound by the traditions inherited from the past because to be postmodern is 'to be ahead of oneself, the consequence is that the writer is somehow always already herself *posthumous* always already the prefiguration of herself as a *revenant*, as a

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-François Lyotard., Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi. *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. p.79.

ghost'.<sup>2</sup> This phantasmal nature of adaptation can be better understood through Michael Alexander's term *palimpsestuous* which indicates the faint traces left on a manuscript that has been scraped off so that the page can be reused. The adapted object is a simulacra of an unobtainable original founded upon (dis)similarity which emphasises reflexivity as 'an act of displacing (in order to replace) the self'.<sup>3</sup> In this case, adaptation is a form of intertextuality since they serve as palimpsests that build layers of significance upon the memory of the reader via other works that reverberate through replication with derivation. Imitation supersedes representation as the essential dynamic of epistemology, of a real without reality, which endangers any explicit division between original and replica. Adaptation is a perpetual dialogical process where texts are said to be composites of quotations in which they are both already written and read. By reinterpreting the past, contemporary writers acknowledge the legacy of canonical authors whilst simultaneously veiling those origins through cultural revisionism: the source of their originality. The satisfaction of experiencing an adaptation results from the familiarity engendered through repetition and recollection as memory is vital to appreciating difference as well as similarity. This article explores the use of posthumous writing in Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (2001) and the posthuman writing in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) in order to understand adaptation as central to the human experience and as such a form of life-writing which in postmodernism becomes *afterlife-writing*. The adaptation is not merely a slavish copy but rather, as Smith and Ishiguro show, takes on a life of its own by embracing its default as a template, not a mould. Ali Smith's *Hotel World* narrates the event, and aftermath, of Sara Wilby's accidental suicide in which she makes a bet with a co-worker that she can fit inside of a hotel's dumbwaiter, only for the cord to break

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Docherty. 'Ghosts; or the Postmodern and the Posthumous'. *Philologia Hispalensis*, 13 (2) (1999) pp. 105-114. Last accessed 1 February 2016. p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Campbell. *Temporalities, Autobiography, And Everyday Life*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. p. 262.

and fall with her inside. Smith's novel traces the repercussions of Sara's death through the lives of six characters (her sister, a journalist, a hotel receptionist, a homeless woman and a female shopkeeper) all of whom are either directly or indirectly related to her and not only explores the ways in which Sara's ghostly presence continues to pervade every aspect of their lives but also charts Sara's own existence as a ghost passing further into annihilation. Many of the same themes of appropriation and spectrality are explored in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* which presents a dystopic vision of England in the 1990s where clones are manufactured for the purpose of harvesting their organs and, in particular, explores the lives of three young donors, Ruth, Tommy, and Kathy, as they strive to understand not only their function in society but their purpose in life. The novel is centred around the children's early years at Hailsham (a boarding school for clones) where the curriculum is designed to both prove that clones possess artistic and intellectual abilities akin to those of a normal human being and emphasise their servile role as donors whose only function is to prolong the life of another. The Hailsham clones and Sara's ghost are authentic in their inauthenticity because their experience is mediated by the recycling of past lives from which they are adapted. Adaptation is a binary process of interpretation and creation which relies on memory to make the adapted form appear both familiar and distant as it exists independent of its original content and 'without a narrative linking the present to the future and the past, there can be no development, only repetition'.<sup>4</sup>

In *Hotel World*, the ghostly protagonist is caught in a freefall between her corporeal death and final spiritual departure from earth as the hotel functions as a purgatory in which to determine unresolved questions from her previous existence. It would be remiss to interpret ghostly phenomena in *Hotel World* as solely an instance of loss or absence since Smith seeks to deconstruct various conventional assumptions regarding spectrality and in turn subvert

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<sup>4</sup> Graham Good. *Humanism Betrayed*. Montreal, Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. p. 65.

