

Who is Ryder?
The Fragmentary Self in Kazuo Ishiguro's
The Unconsoled

University of Tampere
School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
English Department
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Marika Rautiainen

Tampereen Yliopisto

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Muistot ja niiden subjektiivisuus sekä kertojan epäluotettavuus ovat tyypillisiä elementtejä Kazuo Ishiguron kirjallisessa tuotannossa. Ishiguron minämuotoiset kertojat joutuvat kohtaamaan kipeitä muistoja menneisyydestä, mutta heidän johtomotiivinaan on kuitenkin yleensä menneisyyden uudelleen jäsentely hatarien muistikuvien ja tunnepatoumien pohjalta. Surua, syyllisyyttä ja tuskaa paetaan itsepetokseen. Teokset muistuttavat palapelejä, joista osa paloista puuttuu. The Unconsoled ei tee poikkeusta tässä suhteessa, mutta palapeli saa vielä uuden ominaisuuden. Löydettyään palasen lukija saa huomata palapelin muuttavan muotoaan, väriään ja kokoaan pienimmänkin liikeyksen voimasta.

The Unconsoledin juoni itsessään on harvinaisen yksinkertainen. Tarinan kertoja herra Ryder, kansainvälisesti arvostettu ja outoa muistinmenetystä kärsivä pianisti, saapuu nimeltä mainitsemattomaan keskieurooppalaiseen kaupunkiin esiintymään konsertissa. Saamme seurata konsertin valmisteluja ja sen vaikutuksia kaupungin kultivoituneeseen eliittiin. Näemme myös vilauksia Ryderin suhteista hämmästyttävään määrään kaupungin asukkaita, kun hän kiiruhtaa tapaamisesta toiseen kolmen kaupungissa viettämänsä päivän aikana. Varsinaista kertomusta emme kuitenkaan löydä juonenkäänteistä, vaan se on hienovaraisesti kätkeyty dialogin ja kerronnan mutkikkaisiin verkostoihin.

The Unconsoled on ennen kaikkea tutkielma mielen, muistin ja niiden väijäämättömän symbioosin luomasta kokemuksesta. Romaani sisältää klassisia unenomaisia osioita ja takaumia, ja paikoin kaikkietävyys valtaa yleensä suppeammasta näkökulmasta toimivan kertojan. Kaikki kerrokset sekoittuvat ja nivoutuvat niin saumattomasti yhteen kerronnan virrassa, että lukijan on vaikeata hahmottaa milloin yhdestä siirrytään toiseen. Tämä antaa oman leimansa tarinalle ja tuo uuden ulottuvuuden epäluotettavan kertojan rooliin.

Ishiguro sallii kertoja Ryderin antaa lukijalle vain muutamia epämääräisiä ja tulkinnanvaraisia faktoja itsestään, ja lukuprosessin edetessä lukija tulee huomaamaan, että nekin tiedot ovat enemmän tai vähemmän epätarkkoja. Itseasiassa Ryder ei muista keskeisimpiäkään asioita omasta elämästään ja hänen muistoillaan on tapana pulpahtaa pintaan ainoastaan, kun jonkin tapahtuma, esine tai toinen henkilö muistuttaa häntä niistä. Useiden sivuhenkilöiden kohtaloilla romaanissa on kuitenkin epäilyttävän suuria yhteneväisyyksiä Ryderin menneisyyden ja nykyisyyden kanssa.

Kerronnan vaihtelevat tavat, monet kerrokset ja luotettavuuden tasot vaikeuttavat suuresti prosessia, jonka lukija joutuu käymään lapi yrittäessään rakentaa kokonaiskuvaa herra Ryderista. Tässä tutkimuksessa perehdytään siihen kuinka kaikki nämä tekijät vaikuttavat kokonaiskuvaamme herra Ryderista. Narratologia perusteet ja teoriat kertojasta luovat pohjan tälle tutkimukselle, jossa on pyrkimyksenä jäsentää herra Ryderin mysteeksi muodostuneen identiteetin ja pirstaloituneen persoonan eri kerroksia. Ensisijaisena kohteena on Ryderin kaksoisrooli kertojana ja päähenkilönä, mutta tarkoituksena on myös tutkia mahdollisuutta tulkita Ryderin henkilöahmon sisältävän myös useita sivuhenkilöistä.

Avainsanat: The Unconsoled, epäluotettava kertoja, narratologia

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1 INTRODUCTION

“I think where I am not, therefore I am not where I think.”

Sartre (Brown, 1989, 110)

Selfhood is theoretically of interest to everyone, because we all experience our ‘selves’ every day and usually also want to make sense out of them, says Brown and I could not find a better reason for this thesis (1989,12). Ishiguro’s The Unconsoled presents the complexities of that self-experience carried to extremes depicted in Sartre’s remark above. Ishiguro’s fourth novel radically probes the nature of selfhood and the means through which the self is expressed. It creates a multilayer puzzle for the reader with its experimental and defamiliarising devices. I will attempt to collect the pieces of the puzzle called Mr Ryder and find their location in the text. It is my aim in this thesis to study the fragmentary realities of selfhood in this Postmodernist¹ work and to explore the self-diversification and self-plenitude in Ishiguro’s complex narrator-protagonist.

The fallibility of memory, the fragmentary selves and the unreliability of the narrator have always played an important role in Kazuo Ishiguro’s novels. The first person narrators of Ishiguro’s previous three novels were all trying to come to terms with their past with memory as the cause of uncertainty and displacement and The Unconsoled is not an exception, yet it has been perceived to be a radical break from the earlier novels due to its chaotic and dream-like dimensions. The plot in itself is simple enough: Mr Ryder, an internationally acclaimed pianist with an inexplicable amnesia, arrives in an unidentified European city to play in a concert. We

¹ The Unconsoled is in some ways a typical example of Postmodern literature. Postmodern is a term used to describe certain features in post-World War II literature. According to Lewis (2002, 121-133), postmodernist fiction features elements such as temporal disorder, paranoid anxieties and looseness of association. It is considered to be a continuation of the experimentation exhibited by writers of the modernist period relying on fragmentation, paradox and questionable narrators and it is seen as a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in Modernist literature. For example, instead of the modernist quest for meaning in a chaotic world, the postmodern author avoids, often playfully, the possibility of meaning, and the postmodern novel is often a parody of this quest.

witness the preparations for a concert, and the effects this occasion has on the lives of those concerned. We also see glimpses of relationships between Ryder and a surprising number of the town's people while he is rushed through his engagements and appointments during the three days of his stay. What is remarkable is that, even though the story spreads over 536 pages in length, there is a notable lack of information about the character of Mr Ryder in the novel. In my reading The Unconsoled is a book where words mean more than action: the actual story is not carried out by these events or a traditional plot, but it is written, if not hidden, in the complexities of the dialogue and narration. It is a study of mind, memory, dreams and the experience generated by the inevitable symbiosis of all of these elements. There are classic dreamlike sequences, flashbacks and elements of omnipresence by the narrator and it is all entangled and seamlessly woven within the realistic elements of the storyline. When the transitions in between the different realms are also blurred and unexplained, all these elements inevitably contribute to the enigma of Mr Ryder.

In this thesis I will examine the different ways in which a reader might be able to extract more information from the text on Mr Ryder, the fragmentary postmodernist self in a chaotic world. The theories of the narrator and the basic concepts of narratology will provide a framework for my study. I will attempt to explore how the narrative technique affects the reader's experience of the character of Mr Ryder and I will study the similarities between him and the traditional types of unreliable narrators. I will also explore how Mr. Ryder, the character, functions as a narrator, and the many ways in which Ryder is perceived by himself, by other characters in the book as well as by the reader. I intend to look at the psychological facets at work within this complex character as well as his roles as a musician, a son, a father and a husband.

Ishiguro has given yet another layer, if not several layers, to the concept of self in this novel which brings me to the third aim of my thesis. While I intend to study Mr. Ryder's dual

role as a narrator and a character, I will also explore the possibility of his role as several characters and how the concept of displacement manifests itself in connection with Ryder and the other characters. Many of the other characters seem to be merely mirror images of certain aspects of Ryder's personality. Their fates bear an uncanny resemblance to that of Ryder's: his past, his present and possibly even his future. The majority of the conversations the other characters have with Ryder or amongst themselves are relevant to Ryder's situation. Is Ryder himself assimilating other characters into his own sphere of experience? Are the other characters just extensions or creations of the narrator's own psyche?

As conceptualising of selfhood is problematic in itself, it becomes particularly difficult to define it for purposes of literary analysis. Even though there are viable models of selfhood available, they do not necessarily lend themselves to the study of a literary self directly. Rogers lists (1991, 33) three of Freud's models for selfhood: a layered model (conscious, preconscious and unconscious), a developmental model (oral, phallic, oedipal etc.) and a structural model (id, ego, superego, internalized others). Rogers also mentions various ways of modeling the self: self as a container of forces (libido, aggression), representations (memories, wishes, fantasies). The difficulty of defining the self branches into such a vast arena that it becomes a paradox of a sort in itself as Brown suggests:

If human consciousness is all – arbiter not only of values and beliefs but also of the nature of reason and reality itself – then the possibility of human self-deception puts all in doubt. And again, since human language is not divinely guaranteed, and can be shown as inadequate to express accurately what is beyond it, quite what can be said to be the case about anything? (1989, 108-109)

Brown is thus suggesting that there is more to the human self that words alone can express. He also mentions the struggle with imprecise terms such as 'identity', 'experience', 'ego', 'consciousness' or as Brown expresses it "the awkward key word 'self' with its colloquial associations and its specialized uses", which does not facilitate the task of decoding the self in

contemporary literature (1989, 10). He also quotes Derek Parfit who makes an interesting suggestion that selves are more like “nations” (1989, 181) and Mr Ryder certainly represents such a plenitude on many levels in The Unconsoled. The problem of defining the concept of self is obviously relevant to my study. As the literary selves have developed from integral, unitary characters to fragmented, relative and even plural entities, Brown suggests that we have to be more tentative, more open to admit and negotiate the relativities involved in any sense of selfhood and any statements about the literary self.

In this study I will discuss the self as it is presented through the narration and the characterization including facts concerning Ryder’s identity, his personality traits and his psychological profile as well as the plural nature of his ‘self’. I do not intend to employ any models of selfhood mentioned above as such, even though I will use aspects of each in my analysis. Following Brown’s advice, I will attempt to form a portrait of Mr Ryder through a threefold approach into the self of Mr Ryder: the narrator, the character and his plural self - regardless of the gaps in the narration produced by the dream-like forces and the overall unreliability, and with an openness to the relativities of the self.

2 RYDER THE NARRATOR

Mr Ryder, the narrator, enigmatic and self-deluded, immersed in a landscape of imagination with an unfamiliar set of rules, enters an arena far beyond that of a traditional narrator. Wong goes as far as to call it “a shift away from recognisable narrative” (2004, 68). Ryder narrates seamlessly through layers of dreams, reality, omnipresence and assumptions without defining the transitions from one type of recall to the other. Nostalgia, narration through the veil of politeness and formality, evasions and distortions, self-deception and accounts coloured by emotions and confusion all come into play when we start to examine the narrator of The Unconsoled. In this chapter I will study what answer to the enigma of Ryder theories of the narrator can provide. I will take a look at the focalization of the narration, the levels and voices, the typology and the reliability of the narrator. I will also attempt to analyze the psychological facets at work in Ryder’s narration.