standard notions of time and language. To write about the hereafter is to write about the metaphysical, but also necessitates an examination of the metafictional, because the two are ultimately concerned with providing interpretative models for distinguishing between the world of fiction and the world of reality. *Hotel World* positions itself in an arrested jump that is caught between premature cause and incomplete, where motion appears to be suspended in time and Sarah's spectral presence continuously haunts the narratives of other characters. Given that temporality in the afterlife is no longer a linear occurrence but rather a repetitive, complex web of causal relations; the ghost narrator foregrounds a hierarchy of vague temporality and thus, ontological aspects of fiction inhabited by supernatural spectres are thrown into confusion. Sara's syntax reflects her ghostly existence as inhabiting a space outside of sequential concepts of time and enters into a realm characterised by altering forms, such as the mixture of past and present verbs, '[f]rom summer to autumn I did all that I can'.<sup>5</sup> In this instance, Sara is portrayed as being in a constant state of potentiality since she is suspended between the accomplished action 'did', and the future-facing 'can', which mimics the simultaneous completedness emphasised by the physicality of death and the uncertainty of spiritual continuation. This stasis is indicated in Sara Wilby's homophonic and future-oriented name which combines French *sera* and English 'will be' indicating a spectral permanency in an unknown future whilst situated in a fatalistic world view. Smith foregrounds the character with the least hegemonic positioning by having her presence felt within each of the various stories, opening the novel with a distinctly audible scream, 'Wooooo0000-hooooo0000 what a fall' and directing Sara's first-person address, 'you' outside the text.<sup>7</sup> These devices grant Sara an unmediated immediacy to both the fictional and real world which resurrects her in the mind of the reader and thus counteracts her corporeal erasure through a potent rhetorical technique. Therefore, just as Sara's experience is mediated

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Smith. *Hotel World*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002. p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

by the narration of a present-tense spectral self which is in the process of breaking apart, so too does the concept of adaptation necessitate the deconstruction of dead voices through a new form that is both reliant on and distinct from the form which gave it sustenance (the literary canon). Sara's posthumous narration destabilises standard notions of sequential linearity that govern most stories and results in a temporal confusion that permeates every narrative she comes into contact with. This notion of a life which is at once fragmented and alienated from itself epitomises the relationship between postmodernity and spectrality since the ghostly realm, like deconstructionist schools of thought, undercuts any attempt to uncover a stable, objective view of reality.

Within the postmodern mindset, imitation supersedes representation as the only valid substitute (aesthetically and epistemologically) to Jean Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreal wherein adaptation or simulacrum blurs the boundary between what is objectively true and false. In this instance, objective knowledge becomes nothing more than a delusion that constantly eludes the strict boundaries of life since every object of perception can only be known insofar as it is a re-presentation of that which is real. By focusing the narrative on a ghostly protagonist, Smith is able to avoid any binary conflict inherent in structuralism due to the fact that Sara is caught in a state of limbo characterised by the Kantian distinction of *noumenon* (represented by her corpse) and *phenomenon* (represented by her disembodied voice). *Hotel World* presents the phantasmal as integral to postmodern notions of the uncanny since it depicts a liminal realm within reality where any stable grounds for subjectivity are denounced in favour of a spectral existence which serves to dismantle established categories such as semiotic and symbolic. In simultaneously occupying two realms, Sara's ghost enables Smith to overcome binary oppositions of structuralism because she embodies the grey spaces of mysterious and rational phenomena and, like fiction, exists in a state of replica and secondariness. The presence of a wandering spirit de-synchronises the narrative chronology

whilst undermining the ontological assumption of life as a linear, forward-facing, embodied experience and shows that '[in] returning to haunt the living from the past, the revenant defies the laws of time, disrupting the chronotopic linearity of the ghost story.'<sup>8</sup> *Hotel World* takes place in this state of repeated suspension, 'hanging falling breaking between this world and the next' in which death has struck but something lives on in arrested development whose actions are both incomplete and displaced in time.<sup>10</sup> As Sara narrates her own unravelling, death strips her of language and exposes the gaps where words used to be ('I want to ask her the name again for the things we see with') as the disembodied voice must rely on deconstructive speech to remain actualised in the world – the ghost's fading existence is associated with the disintegration of her language.<sup>11</sup> The perpetual theme of loss running through the novel leads to a complete breakdown of symbolic harmony since this deconstructive discourse is tied to a ghostly protagonist who occupies the centre and works to unify the several voices searching for coherence in the story of Sara's untimely death. Due to the uncanny and disjointed quality of the afterlife, as presented in the text, the possibility for any substantial relation between signified and signifier is undermined which results in Sara's failure to stabilise meaning when she cries, 'I want to ask her the name for heated-up bread'.<sup>12</sup> As Sara fades from existence, so too does her ability to salvage words and rearrange them in a way which would be significant. It would be careless, however, to analyse this descent towards spectrality as entirely self-effacing ruin because the procedure of adaptation is not simply one of loss but regeneration as Kathy Acker explains in her adaptation of *Don Quixote*, '[l]anguage presupposes community. Therefore without you, nothing I say has any meaning. Without love or language, I do not exist.'<sup>13</sup> Both Acker's *Don Quixote* and Sara

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Monica<sup>8</sup> Germanà. *Scottish Women's Gothic And Fantastic Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Hotel World*. p.31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Kathy Acker. *Don Quixote Which Was A Dream*. New York: Grove Press, 1986. p. 202.

construct their community with language whilst relying on the community to grant their words meaning and ultimately an identity. Sara will continue to subsist in the reinterpretations of her life whether in the sensational, journalistic prose of Penny, the sombre performance of Clare, or the watch-shop girl in whose memory her death has not yet been realised. This non-hierarchical nature of voices that enter and exit the novel is not envisioned as fragmentary and isolated entities but rather should be viewed as continuously constituted with every new reading. Smith foregrounds the notion of intersubjectivity between individual and collective as not caught in a hostile conflict for power but as regenerative through reciprocity. The homogenizing corporation represented by Global Hotel creates a indistinguishable, institutionalised space that, due to its formulaic use of furniture in every branch, generates a facade of uniqueness which only perpetuates the culture of anonymity and conformity that such businesses symbolise: ‘You could be, literally, anywhere’.<sup>14</sup>

The final chapter indicates that it is within communal memory that people are remembered since the hotel’s revolving doors (a site of entry and exit) become a metaphor for intersubjectivity wherein democracy of voice is (re)constituted with each reading. For instance, as Sara recounts the out-of-body experience she felt upon seeing the watch-shop girl, ‘[f]alling for her had made me invisible,’ it establishes an emotional fall that coincides with her physical descent and releases a yearning that Sara can only communicate as a ghost: ‘I passed through her. I couldn’t resist it. I felt nothing’.<sup>16</sup> To appropriate this lesbian desire she must do so at the expense of a part of herself; by separating that aspect of herself in death she is able to grant it form (authenticity) through the very transparency which suppressed it in life whilst simultaneously resisting and adhering to heterosexual narrative traditions. Likewise, the dynamic between Clare and Sara is exemplified in Harold Bloom’s term ‘Tessera’ wherein an author elaborates upon the precursor’s work but develops their thoughts

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Hotel World*. p. 180.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23; p. 29.



towards a more substantial conclusion, the 'poet antithetically "completes" his precursor, by so reading the parent poem as to retain its terms but to [journey where] the precursor had failed to go far enough'.<sup>17</sup> This continuation of Sara's narrative is evidenced during the re-enactment of her death performed posthumously by Clare, wearing Sara's uniform. Clare's story functions to fill in the gaps of Sara's final moments such as the time taken to fall or why she sneaked into the dumb waiter, and in doing so, counteracts her sister's spectral dissolution by developing her story to a logical conclusion. The novel examines notions of immateriality as presented through the paradigm of a capitalist system built on imitation and illusion whereby Clare spends most of the novel trying to uncover the invisible traces of her sister such as her footprints in the carpet or the dust composed of Sara's skin in the Hoover. Through the reworking and adaptation of their divergent perspectives they reach closure within a cycle of grief and reconciliation that ends with Clare finding solace in the idea that wherever Sara is, she will be watching over her. In this sense, the narrative between the sisters is dialogic and/or intersubjective as their monologues are not suspended in time but rather dynamic and moving away from the past, as highlighted by the future-facing clause of their shared surname 'Wilby' (will be) which affirms their presence in one another's lives. The interior monologue becomes a shared space to (re)appropriate previous experiences with the benefit of hindsight not as a means of whitewashing the incoherencies and idiosyncrasies of the past but rather as a form of cathartic recollection. Consequently, the substitution of blank spaces in place of words reflects the fracture inherent in death and leads to a gradual realisation that the void is not a site of definite closure but limitless potentiality. During the final section, Sara begins to fade off the page but she will continue to subsist in the