When we first meet Mr Ryder on the very first pages of the novel, we find him arriving at a hotel reception, describing the interiors of the lobby in his formal and pleasantly sophisticated tone and describing his meeting with a desk clerk that fails to recognize him at first, but who quickly straightens himself up at the mention of Ryder’s name. The narrator in Ishiguro’s The Unconsoled is quite clearly the protagonist Mr Ryder, a first-person narrator that refers to itself as ‘I’. In other words, we are dealing with a fictional autobiographer, who recounts a portion of his own life in his own voice. The presence of this protagonist-narrator is very powerful as everything he relates to us has value as information about his past and his character. The way the story is told tells us as much about him as the tale itself. So far we have no reason to doubt Mr Ryder and as William Riggan points out, it is our “natural tendency to grant our speaker the full credibility possible within the limitations of human memory and capability” (1981, 19).

Very soon however, the reader's suspicions are raised, as Ryder is engaged in an overly long conversation of several pages during a ride up to his room in a lift. The journey seems to take a disproportionately long time for an ordinary ascent; the time and space seem to stretch in an unlikely manner. A woman, in the form of Miss Stratmann, makes an uncanny appearance into the same lift and Mr Ryder already exhibits the first signs of his extraordinary abilities for reading people's minds as he studies the porter Gustav while he is introducing to Ryder the room he is to stay in:

And then, as he continued with his explanation, waving a hand towards various parts of the room, it occurred to me that for all his professionalism, for all his genuine desire to see me comfortable, a certain matter that had been preoccupying him throughout the day had again pushed its way to the front of his mind. He was, in other words, worrying once more about his daughter and her little boy. (The Unconsoled, 13: cited hereafter as "U")

Ryder also seems to suffer from deficiencies of memory already at the beginning of the novel as he remembers having studied the schedule for his visit on the plane yet he is unable to recall any of its content:

Indeed, I could recall the very texture of the thick grey paper on which the schedule had been typed, the dull yellow patch cast on it by the reading light, the drone of the plane's engines – but try as I might, I could remember nothing of what had been written on that sheet. (U, 15)

Right at the end of chapter 1, Ryder is feeling very tired and as he is about to fall asleep in his hotel room somewhere in this mid European town where he is staying, we experience a confusing episode:

I was just starting to dose off when something suddenly made me open my eyes again and stare up at the ceiling. I went on scrutinizing the ceiling for some time, then sat up on the bed and looked around, the sense of recognition growing stronger by the second. The room I was now in, I realized, was the very room that had served as my bedroom during the two years my parents and I had lived at my aunt's house on the borders of England and Wales. (U, 16)

Before the first chapter comes to an end, the reader has had time to establish that Ryder has a dual role as a narrator-protagonist, he seems to be omniscient in his ability to enter the

consciousness of other characters, he is exhausted and weary from his travels and suffers from some level of amnesia, he seems to confuse reality with memories and his universe on the whole seems to stretch in time and space in an ambiguous manner. The reader will thus very quickly come to the conclusion that Ryder can certainly not be trusted and that we are dealing with a complex unreliable narrator.

In the course of the narrative, we notice that Ryder is constantly interrupted and he drifts from reality to dreams, from memories to assumptions or fantasies and the transitions in between all these sequences are very blurred. It is exceedingly difficult to keep track of the transitions and therefore of the “facts.” Ishiguro does not facilitate matters for the reader by letting Ryder make clear distinctions between the different modes. We glide through it all and we are forced to accept anything that comes along, much in the way we accept the surreal twists and turns in our own dreams.

2.1 Distance

A typical feature of autobiographical narration that Riggan introduces is the inherent narrative distance between the narrator ‘as narrator’ and the narrator ‘as protagonist’ (1981, 24-25). He points out that even though the narrator tells the story of his own life, the narrative situation is such that it approaches the subject-object distinction: almost as if it was one person telling the story of another. Most commonly the distance ranges from several days to several decades and there might thus also be distance in terms of maturity and intellect. Tumanov (1997, 4) also differentiates between a retrospectively-oriented narrating and the type of narrating where the experiencing self is the source of discourse. In Mr Ryder’s case this distance in question appears minimal and his inner verbalization and on-going experience become almost simultaneous. Even though the story of The Unconsoled is recounted in the past tense, it is with such puzzlement and

awe that our narrator wanders through the streets of this unknown town, constantly faced with a surprise behind every corner, that it seems as though the events he recounts have just taken place a second or two earlier as the following examples will demonstrate.

Example 1: He drifts in and out of sleep on several occasions during his narration and wakes up to the new situations always with an equal sense of alarm and confusion. In the following extract, he wakes up in a bus with Boris:

I became aware that Boris was shaking my shoulder. ‘We’ve got to get off now,’ he was saying. Becoming fully awake, I realised the bus had come to a halt and that we were the only remaining passengers. (U, 210)

Example 2: He is constantly having to deal with some type of an unexpected occurrence, e.g. at the beginning of chapter 37 he is ready to give the all-important speech, which he has constantly been reminded of, only to realize that there is no one left to listen to it:

I quickly rehearsed a few lines in my head, then, without further ado, went up to the gap in the drapes and drew back the heavy material.

I had been ready to find the auditorium in some disorder, but the sight that greeted me quite took me aback. Not only was the audience absent in its entirety, all the seating had vanished as well. (U, 519)

Example 3: Even at the very end of the novel Ryder does not have an awareness of the outcomes and consequences in full at all, which would indicate a longer time span between the events and the account:

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. And here I was, my visit almost at its close, a thoroughly impressive buffet before me offering virtually everything I had ever wished to eat for breakfast... (U, 534)

He seems as clueless about the great scheme of things as the reader throughout the entire novel and does not appear to change at all even at the end. He also does not exhibit any maturity gained by the experience of the past 535 pages, but states simply in contingencies as a conclusion that:

Then as the tram came to a halt, I would perhaps give the electrician one last wave and disembark, secure in the knowledge that I could look forward to Helsinki with pride and confidence.

I filled my coffee cup almost to the brim. Then, holding it carefully in one hand, my generously laden plate in the other, I began making my way back to my seat. (U, 535)

In some ways The Unconsoled has similarities with Romberg's *diary novel* even though the book is not written to resemble a diary as such:

The diary novel gives the author the opportunity of letting the narrator and the reader come up against the action of the novel simultaneously, or at least experience its future happenings with the same degree of uncertainty. The fiction in a diary novel is both narrated and experienced gradually. The narrator's epic situation does not give him any all-embracing and definitive retrospective view over the events covered by the story, but only some short concentrated, frequent backward glances" (p. 43).

In The Unconsoled as well as in the diary novel the narrator's epic situation is close to the events that he narrates and Romberg's description of a diary novel narrator has many features in common with Ryder as the previous examples have shown. Romberg points out how this type of narration is suitable for psychological study of the self where "first-person fiction serves first and foremost, not to disclose an external series of events around the main character, but rather to reflect the eddying of these events in his mind" (1962, 44) and one cannot fail to notice the same function in The Unconsoled. The focus and perhaps the purpose of almost all of the events in the novel, is to explore the mind of the protagonist in its complexity.

2.2 Unreliability

Riggan delivers a comprehensive account of reasons why first-person narration is always at least potentially unreliable. First-person narration carries with it, as Riggan explains it, "an inherent quality of realism and conviction based on a claim to firsthand experience or to a source of such firsthand experience and knowledge" (1981, 19), and also "the natural limitations of human knowledge and judgment and memory come into play". In fact the first-person narrative can

never be absolute in reliability when such human fallibility must be taken into account. The narrator may easily have forgotten details or misunderstood incidents, words or motives. His emotions may cloud his judgment or it may be affected by a trauma.

Rimmon-Kenan lists the main sources of unreliability in Narrative Fiction, Contemporary Poetics (1983, 100):

1. Narrator's limited knowledge or understanding
2. Narrator's personal involvement
3. Narrator's problematic value-scheme

He also mentions the language used as an indicator about a narrator's unreliability: "Contrasts and incongruities in the narrator's language alert us to a possible unreliability in the narrator's evaluations" (1983, 102) and he suggests that irony from the implied author's part must also be taken into consideration as well. Rimmon-Kenan also discusses 'ambiguous narratives' (naming Henry James's The Turn of the Screw as the most famous example) which may well be at least partially applicable to The Unconsoled:

Many texts make it difficult to decide whether the narrator is reliable or unreliable, and if unreliable – to what extent. Some texts – which may be called ambiguous narratives – make such decision impossible, putting the reader in a position of constant oscillation between mutually exclusive alternatives. (1983, 103)

The reader is also limited to the narrator's subjective selection as well as conclusions derived from the information. He is subjected to the two principal components of the unreliable first-person narrator's nature: dissimulation, and reticence. There is an abundance of character monologues within Ryder's narration, but always retold by Ryder. While Ryder retells the monologues by other characters in great detail, are they truthful? What is the significance of these seemingly trivial, never-ending monologues? Are the monologues subjective and if they are, whose subjectivity are we experiencing - Ryder's or the character's who is being quoted?

Does Ryder retell them accurately, or does he falsify his accounts for his own ends? Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 106-108) divides speech representation into two categories according to narratological tradition:

1. diegesis, the indirect speech (summary, telling)
2. mimesis, the direct speech (dialogue, monologue, showing)

This division is significant when we examine Ryder's rendering of speech in the novel, how the problem of mimesis enters the equation and how it contributes to the unreliability of the narration. The Unconsoled is filled with direct discourse in the form of the lengthy monologues by Ryder himself and by the other characters as well as of dialogue, which both at first would seem purely mimetic. There is however always the narrator Mr Ryder, who quotes the characters' speech in the same strictly formal style and thus reduces the directness of the speech act and in the end the narrative can only create the illusion of mimesis for the reader through diegesis.

Focalization, or the point of view from which the story is told, can also be problematic in The Unconsoled and it may also potentially contribute to the unreliability. Rimmon-Kenan points out that in this type of first-person retrospective narrative it is possible to see narration and focalization as separate (1983, 73). In the light of Rimmon-Kenan's observation, Mr Ryder's case becomes very interesting: while he as the adult remains the narrator, it would often seem that someone else completely, or he himself as a child, becomes the focalizer. Mr Ryder could be described as an internal focalizer because he takes part in the tale as an actor as well. Usually internal focalizers are confined to the outward manifestations of the focalized, but Mr Ryder also provides us with insights to other characters' inner thoughts and feelings, and is able to perceive the object from within. Therefore, it would be possible to conclude that, in fact, he shifts between external and internal focalization.

While the entire novel is being narrated solely by Mr Ryder, we nonetheless experience other characters that do provide us with perceptions and cognitive, emotive and ideological orientations, somewhat different from those normally produced by Mr Ryder himself. It is however evident that for the most part we do experience Mr Ryder as the only vehicle of focalization and we cannot even be sure to what extent the accounts by others are not edited and coloured by Mr Ryder's character, if not completely fabricated by him, owing to the ambiguous and dream-like nature of the narration. Romberg discusses this same dilemma and how a first-person narrator can "reproduce his perspective on other persons, but other persons' perspective upon him can only emerge indirectly, since it is he himself who describes them for the reader" (1962, 59). The overall unreliability of the narration leads to speculation whether we can in fact trust that Ryder is retelling the perceptions of the third-person consciousness in question accurately and not fabricating the entire dialogue within his own sphere of consciousness. All these different elements of potential unreliability come into play when we start to examine the narrator of The Unconsoled.

Ishiguro is known for his technique of using memory as a source of unreliability. The characters in the first three novels were revisiting their pasts which were then narrated through a biased filter. In The Unconsoled he has taken "a further step into the representation of consciousness" as Flor expresses it (2000, 160) and the entire world seems twisted, defying the laws of physics and the narrative technique employed relies on the narrator's unreliability. From the very start of the novel, we experience an abundance of unlikely elements that are brought into the narration: there are physical impossibilities that enter unexplained into the narrative, outlandishly absurd occurrences that are nonchalantly disregarded by the narrator and the characters alike and other obvious discrepancies that cannot be accepted within the limitations of realistic prose. Flor (2000, 162) identifies three main features of "strangeness" within the novel:

1. Characters appearances: At times when Ryder thinks of a certain character or when they are mentioned by someone else the very soon make an appearance.