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<sup>17</sup> Harold Bloom. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. p. 14.

imagination of her sister and the watch-shop girl and thus embodies Linda Hutcheon's statement that in adaptation '[t]he form changes [but] the content persists'.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, *Never Let Me Go* explores the nature of memory, time, and creativity through the lens of artificially-generated children that lack any origin and whose existences are predicated on the wellbeing of others which is indicated by Kathy's profession as a carer. The closest semblance of parenthood is represented by the teachers who subvert conventional notions of lineage because their relation to the clones is characterised by their dissimilarity as 'normals' rather than affirming any blood ties.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the novel, Ishiguro highlights the extent to which the children's estrangement is dictated by their identity as perceived copies (i.e. secondary) rather than as authentic human beings. The children's status is not only constituted by the notion of loss but is predicated on the discarding of their subjectivity. Consequently, the method of cloning at Hailsham shares similarities to commoditised forms of adaptation which 'across all modes of engagement is economic. Broadway adapts from Hollywood; novelizations are timed to coincide with the release of a film,' as the children's lives are equally subject to supply and demand.<sup>20</sup> This conversion of life to commodity is indicative of the postmodern desire to belong, to be associated with something tangible, since it emphasises an origin rather than a future. Postmodernity does not seek to remove history but to rewrite it according to a contemporary viewpoint by salvaging previous works as a means of reconnecting with the past, whilst coming to grips with how to live in the present. In other words, without a narrative connecting the present to the past (and inevitably to the future) there can be no way of developing as a race. Authors must, therefore, reuse past fictions as part of cultural restoration because it is the act of writing that grants civilizations the ability to persist through appropriation. This inherent need to fashion subjectivity through adaptation is not only vital to sustaining a coherent metanarrative but is also essential to

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<sup>18</sup> Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro. *Never Let Me Go*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. p. 88.

<sup>20</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. p. 30.

everyday life as humans unconsciously absorb aspects of one another and those phantasmal existences haunt the fabric of our being. Ishiguro foregrounds a drive towards adaptation through cultural imitation as the clones are displaced in real society which causes them to engage in acts of copying by creating a stable identity. The children are both commodities within and consumers of the culture of adaptation because their very existence is dependent on imitation for the production of compatible organs. It becomes clear that the children's position within the novel is constituted by a perceived loss or deficiency due to their status as clones which necessitates an unsettling abandonment of their subjectivity. Given the secluded atmosphere of Halisham they must rely on establishing relationships based on the behaviour and mannerisms taken from either Television or other children in the boarding school. For instance, Ruth has a way of slapping Tommy's arm that she learnt from friends who themselves acquired it from a television show and to which Kathy exposes the inauthenticity of the action: '[i]t's not what people really do out there in normal life . . . . It looks daft, the way you copy everything they do'.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the lives of the children exemplify what Linda Hutcheon calls the 'double definition of adaptation as process and product', where their methods of interaction are derived from the outside world and filtered through tapes, movies, and other objects.<sup>22</sup>

The reliance on clichés and colloquialisms place the clones in proximity to human teenagers, who also articulate themselves by copying the behaviour of friends which indicates the mimetic constraints of Kathy's life. These second-hand mannerisms are linked to a theme of waste running through the book since Ishiguro highlights the children's status as disposable through the 'exchanges' which take place between the artworks composed from rubbish – a salvaging of personal belongings that foreshadows the recycling of their own

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<sup>21</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. p. 9.