A good example of this we find on page 9, when Gustav keeps mentioning Miss Hilde Stratmann and miraculously at that very moment she appears in the same elevator behind them.

‘Pardon me’ I said, ‘but who is this Miss Hilde you keep referring to?’

No sooner had I said this, I noticed that the porter was gazing past my shoulder at some spot behind me. Turning, I saw with a start that we were not alone in the elevator. A small young woman in a neat business suit was standing pressed into the corner behind me. Perceiving that I had at last noticed her, she smiled and took a step forward. (U, 9)

2. Life stories: Almost everyone Ryder comes into contact with immediately starts telling him their life stories.

3. Transposed characters and past events: Certain aspect of Ryder’s past turn up in unexpected ways in this unknown European town, strangers are never complete strangers after all.

There are also dreamlike distortions of events, space and time that erupt throughout the novel. Flor notes that “such improbable facts acquire the consistency of a dream” (2000, 162) and indeed the novel does seem dream-like and surrealistic in many ways. The dream-like features include: settings changing without logic, temporal and spatial dimensions growing and diminishing in unrealistic ways and characters changing unexpectedly from strangers to intimate acquaintances.

Riggan also lists typical elements that evoke doubt about the integrity and trustworthiness of the narration which are easily applicable to the study of The Unconsoled: unacceptable value judgments, incongruous reasoning, gross errors or contradictions in facts, stridence of tone, unwarranted defensiveness of posture, blatant absurdities in ideas or supposed facts and obsessive preoccupations which unconsciously dominate the narrator’s mind. (1981, 143) Now a reader must look for tools to reconstruct the meaning out of the text. Next I will explore some possible keys to the enigma.

2.3 States of Consciousness

In The Unconsoled Mr Ryder, not only allows the reader glimpses into his conscious mind, but he also shows his unconscious process of concept formation and his memory at work. He is ordering his experiences under the conditions of his individual sensitivities, tendencies and habits, imagination, dreams and wishes, attitudes and other perspectives of his personal interaction with the world around him and while doing so he makes himself an unreliable narrator from the reader's point of view. His reticence and concealment may also be either conscious or unconscious. The unconscious pre-conditions show themselves in the resulting events and interactions and the reader gets an extended document of the narrator's inner workings and of the essence of his Self, beyond the traditional boundaries of a narrated Self.

We have access to Ryder's conscious as well as his unconscious mind in peculiar ways throughout the novel. Bartsch provides a useful guide into the states of consciousness in her study Memory and Understanding (2005, 142). She describes the conscious states as including perceptions and imagination, movements and bodily states, emotional states and states of self-consciousness, states of empathy with others and intentions (beliefs, wishes, interests, plans, goals). We also experience Ryder's various states of consciousness in The Unconsoled even though the unconscious cognitive states cannot always be shown directly, but they manifest themselves in their results. Several such examples can be found in the novel when the narration is carried out in fantasies about what might happen, lifted by the imagination of the narrator or the one who forms the individual concept. For example in chapter 15 Ryder and his son Boris are on a bus on their way to the artificial lake where they used to live to fetch Number Nine, a little toy figurine Boris was very fond of. A passenger behind Ryder delivers a potential scenario of the future events regarding the meeting with the new inhabitants of the apartment. The complete stranger on the bus fabricates an alternative version of the future events in great detail.

...the passenger interrupted with a polite cough.

‘Excuse me,’ he said, ‘but a trip of this kind is almost bound to cause a little worry...But from what you’ve just told me, I feel sure it’ll all turn out well...’

If it’s the wife who’s answered the door, she’ll say: “Oh, at last! We’ve been wondering when you’d be coming round.” Yes, I’m sure she will. And she’ll turn and shout to her husband “It’s the little boy who used to live here! (U, 208-209)

Later on we learn that Ryder has been soundly asleep during the bus ride and the actual event at the apartment does not follow this prediction at all, which in light of this new information may well be a fabrication of Ryder’s own mind rather than that of the passenger behind him if we examine it from a point of view of normal logical human behaviour. Why indeed would the passenger behind him launch himself into such imaginings, whereas for Ryder’s mind to do so would seem more than natural? When contemplating a future event, people often play the scenario out in their mind before the actual event and try to imagine how it might turn out. I believe this is a scene where we see Ryder’s unconscious mind at work. In his unconscious mind he develops a scenario of wishful thinking - a kind of preferred interpretation of the future, which in the end is then far removed from the actual event.

One of the most interesting sources of unreliability that Riggan mentions in terms of this study, is “the natural tendency of an individual to give himself the benefit of the doubt in cases of questionable deeds or decisions, to overlook or play down incidents which reveal some painful negative quality about himself, and to seek at least some self-justification for his life” (1981, 25-26). He goes on to explain that in the case of the fictional autobiographer totally distinct from the author or implied author the likelihood of this kind of fallibility grows even stronger. As the story proceeds it becomes quite obvious in The Unconsoled that it has been Ishiguro’s purpose to satirize and expose his protagonist, to allow the reader to see Ryder’s negative traits regardless of the fact that he as a narrator rigorously attempts to conceal them. In this case I feel Riggan’s observations can be combined with the phenomenon Bartsch calls ‘preferred interpretation’:

Based on phenomenological data, experiences we have of ourselves and others, we can assume that the specific, historical, memory can also contribute to enforcing one activation circuit of understanding above other alternative ones and thus can influence the choice of the most appropriate or preferred 'interpretation' of received sensorial activation. The understanding is then most appropriate, not just according to general conceptual understanding through categories, rather according to maybe a singular emotionally very involving personal experience in the past. The latter might even overrule the strongest activation circuit of general understanding and reinforce the weaker one... In this way the understanding of a situation becomes very biased, due to a previously experienced episode with a strong emotional involvement. (2005, 62-63)

In The Unconsoled the feelings of rejection and loneliness developed in early childhood interactions with the narrator's parents, lead to favoured ways of understanding in conceptualization of situations in life, and in re-actions to later situations of interaction with his own family. Ryder's as well as other characters' resulting self-deception finds its roots from a complex web of suppressed memories, behavioural mannerisms adopted for self-protective purposes and an inability to acknowledge or recognize failures in the present.

A particularly interesting example of these elements mentioned by both Riggan and Bartsch, the self-deception as well as the preferred interpretation, we find in chapter 20 (U, 284-289) in The Unconsoled. In this chapter Ryder is spending an evening with his presumed wife and son, Sophie and Boris, and manages to ruin the great 'feast' Sophie has been preparing all day with his seemingly inexplicable and thoughtless behaviour: concentrating on his newspaper throughout the entire evening and deliberately and repeatedly refusing to communicate with his family. The scene in question starts with little Boris, who has been promised a game which he is expecting Ryder to join in:

'Which one are we going to play?' he asked.

I pretended not to hear and went on reading. I could see him at the edge of my vision, first turning towards me, then, as the realization dawned on him that I would not reply, turning back to the cupboard. For some time he stood there contemplating his pile of games, now and then reaching out to finger the edge of one or another box.

Sophie returned with more food. As she set about arranging the table, Boris went to her and I could hear the two of them arguing quietly.

'You said I could eat on the floor.' Boris was maintaining.

Then after a while, he slumped down in front of me on the carpet again, placing a heaped plate beside him.

I rose to my feet and went to the table. Sophie hovered about me anxiously and I took a plate and regarded the choice.

‘It looks magnificent.’ I said, as I served myself.

Returning to my sofa, I saw that, by putting my plate down on a cushion beside me, I would be able to eat and continue to read my newspaper at the same time. I had decided earlier to examine the newspaper very carefully, scrutinizing even the adverts for local businesses, and I now continued with this project, reaching over occasionally to my plate without taking my eyes off the newsprint. (U, 285-6)

Here we find Ishiguro exposing the inexcusably bad manners of his protagonist through Ryder’s own narration as well as Ryder’s pathetic attempt at trying to rationalize his own behaviour through his interest in the local matters.

Sophie then tries to play the game with Boris and keep his spirits up, but the little boy finds an interpretation for his behaviour, in his disappointment, that mirrors that of Ryder’s:

When I next glanced down at them, the board had been opened out and Boris was positioning the cards and plastic counters with some enthusiasm. I was thus surprised when a few minutes later I became aware of Sophie saying:

‘What’s the matter, Boris? You said you wanted this one.’

‘I did.’

‘Then what’s the matter, Boris?’

There was a pause before Boris said: ‘I’m too tired. Like Papa.’ (U, 286)

Ryder goes on to justify his poor manners in the following extract in a most outrageous way, blaming Sophie for the miserable atmosphere of the evening, and again we witness the preferred interpretation, the author exposing the pettiness of his hero as well as the self-deception of the narrator and how it all comes to play at the same time, as Ryder observes Sophie making her last attempt at persuading Boris to play the game:

There came the sound a dice being rattled in its beaker. As I continued through my newspaper, I could not help feeling a little sorry for Sophie about the way the evening was turning out. But then, she could hardly have expected to introduce the level of chaos she had done without our having to pay some sort of price. Moreover, it was not even as though she had particularly excelled herself with the cooking. She had not thought to provide, for instance, any sardines on little triangles of toast, or any cheese and sausage kebabs. She had not made an omelette of any sort, or any cheese-stuffed potatoes, or fish cakes. Neither were there any stuffed peppers. Nor those little cubes of bread with

anchovy paste on them, nor those pieces of cucumber sliced lengthways, not even wedges of hard-boiled egg with the zigzag edges. And for afterwards, she had made no plum slices, no butter cream fingers, not even a strawberry Swiss roll. (U, 288)

Riggan mentions that there are two sets of subjective elements at play in a first-person narrative on both sides of the narrative act: the fallibility of the narrating voice, and the reader's assimilation, comprehension and human reactions to the storyteller (1981, 20). The entire episode described above provides a vehicle for Ishiguro to reveal several negative traits of his protagonist-narrator and the reader thus has an interesting opportunity to explore this type of a mind at work. The greatest problems for the reader are how to recognize when the narrator's account is unreliable and how to interpret it. For this dilemma Riggan (1981, 35) provides a possible solution when he talks of a sympathetic link between the reader and the author: how we travel with the silent author, observing the humorous, disgraceful or ridiculous behaviour of the narrator. All through the novel there is an identifiable sympathetic effect Ryder stirs in the reader that Ishiguro has built with the primary intent quite likely to make the reader share the plight and confusion of Ryder, but this particular event in chapter 20 also creates a more profound barrier between the reader and the narrator. Ishiguro is showing the reader the discrepancy between the conduct of Ryder and the moral views he propounds.

Ryder also acts against the advice he gives to other characters in the book, for example with regards to the destructive effect of the lack of communication. Ryder provides an insightful observation when the issue at hand is Gustav and Sophie's perpetual silence, the "understanding":

Yes, yes, yes, 'I broke in, feeling another wave of impatience. Then I said more gently: 'I appreciate how things stand between you and your daughter. But I wonder, isn't it possible, this very matter – this matter of your understanding. Isn't it possible that this might itself be at the heart of what's bothering her? (U, 85)

He easily concludes that the thing bothering Sophie might well be that lack of communication with her father; yet he fails to see the effects of the same issue causing adverse effects in his own relationship with her as well as with their son.

2.4 Types of Narrators

William Riggan has studied the unreliable first-person narrator extensively in his Picaros, Madmen, Naïfs and Clowns, The Unreliable First-Person Narrator, (1981). He has introduced an interesting categorization of such narrators into the four types named in the title of his study: Picaros, Madmen, Naïfs and Clowns. Riggan's study analyses how the different elements of unreliability are reflected within the four stereotypical categories. I have found Riggan's categorization particularly interesting in terms of finding similarities between them and Ishiguro's Mr Ryder.

2.4.1 The Picaro

Riggan describes Picaros' narratives in general as having vicious humour, emphasis on action, realistic and occasionally naturalistic detail and elements of social, moral or cultural satire and critique. Their realm is ruled by a chaotic world order. Typical of Picaros are verbal adroitness, lack of extensive education, ingrained role-playing, superficiality of perception and hypocrisy. They can be "incorrigible, ambitious, scheming, role-playing, mask-wearing, characterless masters of physical and verbal pose" (Riggan 1981, 71, 76). So far a few elements of Riggan's Picaro seem to resemble the narrator of The Unconsoled. Ryder can be seen as hypocritical and there is a certain superficiality to his perceptions. He can certainly also be seen as one trying to hide his true identity or the flaws of his character and therefore the role-playing or mask-wearing features would be applicable to him.

One of the most essential elements that Ryder has in common with the Picaro is his drifting nature and mobility. Picaros drift through places and events not necessarily in control of their destinies, very much echoing the tendencies of Mr Ryder. Riggan calls the picaresque tale a “parade of adventures” or sometimes misadventures (1981, 70). Its structure can be loosely jointed and episodic as The Unconsoled. The Picaros also roam through wide-ranging social and geographical locations much like our unconsoled hero and they may occasionally be as world-weary as Ryder.

A truly interesting feature of the Picaros for the case of my study is that of self-delusion. Picaros have a tendency to try to present their character traits in the best possible light, as Riggan explains: “There is, to be sure, a certain amount of reticence in the Picaros’ accounts, in the sense that certain incidents from the past and present may be passed over lightly or omitted when they might work to the individual narrator’s disfavour” (1981, 174). With the presence of the implied author always discernible, however, we are able to read through the camouflage and detect the less attractive traits of the elusive narrator. The following extract from The Unconsoled depicts this particular attribute when an embarrassing event of Ryder’s past is brushed by barely noticeably. Ryder is quite possibly dreaming the entire chapter 10 of the novel, since he is dressed in a dressing gown and carpet slippers attending a dinner party in his fellow musician Brodsky’s honour:

A few people smiled vaguely at me as I joined the procession into dinner, but no one spoke to me. I did not really mind this, since I was still trying to shape in my mind a really captivating opening statement. As I moved closer to the dining-room doors, I found myself undecided between two possibilities. The first was: ‘My name over the years had tended to be associated with certain qualities. A meticulous attention to detail. Precision in performance. The tight control of dynamics.’ This mock-pompous start could then be rapidly undercut by the hilarious revelations of what had actually occurred in Rome. The alternative was to strike a more obviously farcical note from the start: ‘Collapsing curtain rails. Poisoned rodents. Misprinted score sheets. Few of you, I trust, would readily associate my name with such phenomena.’ Both openings had their pros and cons and in

the end I decided against making a final choice until I had gained a better sense of the mood over dinner. (U, 136)

We discover that something has happened in Rome that he is embarrassed to talk about, but which some people might be aware of. His unconscious mind reveals this information about his professional past to the reader that Ryder's conscious mind has been careful to conceal, as he dreams about the opening lines of his speech.

The psychological forces such as shame, guilt, inferiority, vengefulness or unfounded optimism distort the vision of a Picaro's life and world (Riggan, 1981, 77) and so they do in Ryder's. In fact he has some considerable difficulty in distinguishing truth from appearance, particularly when it comes to other people's opinions about him. He seems to have such a need to believe their superficial flattery, that he represses any controversial statements about himself or his conduct. Shame and guilt about his past behaviour manifest themselves in denial and appropriation. He also transfers his own shameful and painful past onto other characters. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 of this study.

2.4.2 The Clown

Riggan's 'Clown' narrator is reminiscent of the traditional fool, the clown as the truth teller, the entertainer that is given more to dissimulation than reticence, reshaping of character and incident rather than withholding information (1981, 175). Farcical exaggeration, satirical reversal and imaginative chaotic play are typical tools for this narrator. According to Riggan, "they lend the account an air of surreality, of grotesqueness, of imaginative excess, and they thereby ineluctably focus attention on the telling of the tale instead of on the tale itself, on the nature of the narrative voice rather than on content alone" (1981, 101). Ryder is also capable of delivering an eerily comic effect with grotesqueness as well as farcical exaggeration. Chapter 16 provides one such

clownish episode where he is to simply introduce himself to his childhood friend Fiona's acquaintances Inge and Trude in order to help her get back into their good graces. He nonetheless, for some strange reason, is utterly incapable of announcing his identity to the ladies. All he can manage is a "strangled grunt" and finally the situation culminates in this embarrassing scene:

'Why don't you help me!' Fiona suddenly addressed me directly for the first time. 'What's the matter, why don't you do something?'

In fact, all this time I had been continuing to strain. Now, just as Fiona turned to me, I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror hung on the opposite wall. I saw that my face had become bright red and squashed into pig-like features, while my fists, clenched at chest level, were quivering along with the whole of my torso. Catching sight of myself in this condition took the wind right out of my sails and, losing heart, I collapsed back into the corner of the sofa, panting heavily. (U, 240)

Ryder certainly shows such laughably antisocial abnormality in this situation and in this respect he very well would merit the title of Riggan's Clown. He is not however trying to entertain people in the typical way a Clown would, but his comical attributes are quite involuntary. He also does not function as the truth teller, but quite the contrary, he twists the truth to serve his own ends.

The elements of the grotesque and surreal on the other hand are present in Ryder's accounts. In particular an episode comes to mind in chapter 30, where Brodsky is involved in an accident with a car and has both of his legs "entangled" among the contorted metal of his bicycle (U, 440). His left leg in particular is in a bad condition according to a grey-haired man, who proves to be a surgeon at the scene. The surgeon proposes that something must be done about it due to the delay with the ambulance, but he has no suitable equipment with him. Ryder however finds a hacksaw in the boot of the car and consequently Brodsky is informed that an operation is going to take place and that "It might be a little painful" (U, 442-443). Not only that, but later

that same evening, regardless of his condition, Brodsky makes an appearance at the concert with his freshly amputated stump of a leg using an ironing board as crutch:

Moreover, as he began to make his way towards the conductor's podium – the ironing board thumping with each step – I noticed the handiwork he had carried out on the empty trouser leg. His desire not to have the material flapping about was perfectly understandable. But rather than knotting it at the stump, Brodsky had cut a wavy hemline an inch or two below the knee. An entirely elegant solution, I could see, was not possible, but this hem seemed to me far too ostentatious, likely only to draw extra attention to his injury. (U, 488-489)

It is quite likely that this event is again a figment of Ryder's excessive imagination, not least because he is observing the latter scene from a cupboard (U, 493). Both of these scenes do convey a grotesquely surreal world-order and from the point of view of my analysis it is almost immaterial whether it is Ryder's conscious or unconscious in action – the grotesque and surreal exist, equally real either way, in the subjective experience for Mr Ryder, as well as in the objective experience for the reader.

2.4.3 The Madman

Typical distinguishing features of Riggan's Madman narrators are psychological disorders such as neuroses. They can be irrational or perverse of their nature or not fully in command of their faculties. Their psychic chaos may be produced by some imbalance in the faculties such as subconscious guilt. The circumstance underlying their current irrationality may include oppressive fears or an agonising spiritual or intellectual crisis or the condition can be simply induced by sheer pathology, "it's the narrator's mental aberrance which is the primary source of the narrative deceptions, omissions, distortions and unreliability" (1981,179). The Madman narrators' accounts, owing to the previously mentioned defects in their character, are highly unreliable in nature as Riggan explains: "His account is therefore in most cases not a responsible, controlled one relating events and portraying characters with any degree of reliability, but rather a

reflection of his own twisted impressions, confused thought patterns, or neurotic obsessions” (1981, 178). The Madman’s narrative can also, according to Riggan, include components both of a straightforward supernatural reading and an ironic, psychological one (1981, 131). Whereas Ryder could not by any means be described as being insane in the traditional understanding of the word, he definitely suffers from spells of irrationality. There are underlying feelings of guilt and malaise at work behind his behaviour, and with his actions in regards to his family he also exhibits an absence of a defined moral or spiritual centre.

Ryder does not seem fully in charge of his faculties on many levels, least of which his memory. Bal points out the way memory functions as “an act of ‘vision’ of the past, but as an act situated in the present” (1985, 147). Memories can be very unreliable; the story the person remembers may not be identical to the one experienced in the past. This is particularly true in the case of trauma:

This discrepancy becomes dramatic and, indeed, incapacitating in the case of trauma. Traumatic events disrupt the capacity to comprehend and experience them at the time of their occurrence. As a result the traumatized person cannot remember them; instead they recur in bits and pieces, in nightmares, and cannot be ‘worked through’. The incapability that paralyzes the traumatized person can be situated on both story and text levels. (Bal, 1985, 147)

Ryder is most definitely a victim of a domestic trauma from his childhood, which affects every aspect of his personality and thus his narration. Due to his own wounds, he lacks the inner integrity to stop himself from inflicting suffering on those close to him. This is where we start to discover similarities with Riggan’s Madman and the narrator of The Unconsoled.

Ryder is as much unconsciously capricious as Riggan describes his Madman narrator to be. Riggan explains how it is possible for such narrators to be “victims to their emotions or mere fancy and suffer from the sort of madness that distorts their self-image with poses of innocence, righteousness, outraged dignity, or superiority” (1981, 179). One episode in the novel which

reveals these Madman characteristics in Ryder can be found in chapter 9 where Ryder has to face his own inadequacies, feelings of inferiority and makes a show of his unhealthy coping mechanisms at the same time:

In fact the look on my face noted by Pedersen had not to do with ‘concern’, so much as the growing annoyance I was feeling towards myself. For the truth was that my forthcoming address to this city was not only far from ready, I had yet to complete even the background research. I could not understand how with all my experience I had arrived at such a state of affairs. I remember how that very afternoon in the hotel’s elegant atrium, I had sat sipping the strong bitter coffee, reiterating to myself the importance of planning the rest of the day with care so as to make the best use of the very limited time. As I had sat watching the misty fountain in the mirror behind the bar, I had even pictured myself in a situation not unlike the one I had just encountered at the cinema, 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 by other matters, with the result that, during my entire time at the cinema, I had been unable to manage a single noteworthy comment. It was even possible I had created the impression of being less than urbane. Suddenly I felt an intense irritation with Sophie for the chaos she had caused and for the way she had obliged me to compromise so thoroughly my usual standards. (U, 115)

Ryder knows he is not performing to the required standards during this visit of his and is feeling guilty about failing to meet the expectations of the town’s people despite his best intentions perhaps. He has earlier that day made the choice of spending the day with his family all by himself and yet he manages to convince himself that his lack of preparation is Sophie’s fault and continuously also punishes Sophie for this in many ways. He paints a picture in his mind of himself as a witty hero who with leisure and ease glides through the social demands. His pompous and self-righteous use of language, the irrational accusations and fanciful imaginings indicate a highly self-deluded personality indeed.