body.<sup>23</sup> The exhibition foregrounds the role of art as symbolic of the interior, essential soul that the children are assumed to lack whilst positing the idea that clones are inherent copiers which also destabilises notions of originality and authenticity as it relates to human beings. The omission of any legitimate backstory reflects an orphan's search for their missing parent as the children attempt to write their own history by imagining the human model from which they were designed. Such examples of fiction-making enable the orphans to design a blueprint of the life they could potentially live as well as the promise of a human ideal in their genetics that could eventually be attainable. Consequently, the children are faced with the dilemma of living a life without origin and must instead rely on the myth of a 'possible' counterpart to retain some semblance of ontological worth.<sup>24</sup> In other words, identification supersedes authenticity as the children perceive their association to a human original as a sufficient reason for themselves to be considered 'real' in the eyes of the humans: 'We all of us, to varying degrees, believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get some insight into who you were deep down'.<sup>25</sup> Akin to the spectral identity in *Hotel World*, Ishiguro depicts the relationship between the 'normals' and the 'donors' like a ghostly presence: 'each of us was copied at some point from a normal person . . . a model getting on with his or her life'.<sup>26</sup> The children want to absorb aspects of the other to implant traces of the real and/or human onto their modified bodies. It is this idea that both humans and clones are similar in their function as copy and copier which unsettles traditional conceptions of the uniqueness of humanity and fashions a breakdown of categories such as originality and essentialism. The freedom to imagine a fictive origin is integral to the process of reworking adaptation through memory which does not replicate verbatim but rather appropriates gestures for the benefit of re-crafting a unique interpretation, what Rosemary Rizq terms

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<sup>23</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

‘something new within a borrowed self.’<sup>27</sup> Hence, Kathy’s experience is a rendition of an orphan’s search for absent origins as the children desire to invent pasts based on speculation and imagine a life they have the potential to lead rather than the existence their status dictates. The tape, for example, that Kathy lost at Halisham has lyrics which convey her longing to share an intimate connection with a mother and a baby whom she will never have:

[W]hat I’d imagined was a woman who’d been told she couldn’t have babies, who’d really, really wanted them all her life. Then there’s a sort of miracle and she has a baby and she holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: ‘Baby, baby never let me go’ partly because she’s so happy, but also because she’s so afraid something will happen that the baby will get ill or be taken away from her.<sup>28</sup>

This miraculous birth that disrupts cause and effect is an important analogy for the process of adaptation because it raises questions as to whether the past determines the present or the present retroactively determines the past by reconstructing prior events as truth for the individual. The clones can be characterised as caught between two states of adaptation which do not affirm their identity but are instead dictated by who they are *not* and who they *could* be. For instance, Bloom cites *Daemonization* as the process wherein the writer feels subordinate to the original piece and thus deliberately creates a text that is secondary by replicating previous ideas in favour of positing their own ‘by so stationing its relation to the parent-poem as to generalize away the uniqueness of the earlier work’.<sup>29</sup> Blindly imitating past templates due to feelings of inferiority, the process not only harms the copy by revealing its inauthenticity but also removes any perceived uniqueness from the original. Through

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<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Rizq. ‘Copying, Cloning and Creativity: Reading Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*’. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*. 30 (4) (2014). pp. 517-532 (p.531). Last accessed 28 January 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*. p. 15.

imitation human beings, whether consciously or unconsciously, construct a subjectivity built from the parts of other entities in a communal formation of the ego whereby the human being is not only transformed through identification but constituted by assimilation of the other in the self. The human tendency towards imitation both seeks to adopt or disown traits and mannerisms to create the impression of a sovereign individual whilst also striving towards a greater goal which consists of becoming more than the sum of our parts and transcending the outward manifestations of personality.

In line with Aristotelian notions of humanity as intrinsically mimetic, Ishiguro foregrounds the confusion which arises when distinguishing clones from humans as both biologically and emotionally constituted by external forces. It is important, therefore, to renounce explicit contrasts between imitation and original and instead analyse the various manifestations of imitation and imitators. Ishiguro presents the clones as uncanny not due to any particular deficiency in themselves which isolates them from the other humans, but rather he challenges traditional beliefs surrounding those who imitate and those who are imitated and as such questions the essence of humanity. Likewise, the relation between clones and humans is predicated on the understanding that to acknowledge the children's shared faculties (to create artwork and to imitate T.V.) is to taint the legitimacy of humanity: 'You were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us'.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, it is feared that if the clones were to gain autonomy by embracing their augmented nature they could develop into a more superior form than the default, '[a] generation of created children who'd take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people'.<sup>31</sup> This concept of the successor overpowering its predecessor is labelled by Bloom as *Apophrades* in which the reader, for example, cannot help picturing the book in terms of its