While events occur for the most part within the limits of normalcy in The Unconsoled, there are episodes where the realism begins to dissolve. The narrative drifts into an associative and almost hallucinatory sequence of visions, memories and imaginings or dream worlds Ryder cannot control. Riggan points out that often for the Madman narrators “the reality of the outside

world disintegrates and the narrator's world gradually comes to consist of nothing more than the feverish imaginings and distortions of his own psyche" (1981, 142). Ryder never really allows himself to be swallowed up by these strange excursions into the imaginary or dreamlike realms, but he certainly cannot help them from occurring. One such incident we come across in chapter 8 (U, 93-94) when Ryder is supposed to be at the movies with Sophie yet he seems to drift into a peculiarly dreamlike state somewhere along the line and the classic science fiction movie *2001: Space Odyssey* takes on strange features, such as actors Clint Eastwood and Yul Brynner, who of course never starred in this particular film. Similarly in his wishful thinking he enters a fantasy that becomes a surrogate reality for him in chapter 27. In his imagination he sees his long-awaited parents arrive at the concert hall:

A picture entered my mind of my parents, of the two of them in the horse-drawn carriage approaching the clearing outside the concert hall. I could see the local people...breaking off their conversations and turning towards the sound of the horse hooves... and then the gleaming carriage would burst into the wash of lights...and my mother and father would be peering out of the carriage window, on their faces the first traces of excited anticipation... (U, 398)

Later on when Ryder is told that his parents are not coming to the concert at all, he maintains this false image in his head and insists: "They must be somewhere. Besides, I heard them coming. When I stopped the car in the woods, I could hear them coming, their horse and carriage. I heard them, they must be here, surely, it's not unreasonable" (U, 512).

The Madman narrators are also very often solitary individuals according to Riggan (1981, 142): isolation, alienation, withdrawal, nonconformity, inability to cope with human contact or to handle human relationships are typical for this type of narrators. There is also an existential despair - a sense of aimlessness and meaninglessness of existence - that runs through the veins of 'the unconsolated' as much as they are attributes of the worlds of Riggan's Madmen. Wong depicts this very condition in Ryder:

Unable to forge genuine human ties with other people, Ryder wanders with aimless purpose in the novel, and his adventures compel readers to identify with the truth of contemporary existence: deep loneliness and isolation are at the heart of the flurry of the social activity for us contemporary nomads. (2004, 78)

2.4.4 The Naïf

Mr Ryder is the least like Riggan's Naïf narrator, but there are a few elements that do find a point in common. Usually a Naïf is a child or an adolescent, or they possess such a level of inexperience and naïveté, and in The Unconsoled we do experience Ryder the child through the focalization of the narrative when memories from his childhood emerge. In the memories he recalls, even though they are narrated through the adult narrative voice, we experience the logic, the reasoning, the feelings and the preoccupations of a child. One such episode is unfolded before our eyes in chapter 18, when Ryder recalls how he used to play in the old family car. This play of his demanded a "slamming of the car doors" to his mother's dismay who kept threatening to "skin him alive" if he did not stop. The slamming of the doors was, however, "central to the enacting" of little Ryder's scenarios and therefore he felt compelled to keep doing so regardless of his mother's annoyance about it (U, 261-262).

The way in which Ryder also resembles a Naïf is in that he is not fully aware of many of the implications of his narrative. His accounts are also not very deep in perception or interpretation and as Riggan points out "the commentary where present at all is offered in seemingly spontaneous fashion" (1981, 179). Even with regards to the door slamming scene in the book, Ryder does not provide a commentary inclusive of any deeper understanding. As the Naïf, he merely recounts what he has experienced; not providing commentary of what is detectable for the reader: a child's feelings of neglect and a great need for attention.

As the examination shows, we can conclude that Ryder has points in common with all the four different types of narrators, yet he has much more in common with the Picaro and the

Madman than the Clown or the Naïf. The Picaro and Ryder share an abundance of features: the drifting nature, the hypocrisy and the superficiality of perception. They are mask-wearing narrators that wish to hide their flaws and they are caught in a web of self-delusion. The Madmen narrators, very much like Ryder, are not at all in control of their faculties. There is a certain irrationality to their actions, often caused by a trauma, as it is in the case of Mr Ryder. The world view of these solitary narrators is distorted by their emotions and their lives are ruled by despair and aimlessness. The Clown can only be seen as having very few attributes in common with Ryder: the surreal and exaggerated elements to the narration. Ryder also shares an excessive imagination with the Clown narrators and also some comic and grotesque features that in Ryder's case, however, are not quite intentional, but rather involuntary aspects of his character. With the Naïf, Ryder only has in common the lack of deeper interpretation and awareness of the outcomes in the novel.

2.5 Omniscient Narrator

One of the most peculiar features about Ryder as a narrator is that he is able to access the thoughts and inner dispositions of other characters. He is able to retell conversations by other people when he has not been present. He is able to describe the interiors of buildings he has never been to. There are, nevertheless, limits to his "powers" – if he is distracted from his thoughts, he is usually always unable to pick up where he left off.

This unreliability is generally speaking even more of essence in the case of a narrator who recounts also the lives of other characters. Usually such a narrator would be incapable of penetrating directly into the psyche of the other characters and would need to resort to other aids in accessing their thoughts and feelings, such as letters, diaries etc. Ryder however has abilities

beyond normal realistic boundaries: he is an omniscient narrator, limited and fallible as such, but on occasion able to access areas of the narrative that a traditional first person narrator would not be able to relay. Rimmon-Kenan describes omnipresence as follows: “familiarity, in principle, with the character’s innermost thoughts and feelings; knowledge of the past, present and future; presence in locations where characters are supposed to be unaccompanied and knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time” (1983, 95). Ryder does not fulfill all the characteristics of an omniscient narrator if we use Rimmon-Kenan’s summary as a standard. He does not only give us an account of what he and other characters say and do, but he seems to be blessed with some extrasensory perceptions and insights into other people’s very private conversations, as well as thoughts and feelings, and yet at the same time he suffers from severe deficiencies of memory, which creates an interesting paradox.

Example 1: There are several examples of Ryder’s omnipresence throughout the novel. He retells in detail conversations that go on between other characters when he is not present and he is able to describe the interiors of buildings into which he has never been and yet he does not seem to be fully in control of this ability. Ryder fluently reads Stephan’s thoughts while getting a lift from him with Boris back to the hotel:

But then I caught sight of his profile in the changing light and realised he was turning over in his mind a particular incident from several years ago. It was an episode he had pondered many times before – often when lying awake at night or when driving alone – and now... (U, 65)

Ryder goes on to narrate in great detail an incident where Stephan’s parents are particularly hard on him about his piano playing. Ryder finally replies to Stephan’s thoughts as if he had in fact spoken them out loud:

I felt sorry for the young man and broke the silence by saying to him:
‘I realise it’s none of my business and I hope it doesn’t sound rude, but I do think you’ve been treated rather unfairly by your parents over the matter of your piano playing.
(U, 71)

Stephan does not seem to be baffled in the least by the fact that Ryder knows his innermost thoughts however and continues to discuss the details of the incident he had been thinking about further:

I can see how to an outsider my mother's behaviour that night might look a little, well, a little inconsiderate. (U, 71)

Stephan even mentions 'the night' of the incident as if Ryder should know exactly what he was talking about.

As these abilities are in no way explained by the author or the narrator, the readers must come to a conclusion of their own about the phenomenon. Wong offers one possible explanation to this very extract. She argues that Ryder's ability to penetrate the thoughts of Stephan is related to his own concerns about parental acceptance and that Ryder is using Stephan's presumed past to access aspects of his own (2004, 74). In other words, it is a subconscious strategy for dealing with a painful past: by remembering events of other people's lives, he begins to assess the meaning of his own.

Example 2: Another such occasion where Ryder delves into the private lives of others, we can find on pages 56-57 and this time Ryder is able to see and hear through walls. Stephan, who is giving Ryder and Boris a ride back to the hotel, stops by to see Miss Collins on the way. He goes to meet with Miss Collins in her apartment leaving Boris and Mr Ryder in his car outside the building:

Stephan got out of the car and I watched him go up to entrance. He stooped over the row of apartment buttons, pressed one, then stood waiting, a nervousness discernible in his posture. A moment later a light came on in the entrance hall. (U, 56)

Miss Collins comes to show Stephan in, but Mr Ryder claims at this point that:

The door closed behind him, but leaning right back in my seat I found I could still see the two of them clearly illuminated in the narrow pane to the side of the front door. Stephan wiping his feet on the doormat, saying... (U, 56)

Mr Ryder seems to be able to hear the conversation behind the front door in detail from the car. Even more interestingly, as Mrs Collins leads Stephan into her apartment, Mr Ryder is still able to deliver a perfect account of what goes on behind closed doors as well as describe in great detail the interiors of the building he has never been to:

I watched her lead Stephan through a small and tidy front parlour, through a second doorway and down a shadowy corridor decorated on either side with little framed water-colours. The corridor ended at Miss Collins's drawing room – a large L-shaped affair at the back of the building. The light here was low and cosy, and at the first glance the room looked expensively elegant in an old-fashioned way. On closer inspection, however, I could see most of the furniture was extremely worn, and that what at first I had taken for antiques were in fact little better than junk. (U, 56-57)

He sees Stephan seating himself and continues to follow the conversation between the young man and Mrs Collins word for word and at great length until he is distracted from his narration by

Boris:

Miss Collins sipped her cherry thoughtfully. She seemed about to reply, but just at this point I heard Boris shift behind me in the back of the car. (U, 61)

This extract is perhaps more complicated in terms of a possible explanation than example 1.

None of these spells of sudden omnipresence are in any way explained by the narrator. It would seem possible to come up with three explanations for his omnipresence: he is dreaming (which he often does) and we experience his dream, he is truly gifted with supernatural powers, or these encounters are figments of his imagination. If we take example 2 for inspection, it is possible to draw a conclusion that this time we are not dealing with a dream sequence. There is no indication in the text itself that would support such a theory. One possible explanation could be imagination and Bartsch provides us with a convenient explanation into the genesis of imagination:

Imagination depends on the workings of the memory; it has its roots in the generalizations and associations, which our brain forms on the impressions and excitations we get from the outside when interacting with our surroundings. (2005, 78)

In other words to some extent the subject creates the object and it would be possible that the entire episode was fabricated by Ryder, and yet it would seem quite unlikely that he could recount the events in such detail considering also that the subject matter of the conversation would require information that he should not be in possession of as the conversation between Stephan and Miss Collins circles solely on Mr Brodsky and the role that Miss Collins is asked to play in his recovery. It would be more difficult to find a link with Ryder's own past and therefore also a motive for the fabrication of such a scene in the similar way as with example 1. Brodsky and Miss Collins' healing relationship or Brodsky's professional problems as such would not seem relevant to the Ryder of the present, but peculiarly enough it would to the Ryder of the potential future. I believe it is possible to make the claim that this scene, born within Ryder's imagination, reflects his fears of the future: where Brodsky, the older failed artist, becomes a surrogate for the Ryder of the future, and Miss Collins substitutes the Sophie of the future and fabricating a scene of this description would again serve as a way to deal with those fears. It is, however, impossible to draw definitive conclusions from the text alone concerning the matter of Ryder's omnipresence; much is left for the reader to interpret and analyse according to his own understanding.

2.6 Amnesiac Narrator

Ishiguro gives the reader very few facts about Mr. Ryder. Ryder himself gives us only vague, ambiguous information about himself and we soon discover that anything he does tell us may not be quite accurate. In fact, he is unable to remember very essential facts about his own life, past or even present, and he does not seem to be aware of his own situation at all. His memories, when they do surface, are usually triggered by an event, another character, an object or a situation. At

the beginning of the book, he remembers hardly anything about his own life and he is constantly baffled about the topics of conversation and the circumstances that he finds himself in. The other characters seem to be filling in all the ‘blanks’. They are also walking and talking him through the three days of his stay in this strange town, because he has lost his schedule as the following example depicts. Stephan Hoffmann is giving Mr Ryder and Boris a lift to town and reminds Ryder about a meeting with some journalists:

‘Look, it’s awfully impertinent of me. But are you sure you don’t want to go back to the hotel? It’s just that, I mean, with the journalists waiting for you there and everything.’

‘Journalists?’ I looked out into the night. ‘Ah yes. The journalists.’

‘Golly, I hope you don’t think I’m being cheeky. It’s just that I happened to see them as I was leaving. Sitting in the lobby with their folders and their briefcases on their laps, looking very keyed up at the thought of meeting you. As I say, it’s none of my business and naturally you’ve got the whole thing worked out, I’m sure. (U, 55)

Ryder seems completely bewildered by what Stephan has just told him and as he goes on to narrate his reaction we cannot fail to notice the language of utmost hesitation:

But I found myself thinking about the journalists and after a moment I thought I could perhaps remember some such appointment... In the end I could not recall with any definiteness such an item having been on my schedule and decided to forget about the matter. (U, 55)

Mr. Ryder’s narration is heavily subjective in nature. There are also elements of nostalgia to his narration. Dames calls nostalgia an absence of accurate ‘pure memory’. He describes nostalgia as follows: “a retrospect that remembers only what is pleasant, and what the self can employ in the present” and he explains that it consists of “stories about one’s past that explain and consolidate memory, rather than dispersing it into a series of vivid, relinquished moments” (2001, 2). As so many of Ishiguro’s characters in his first three novels, Ryder also has a tendency of trying to redefine events and their significance as a coping mechanism of a sort. His recall and interpretation of events and conversations are often coloured by emotion or repressed emotion,

fears and desires as well as arrogance that turn into self-deception. The language used in the book already, in its formality and reserved politeness, lends itself perfectly to such evasions.

In order to study the amnesiac condition of Ryder's, I find it necessary to explore briefly the mechanics of memory. According to Bartsch memory is divided into at least two kinds: semantic which is "directly associated with lexical items expressing general concepts" (2005, 29) and autobiographical memory which is constructed from historical episodes in our lives. Bartsch goes on to explain Conway's theory that these episodes get organized in the memory and the organization "happens by relating the episodes to a structure of goals that determines what the self is. The episodic memory is the basis of the autobiographical narrative. It serves to make a schema of the self, to become conscious of one's wishes and expectations" and Bartsch also quotes Haberlandt pointing out that "autobiographical memory and its narratives are social creations – they are shared with as well as shared by other people" and that "as a result of reflection and new circumstance many recollections do change as the years go by" (2005, 57).

Memories Bartsch divides into voluntary recollections and involuntary memories:

Remembering with association belongs to the category of involuntary memories:

Remembering is a conscious state, but even if remembrance of a previous episode similar to the current is not achieved in consciousness, the perception and understanding of the current situation can be modified or partly determined by the unconscious partial reconstruction process of the previous situation, and actions can be called up by the current situation via the unconscious links to the previous episode. Thus an action, or attitude, or emotional evaluation will be transplanted on, or associated with the current situation, though we are not aware of where they come from. (2005, 30)

In moments of emotional distress or discomfort Ryder has adopted the habit of powerfully focusing his attention to trivial details. In the following extract, we can see how, in connection to memories formed with association, a present situation is understood in the light of previously experienced episodes through concepts and routines formed and activated in early childhood.

Ryder is just about to take part in the event at the Karwinsky gallery with Sophie and Boris. Sophie is very anxious about how the evening is going to go and Ryder has tried rather in vain to assure her that everything will be fine. Ryder himself however keeps showing signs of utmost distress all through the journey to the gallery. He is blaming Sophie for bringing “chaos to his life” (U, p.243), as always when he feels that things are slipping out of control and he is driving so recklessly that he scares both Boris and Sophie (U, 246-247). When they arrive at the gallery eventually, a peculiar sequence is highlighted when he sees “that an old ruined car had been left abandoned in the grass” He then realizes something quite unlikely about the car: “I knew I was looking at the remains of the old family car my father had driven for many years” (U, 260-265). We learn that in his childhood Ryder used to have a habit of playing in the car and using it as an escape from the family troubles. Having “managed to clamber onto the seat” of this old car, he remembers one afternoon in particular:

..., but I found my mind wandering instead to another afternoon altogether, one of pouring rain, when I had come out to the car, to the sanctuary of this rear seat, while the troubles had raged on the inside of the house. On that afternoon, I had lain across the seat on my back, the top of my head squeezed under the arm-rest. From this vantage point, all I had been able to see from the windows had been the rain streaming down the glass. At that moment my profound wish had been that I would be allowed just to go on lying there undisturbed, hour after hour. But experience had taught me my father would at some stage emerge from the house, that he would walk past the car, go down to the gate and out into the lane, and so I had lain there for a long time, listening intently through the rain for the rattle of the back door latch. When at last the sound had come, I had sprung up and begun to play. I had mimicked an exciting tussle over a dropped pistol in such a way as to make clear I was far too absorbed to notice anything. Only when I had heard the wet tread of his feet go right to the end of the drive had I dared to stop. (U, 264)

We learn that Ryder in his present situation dozes off while sitting and reminiscing in the car.

Once again in a stressful situation he has found refuge in the old family car. Ryder thus exposes his innate and learned dispositions and his coping mechanisms to the reader that he himself is unaware of as well, in various similar situations. The memory itself is triggered by association,

the object this time being the old car. He seems to juxtapose the two events that caused him anxiety, the past and the present, and finds consolation in the very same location – the old car.

There are also peculiar episodes in the novel which present even more severe cases of memory loss: complete oblivion. Ryder the narrator claims he does not at first recognise his presumed wife at all, nor does he recognise the apartment where he used to live when he goes to see it with his son. Bartsch provides a description of this type of amnesia:

People do not in our memory possess the invariability of a figure in a painting. Oblivion is at work within us and according to its arbitrary operation they evolve. Sometimes it even happens that after a time we confuse one person with another. (2005, 31)

Example 1 There is a most peculiar episode of oblivion which can be found at the beginning of the book in a scene when Ryder's first meeting with Sophie and Boris occurs in the café near the hotel prompted by Sophie's father Gustav, who has asked Ryder to find out what is troubling her:

Turning, I saw a woman sitting with a young boy waving to me from the nearby table. The pair clearly matched the porter's description and I could not understand how I had failed to notice them earlier. I was a little taken aback, moreover, that they should be expecting me, and it was a moment or two before I waved back and began making my way towards them.

Although the porter had referred to her a 'young woman', Sophie was in early middle age, perhaps around forty or so. (U, 32)

Ryder the narrator claims not to recognise this woman at first. Sophie begs Boris to say hello to Mr Ryder and refers to him as a special friend. There is no the formal address. Boris is sent off to look at the swan and the conversation between Ryder and Sophie suddenly becomes much more intimate. We are thrown in to witness Sophie telling Ryder the good news about a house the two of them have been planning on buying:

Sophie's face had come to seem steadily more familiar to me, until now I thought I could even remember vaguely some earlier discussions about buying just such a house in the woods. (U, 32)

Sophie goes on to say: “I’m sorry about the last phone call. I hope you’re not still sulking about it” (U, 33). Quite clearly these two are very closely acquainted indeed; yet Mr Ryder still has problems with fully remembering this woman and his relationship with her:

She began to talk again about the house. As she did so, I tried to recall something of the phone conversation to which she had just referred. After a while I found a faint recollection returning to me of listening to this same voice – or rather a harder, angrier version of it – on the end of a telephone in the not-so-distant past. (U, 35)

Example 2 To present another incident of oblivion from the novel, I would like to look at a visit Ryder and Boris are making to see the apartment by the artificial lake that they used to live in. Ryder has no recollection as to location of the apartment in the area and he tells Boris to lead the way. He fails to notice that Boris has deliberately led them in circles and they have in fact passed the old apartment twice without Ryder having noticed. As they peer finally through the apartment window, they meet an old neighbour of Ryder and his family, who explains to him the trouble that had been going on in the apartment when a family had still lived there. At first we assume that the apartment has new inhabitants, but as the dialogue proceeds, it is starting to become more and more likely that the apartment has been vacant for some time already and there is even evidence to support an assumption that it is, in fact, Ryder that the neighbour is talking about, perhaps not recognizing him anymore. It would also explain why Ryder gets very upset by his insinuations.

‘...It wasn’t pleasant. Whenever we saw him he was sober, very respectable. He’d give us a quick salute, be on his way. But my wife was convinced that’s what was behind it. You know, drink...’

‘Look,’ I whispered angrily, leaning over the concrete wall separating us, ‘can’t you see I have my boy with me? Is this the sort of talk to come out with in front of him?’ (U, 215)

The man still continues to describe the affairs of the former neighbours, and this line in particular would suggest it is Ryder that he is talking about: “Okay, he went away a lot, but from what we understood he had to, that was all part of his work.” (U, 215) Shaffer discusses how in these

types of situations Ryder experiences repression, resistance and denial (1998, 103-104). He shows how the narrator himself talks of how the painful memories return and are suppressed: “My memory would unlock and I would finally remember” (U, 24). Ryder talks of keeping memories “shut out” (U, 360) of his mind and of putting certain “thoughts away for ever” (U, 239). Shaffer points out how a childhood friend of Ryder’s used to comfort him by letting him forget the painful incidents: “How skilfully she had comforted me, allowing me quickly to forget whatever scene I had just left behind” (U, 239). It is therefore possible to explain *example 2* as an act of repression derived very possibly from shame and guilt for his past behaviour.

The amnesiac elements to Ryder’s role as a narrator become even more complex in connection with his omniscient abilities. How can this narrator read the memories of other characters when he cannot even recall his own? Are gaps in the memories of Mr Ryder’s past that are never recounted extractable from somewhere else? To both of these questions, I will attempt to find an answer in the following chapters when examining Mr Ryder as the main character of the novel.

3 RYDER THE CHARACTER

“Ryder embodies the indeterminacy of identity” says Cynthia Wong (2004, 66). There is a notable lack of detailed description of Ryder’s affairs, vagueness about the facts around his character as Shaffer remarks: “concrete facts are even more conspicuously absent, even more difficult to discern in Ishiguro’s latest, funniest and most disturbing novel” (1998, 92). It seems the facts about Mr Ryder, as far they can be called facts, are scattered around the novel, hidden in the dialogue and memories, fragmented by the unstable mind of the narrator and made unreliable through the various techniques discussed in chapter 2. When studying a character that cannot seem to be able to fathom his own true identity or sense of self, how can a reader reach an understanding of such a character? In this chapter I will look at how Ryder’s character could be reconstructed from the text: the character traits that can be distinguished within the direct and indirect techniques of presentation and what we can learn about Ryder’s character through different actions, speech acts, roles and analogies.

3.1 Keys to the Fragmentary Self

When starting my investigation into Ryder the character, I initially feel the need to refer to a classic distinction introduced by E. M. Forster and taken over by Bal between round and flat characters (1985, 117). According to this simplistic distinction, there are *round* characters that are complex persons, who develop and transform as the story progresses and *flat* characters which are described as stable, stereotypical characters that “exhibit nothing surprising”, resembling caricatures or types. Bal goes on to mention that it is precisely post-modern novels that very often rebel such categorization. Rimmon-Kenan also makes the point that “there are fictional characters which are complex but undeveloping and others which are simple but developing” (1983, 41).

Ryder represents precisely the kind of postmodern character that defies the logic of the classic distinction. He most certainly is a highly complex character yet, whether or not he actually develops as a character in the novel is somewhat questionable.