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<sup>30</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 240.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 241.

film adaptation and ‘the new [forms] achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later [author] himself had written the precursor’s characteristic work’.<sup>32</sup> In this inversion, the source text becomes the secondary work since it appears as though it was created before, but the reader only came to learn about it afterwards. Hence, the children inhabit this adapted space between *Daemonization* which foregrounds their replica identity as a means of inferiority and *Apophrades* that celebrates this aspect of reproduction as a form of authenticity. In either case, they expose the derivative nature of human beings via their capacity to both influence and be influenced by those around them – jeopardising claims to authenticity. A bipartite model of the unconscious unsettles definitions of an authentic memory which, like *Hotel World*, creates a democracy of voices that neither dismisses previous modes of expression as obsolete, nor nullifies subsequent reproductions on the basis of inauthenticity. Instead, both novels sustain a perpetual dialogue between these two modes of adaptation. *Never Let Me Go* affords the reader the same reminder given to Tommy and Kathy when they go to Madame and Miss Emily to request a deferral as they are reminded that time is running out and since they are products of cloning (cultural imitation) both the audience and children will eventually be stripped bare of all those acquired attributes and replaced by another model because ‘sometimes that’s how things happen in the world’.<sup>33</sup> This divide unsettles the category of human being as origin and originator since the validation of the children’s existence as clones is predicated on their role as *product* tailored to a specific need and time. The emphasis on impersonation identifies not only the social or generational influence but also the biological as clones and humans are innate copiers (borrowing from external influences to create an ego) where distinctions between copy and original no longer suffice. Instead, the purpose of imitation is one of innovation; to seek to be more than the sum of parts and build an authentic identity because if creation becomes simply

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<sup>32</sup> Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*. p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 243.

reiterative then it reduces the prospect of being distinct and as such adaptation ‘is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary’.<sup>34</sup>

Both Smith and Ishiguro explore narratives of lost identity and displaced subjectivity as the present is haunted by the ghosts of the past where the protagonists have no stable original and instead must exploit their fragmented position in time and space to suspend the bleak notion that their lives are merely reiterations of previous existences. The authors manipulate the nature of reality by replacing real time and space with a substituted or parallel time-space dimension that is a simulacrum of the original. In each book, the fictitious realm presents a space wherein the past and present merge and separate in a fluid conception of time which simultaneously promotes temporality as a free and empowering entity whilst mourning the inability of memory to salvage those previous lives in any meaningful way. The significance of merging authentic and fictional selves is highlighted by Kathy who wonders, ‘I don’t know how it was where you were’ which implies an unsettling premise that the reader is merely a clone like her and the human race is intrinsically both copies and copiers of others.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, adaptation becomes a process of appropriation by vicariously performing the lives of others through the filter of one’s own sensibilities since a person’s memory first interprets and then creates from the remnants of previous narratives. The need to become ‘authentic’ is linked to the journey towards death because in seeking to be original and therefore without precedent is to subsist independently of the body that granted it form. Likewise, in *Hotel World* and *Never Let Me Go* the central protagonists are simultaneously leaving an individual imprint on the world (the name on Sara’s grave and the donated organs) whilst slowly disintegrating into a subject free of traces. In the same way, literature can have an *afterlife* through new editions, adaptations or translations, as well as a *pre-existence* within the works that it takes influences from. This inherent duality of adaptation (to be

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<sup>34</sup> Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*. p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. p. 62.



unique in its own deconstruction) enables it to escape the trappings of originality and instead become an authentic *counterfeit*. Smith and Ishiguro present characters that exist between the Romantic principle of unique intellect and the capitalist philosophy of individual authorship; as Jean-Paul Sartre states, “[w]hat remains [of my work]? A whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Words*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Vintage Books, 1981. p.255.

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