In character analysis, we are restricted in our investigation to the facts that are presented to us in the actual words of the text and there are two ways in which the reader acquires information on characters in a given text according to Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 60-61): *direct definition* and *indirect presentation*. This is another classic distinction which is essential for the study of The Unconsoled. Very often one may find an explicit mass of information presented to us by the narrating agent that builds up a portrait of the character in a novel. The narrator names the character qualities as Prince explains the presentation of the character or any narrated element: “Any narrative obviously imparts some kind of narrated information of which the narrator is the more or less original source; he may present it in his own name, as it were, or through a character or, more generally, through a text for which he is presumably not responsible” (1982, 35). In Ryder’s case however, as the narrator he does not provide us with a direct description of himself as a character. All information on Ryder needs to be deduced from the text indirectly. Even very crucial facts about his background and origins, not to mention his personality traits are all hidden in the text for the reader to recover. What facts about Ryder’s character can one comfortably accept regardless of his unreliable accounts? There is enough information to conclude that he is English and that he has spent at least parts of his childhood in Worcestershire and he also seems to have spent his student days in England. He does not give any information about his outward appearance, age or any distinguishing features, nor does he directly discuss his personality traits, or name them in any way. Other characters in the novel provide us with information about his profession and his brilliance at it: “a brilliant musician, one of the most gifted presently at work anywhere in the world” (U, 11), “not only the world’s finest

living pianist, but perhaps the very greatest of the century” (U, 93), “an internationally recognized genius” (U, 301) and “The finest pianist in the world” (U, 507). The only word that Ryder ever uses to describe himself is “an outsider”, which may of course carry several connotations as well as possibly implications. For the most part we are however entirely dependent on the information we can deduce from the text through indirect presentation. This type of implicit qualification requires a certain frame of reference from the reader and interpretation becomes a crucial factor in the character analysis. Wong also discusses more specifically how the character of Mr Ryder can primarily be reconstructed from the way in which the actions are performed in the novel and the question ‘how’ becomes an important key in deciphering the meaning of Ryder’s character:

The quotidian spirit of Ryder’s problems lies at the heart of Ishiguro’s evolving style: method of discourse, not description of situation, becomes the important metaphor for understanding the myriad existence. In other words, not what Ryder struggles against, but rather, how he goes about it will reveal the meaning of Ryder’s character and the implications of that character. (2004, 70)

We have no choice but to follow Ryder in his seemingly endless excursions as he wanders with aimless purpose, ‘the fool’s errands’ as another character describes it, and to attempt to absorb the meaning of his character from the subtle indirect hints in the text. I will examine next some of the tools that narratology provides for the complex task

When reconstructing a character from the text, the reader employs four main principles of cohesion according to Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 39): repetition, similarity, contrast and implication. Mieke Bal’s principals of construction are in many ways similar to Rimmon-Kenan’s, but (1985, 125) seem to present a more comprehensive list of attributes: repetition, accumulation, relation to other characters (entailing contrasts and similarities) as well as transformations. Rimmon-Kenan suggests that traits may be implied by both non-routine actions as well as by habitual actions:

By contrast, habitual actions tend to reveal the character's unchanging or static aspect, often having a comic or ironic effect, as when a character clings to old habits in situation which renders them inadequate. Although a one time action does not reflect constant qualities, it is not less characteristic of the character. On the contrary, its dramatic impact often suggests that the traits it reveals are qualitatively more crucial than the numerous habits which represent the character's routine. (1983, 61)

Rimmon-Kenan divides (1983, 61) character actions into three categories into which the one time as well the habitual actions can belong to:

1. *commissions*, something performed by the character
2. *omissions*, something that the character should, but does not do
3. *contemplated acts*, unrealized plan or intentions

I will find most of these principals useful in my study of Mr Ryder. Ryder's relation to other characters I will study in chapter 3 which is entirely dedicated to the intriguing phenomenon of Ryder's life story having striking similarities with the minor characters' stories.

A good example of Ryder's *habitual acts of commission* that repeatedly appear in the text is that of him referring to himself with the word 'outsider' when asked to get involved in matters. He uses it as an excuse to avoid contact and involvement on routine basis. He keeps repeating he is an outsider even though in fact he seems to be very closely connected with a lot of the town's people and not an outsider at all, but this excuse can be found in the text on numerous occasions and can be qualified as a habitual action by Mr Ryder:

These things are often too complicated for an outsider (U, 30)

It is very difficult for an outsider like myself to make much sense of these things. (U, 81)

I'm merely an outsider. How can I judge? (U, 86)

But I can only say, for an outsider like me...' (U, 86)

He refers to himself as an outsider and as a result the other characters do so as well like Stephan in this scene: "I can see how to an outsider my mother's behaviour that night might look a little,

well, a little inconsiderate...” (U, 71). The use of the word ‘outsider’ definitely marks an opening for the detection of characteristics and it becomes a key to understanding Ryder’s character in many ways. The mere word carries a well of connotations: lonely, abandoned, excluded or exclusive, someone not within the sphere of confidence or acknowledgement, an outcast even. It also provides an explanation of a sort for Ryder’s behaviour and his fragmented, estranged self. Chapter 12 reveals that Ryder has adopted this way of thinking already early on in his life as he narrates a discussion about relationships in his childhood with his friend Fiona Roberts. Ryder is apparently sharing his views on wanting to remain solitary, an outsider, in a conversation which is not so much quoted in any detail as it is implied. Fiona goes on to reproach him about his thoughts and argues that Ryder will get lonely. Ryder retorts that: “I don’t mind that... I like being lonely” (U, 171). They have a childlike quarrel about it and Ryder the narrator finally concludes that:

In fact, I felt some conviction in making this assertion. For by that afternoon it had already been several months since I had commenced my ‘training sessions’; indeed, that particular obsession had probably reached its peak just around that time. (U, 171)

Indeed we come to learn that Ryder has quite deliberately made himself the outsider and used his piano playing practices, the ‘training sessions’, as an excuse to avoid human contact. In chapter 24 we learn from his discussion with his old friend from his student days, John Parkhurst, that even then he had used the same excuse when asked by his friends to join in the celebrations at the end of their finals: “I’m much too busy. I can’t afford not to practice tonight. I’ve missed two days of practice on account of these horrid exams” (U, 350). A particularly striking omission, which is closely related to his desire to remain ‘an outsider’, that Ryder repeats throughout the novel, circles around the main theme of silence and the lack of communication. The most common of his omissions, which also have elements of contemplated acts in some cases, is that

Ryder fails to communicate with his parents, his presumed son Boris as well as Sophie, his estranged wife/girlfriend.

Bal names *accumulation* as a signifier in identifying character-traits from the text (1985, 125) and in The Unconsoled there is an abundance of accumulation of elements particularly related to Ryder's coping mechanisms. We see more glimpses into Ryder's personality from the accumulation of the habitual acts related to his defence mechanisms. Ryder often uses his work as an excuse to avoid dealing with relationship problems and he proves himself over and over incapable of getting involved when he should. He disguises his desire to avoid to painful aspects of his life with a form of reluctant helpfulness. He suffers from inability to say no to the favours people ask of him. To the town's people it seems that Ryder is to, as Flor so well puts it "meant to provide a sort of spiritual and material renaissance to the whole town through his concert, but he is also required to heal the bleeding wounds of some locals by performing some apparently minor favors" and according to Flor, Ryder sees himself as "an honest, well-meaning person" who "tries to be kind to everyone and to do his best to help", but as "different demands overlap" he fails to cope with the demands (U, 161).

When it comes to *transformation* mentioned by Bal as a constituent part of character analysis, Ryder fails the reader miserably (1985, 125). While Ryder is constantly faced with situation where he could potentially rechoose his 'self', he nonetheless fails to take up on these opportunities. It is precisely his unchanging nature that defines him as a character rather than change itself. Ryder is constantly torn by his encounters, distressed by his own needs as much as he is troubled by the demands of his social relationships. He is presented with countless opportunities to take control of his life and find fulfilment and yet love does not console him, experiences do not mature him, the music cannot restore him.

Lothe also puts emphasis on how a character speaks as an important indicator of his personality: “what a character says or thinks...often has a characterizing function through both content and form” (2000, 83). Elbaz notes that “Every discourse in an interpretation.” (1987, 14) and certainly when it comes to The Unconsoled there can be several ways to interpret the accounts by Ryder and the dialogues that he finds himself engaged in. In Ryder’s case we are provided with an overwhelming amount of material for study because he alone narrates through the entire 536 pages of the novel in his own voice. The general observations that can be drawn from the language used are in particular its formality and reserved politeness which lends itself perfectly for evasions so characteristic of Ryder. The narration is restricted and formal in tone and full of seemingly trivial details. The content of speech includes for the most part dialogue, endless monologues and descriptions of situations, yet they are all peculiarly void of emotion and personalized commentary which is less common in a first-person narrator. The reason for this is even provided in the novel in Ryder’s own words, as he recalls the way he had learned to suppress his emotions as a child: “In time, they had acquired a certain ritual, so that as soon as I felt the earliest signs of my need to return home, I would make myself go to a special spot along the lane, under a large oak tree, where I would remain standing for several minutes, fighting off my emotions”(U, 172). What I also found remarkable is the way the tone, the form and the content of Ryder’s speech is mirrored in the accounts of every other character in the novel. The fact that Ryder quotes the discourse of the other characters’ explains it partially but not entirely. The similarities are simply too great to ignore. This, as well as last of Bal’s main principles of reconstruction, *relation to other characters*, will be further discussed in chapter 4 (1985, 125).

Repetition is an important principle when the reader is building up the image of a character. Bal points out that it is only when our attention has been focused on something a few times that we begin to regard a given trait as part of the character’s personality (1985, 125).

Repetition provides us with a lot of information on Ryder as a character. He exhibits several repetitive aspects that have a significant bearing on his character, such as: lack of emotional presence, withdrawing from showing affection and inability to express emotion. He also repeatedly shows signs of not being able to control his temper. His anger and frustration are most often directed at Sophie whom he keeps blaming for his own mistakes. Ryder feels seemingly unjustified anger on several occasions towards Sophie:

It took me a moment to realize it was Sophie. But as soon as I did so, I became consumed by an intense rage towards her, and it was only Boris's presence that stopped me shouting furiously down the line. (U, 80)

I could sense things were in danger of slipping out of control again, and I felt returning some of the intense annoyance I had experienced earlier in the day about the way Sophie had brought such chaos into my life. (U, 243)

Ryder even accuses Sophie of reducing his “carefully planned time-table to chaos”, which is absurd because he lost that schedule right at the beginning of the novel and remembered nothing of it anyway. It is as if he is directing the rage he feels about other sources of frustration in his life and transposes it all onto Sophie and Boris. The anger and frustration thus displaced find their roots in Ryder's childhood, which leads us to examine Ryder's role as father, husband and son and how all these three roles are intertwined in complex ways.

3.2 Roles

There is a disparity between what Ryder believes about his situation and what the reality is as well as what he hopes to accomplish and how he goes about it. His success as father and husband greatly differs from his professional acclaim even though it contrasts vividly with his hopes regarding his own parents as well as his presumed son and wife. His childhood wounds affect his relationships in numerous ways; Ryder repeats the mistakes of his own parents and cannot help but inflict similar suffering on Boris and Sophie, as Flor points out (2000, 168). Also from a

professional angle there seem to be two very different Ryders: the public Ryder and the private Ryder. He tries to maintain the appearances perhaps in his fear of exposure. There are also clear differences between the reactions the others characters display towards Ryder and they appear to have somewhat different perceptions about him.

3.2.1 The Son, The Husband and The Father

Ishiguro's previous three novels A Pale View of Hills (1982), An Artist of the Floating World (1986) and Remains of the Day (1989) already featured similar themes as The Unconsoled: traumas of the past affect the relationships of the present and how they are all interlinked in their complexity. Wong (2004, 74) points out how The Unconsoled is punctuated with Ryder's remembrance of his parent's behaviour towards him and one another. The various episodes that Ryder recalls are similar to those events in which Boris, his presumed son, or Sophie, his girlfriend/wife, is the focus of attention. Ryder's fierce dedication to his profession also derives from this childhood. Ryder's role as a husband and a father, as well as musician, can hardly therefore be discussed without reference to his role as a son. As the following extract shows, Ryder has been suffering from parental neglect and he has been exposed to domestic disturbances throughout his childhood:

I reached down and let my fingers brush against the hotel rug, and as I did so a memory came back to me of one afternoon when I had been lost within my world of plastic soldiers and a furious row had broken out downstairs. The ferocity of the voices was such that, even as a child of six or seven, I had realized this to be no ordinary row. But I had told myself it was nothing and, resting my cheek back down on the green mat, had continued with my battle plans. Near the centre of the green mat had been a torn patch that had always been a source of much irritation to me. But that afternoon, as the voices raged on downstairs, it had occurred to me for the first time that the tear could be used as a sort of bush terrain for my soldiers to cross. (U, 16)

This memory also depicts a coping mechanism Ryder developed against his loneliness. Early on he found refuge in his games whereas later on they were replaced by his immersion into the world of music; ‘the training sessions’ mentioned earlier in this study and the image he acquired of himself as the outsider who likes to be alone.

All through the novel, Ryder is concerned about the potential arrival of his parents to come and see him perform at the concert. He is agitated by the thought that his parents might not make it safely to the event and it is revealed that for all the success Ryder has had in his career his parents have never seen him perform, only to come to the realization at the end of the novel that his parents have yet again failed to make an appearance. Ryder’s hopes are crushed once again in chapter 36. When talking to Miss Stratmann, he realizes the situation and at the same reveals a great deal about his reasons for his dedication to his career and the subsequent traveling that he has been doing that has kept him away from his own son:

Surely, it wasn’t unreasonable of me to assume they would come this time? After all, I’m at the height of my powers now. How much longer am I supposed to go on travelling like this? Of course, I’m sorry if I’ve put anyone to unnecessary inconvenience, but surely it won’t come to that. They must be here somewhere. Besides, I heard them coming, their horse and carriage. I heard them, they must be here, surely, it’s not unreasonable...’
I collapsed into a nearby chair and realized I had started to sob. As I did so, I remembered all at once just how tenuous had been the whole possibility of my parents’ coming to the town. (U, 512)

Ryder’s parents neglect him not only as a child as we have established through earlier accounts, but they continue to do so now that he is an adult, yet the need for the parental approval and love remains acute in him.

Ironically in his paternal role Ryder fails as much as his own parents did with him. Lewis has made a claim that Ryder may not be the biological son of the man he knows as his father, referring to a scene where Ryder’s childhood friend Fiona’s mother tells her that Ryder is too young to know what everyone else knows (2000, 120). There is also textual evidence to support

the conclusion that Boris is not Ryder's biological son either, e.g. Sophie talks of Ryder as "a special friend" right at the beginning of the novel (U, 32), even though later on Ryder calls Boris on several occasions his "boy" or his "little boy" (U, 45, 54, 155) and Boris refers to Ryder as "Papa" (U, 286) or "father" (U, 407). Sophie however tells Boris at the end of the novel: "He'll never be one of us. You've got to understand that, Boris. He'll never love you like a real father" (U, 532). The lack of biological connection might explain the awkwardness of this relationship as Sophie points out to him: "That's the difference! He is not your own. Whatever you say, it makes a difference. You'll never feel towards him like a real father." (U, 95)

Wong talks about Ryder replicating his own wound onto Boris due to his own childhood experience, regardless of his attempts to rejoin his son (2004, 75). He is not emotionally available for Boris and as Flor expresses it "Such neglect of his family derives mainly from his vanity and workaholicism: Ryder subordinates his family duties to any kind of minor errand he is required to perform, since in those cases he feels his prestige is at stake" (2000, 167). Flor argues that his devotion to his professional duty and his vanity lie behind his inability to act like a good father and husband. I believe however that he has another reason for taking up these errands. Considering the traumas of his childhood, I believe, these professional or other engaging errands provide him with emotional escapes, convenient excuses to avoid emotional involvement as he explains to Boris in chapter 15:

"Boris, I know you must be wondering. I mean, why it is we can't just settle down and live quietly, the three of us. You must, I know you do, you must wonder why I have to go away all the time, even though your mother gets upset about it.... I have to keep going on these trips because, you see, you can never tell when it's going to come along. I mean the very special one, the very important trip, the one that's very very important, not just for me but for everyone, everyone in the world." (U, 217)

Ryder's past has taught him that in-depth relationships cause him nothing but pain and he finds ways to distract himself from the family issues at hand, by resorting to the "special things" he has

to do exaggerating the importance of the trips he goes on for his work. Shaffer notes that “Ryder’s workaholism – he will disappoint Sophie and Boris, but never his public – stems from this constant need to feed his own ego” and points out how Ryder frequently abandons both Sophie and Boris in order to do the bidding of someone associated with his official visit (1998, 110). His ego being left so shattered from his childhood, he overcompensates the sense of worthlessness with pronounced narcissism about his professional self, which leads to the repression of his private self and subsequent neglect of Sophie and Boris.

3.2.2 The Musician

Ryder’s workaholism, as Shaffer calls it, leads me to study Ryder’s role as a musician that is not entirely straightforward in terms of its function or status in the novel either. Ryder arrives in this city not only for the purpose of giving a concert, but also to attend some important meetings in order to discuss the local cultural issues and to give a speech about the cultural revival of the city and indeed he does seem to have a powerful effect on people around him. Many people seek his advice, company and attention, and wish to discuss their issues with him. He kindly obliges to the best of his ability and listens to the endless monologues that they share with him. He also promises to perform certain little requests that they ask of him, which are not even all purely professional in nature, but his counsel is sought for even more personal matters. The first three of these requests are already presented to him before the second chapter comes to an end:

1st request: Mr Hoffman wants Ryder to “peruse these two albums of cuttings” that his wife has collected about Mr Ryder. (U, 20)

2nd request: Stephan asks Ryder to listen to the piece he is to perform at the concert: “if you would have a few minutes to spare to listen to me run through my piece. I’ve decided to play Jean-Louis La Roche’s Dahlia.” (U, 25)

3rd request: Gustav asks Ryder to talk to his daughter Sophie about what is troubling her: “I did wonder if I might ask a small favour of you”. (U, 27)

An abundance of requests follow yet, some of which he is completely oblivious to having even agreed to, and more often than not, he fails to meet the expectations of these people, not least because of his lost schedule. Also Miss Stratmann, who has seen to this schedule, can not seem to be able to help him because he repeatedly fails to communicate the state of affairs to her exactly. He is rushed from one engagement to another without him ever being fully in control of the events. He naturally also fails to attend quite a few of the meetings that he does not recall. At the same time though as Ryder is welcomed with the utmost respect and regarded as an authority in his field, “the novel is riddled with scenes in which Ryder is completely ignored and deemed insignificant by the very citizens who seem to honour him in more public contexts” (2004, 68) as Wong points out. A particularly good example of this is the scene by the Sattler monument on a photo shoot with a journalist and his photographer, who mock Ryder in loud voices and show considerable loathing of his character (U, 166-167). Ryder does not seem to register the insults but narrates them just as casually as anything else and as Wong points out he seems more conscious of their false praises. Wong’s explanation of this is that Ryder pretends as if he understood what they mean, even though he does not, in order to save face, much like the reader is forced to do within the reading process of the novel (2004, 76). Shaffer explains Ryder’s peculiar reaction in the same scene with the blinding aspect of his egomania: “That Ryder is able to overlook the fact that the admiration shown him by others is largely feigned is revealed most clearly when he grants a local newspaper an interview and photo opportunity”. Ryder overhears them refer to him as a ‘difficult shit’ and a ‘fool’, yet this does not stop him from agreeing to all their requests” (1998, 110).

3.3 Analogies

Rimmon-Kenan talks about the use of analogy, and in particular, how it functions as reinforcement in characterization (1983, 67). There are various different types of analogy that could be interpreted in this way in The Unconsoled. Already the surroundings, the entire landscape of the novel could be seen as an enhancement of Ryder's psyche: e.g. the peculiarly flexible dimensions and distances, the doors that lead to unexpected locations, the rooms that change before his eyes could all be seen as metaphoric elements for Ryder's own mind. Even though this has been implicitly left for the reader to discover and not stated in any way directly, the similarities between the two would suggest the link. Lewis also maps out several of these elements that can be seen as displacements of space. He mentions the narrow alleys of the town with their loops and winding. He sees the town as a maze or a labyrinth that "has too many circularities and dead ends" which echoes Ryder's endless rotation in circles (2000, 108-109). In chapter 26 Ryder is faced with a street-long wall of immeasurable proportions. He cannot get past it and expresses his fury at the situation: "If I may say so, this wall is quite typical of this town. Utterly preposterous obstacles everywhere." (U, 388) Similarly Ryder's mind takes similar twists and turns as the streets of the town, his mind is blocked with an abundance of obstacles and it is all indeed - very typical.

The name 'Ryder' also brings to mind the word 'rider'. Lewis notes how Ryder as his name implies, "rides through his life, perpetually moving somewhere else, unable to find the stasis of home". I believe the name may in fact have two forms of analogy at work, one showing similarity as well as one highlighting Ryder's characteristics in a contrastive sense. While it could be suggesting someone caught in a motion and it carries an image of a vehicle a means to an end, it might also entail the connotation of someone in charge of their route and destination and suggests perhaps a role as the one who decides the direction of the journey. The reason I would

suggest a dual interpretation in term of the analogous nature of the name is that Ryder himself in my view has a split personality of a sort. He is seen as the leader in the public view, the one expected to show the society a way out of their misery and yet he is utterly lost as much in his surroundings, in his mind as in his relationships and he is certainly never sure as to where he should be or when. He is treated as the instrument, the vehicle of salvation yet and yet he finds himself incapable of handling all the demands laid upon him. Instead of being fluidly in motion moving towards his goal, he is stuck in his perpetual inadequacies and he finds himself unable to determine the courses of action or unable to take control of even his own personal life, let alone the issues of the cultural community of the town.

There is also an abundance of similarities between Ryder the character and the other characters in the novel. The bits of information that the other characters choose to share with Mr Ryder about their lives are usually always relevant to Ryder's situation in life and Ryder the narrator then chooses to share these specific accounts with the reader. The fates, characteristics and personality traits of other characters in the book bear an uncanny resemblance to those of Ryder. The indicators repeat the same trait in different ways; complement each other and partially even overlap. The different groups of characters are repeatedly presented in similar circumstances and the similarities emphasize the character traits in each. The character traits of these other characters thus brought to our attention map out quite effectively the personality of Mr Ryder, which leads us to another topic altogether, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

4 RYDER AS OTHER CHARACTERS

Already in the title of the novel, The Unconsoled, one is faced with a mystery. Who is the unconsoled? Or should we ask ourselves, who are the unconsoled? The title in its plural/singular duality marks a course for this study that cannot be ignored.

Ryder's role as a musician, which provides its own complexities in itself, is not in my view limited to only the traditional sense of the artist, but I see him as "the artist of the floating world" and the world of The Unconsoled as his peculiar creation. It is revealed little by little in the book how the fates of the other characters in the book have a resemblance to Ryder's own life. As Wong (2004, 71) points out the other characters "reveal themselves to be important caricatures inhabiting Ryder's own past and present life". The question arises whether the other characters are distorted projections of Ryder in different stages and times in his life or truly separate entities that just happen to carry an abundance of characters traits and actions similar to those of Ryder. Shaffer also states that "These characters, while 'real', are mainly to be understood as extensions, versions, or variations of Ryder himself" and makes an interesting claim that "while these characters should not be regarded as mere fabrications of the protagonist's, then, they should be understood as conduits for Ryder to remember and forget, judge and censor his own past" (1998, 94-95). I quite agree with Shaffer's and Wong's observations and intend to study further the possibility of the other characters in the book being peculiar projections of Ryder and also the possibility of Ryder assimilating other characters into his own sphere of experience. Is it possible that this is in fact a story of Ryder alone, which is told not only through the first person narrative voice, but also through the subplots carried out by the other characters?

Bal mentioned *the relation to other characters* as one of the defining principles when reconstructing a character from the text (1985, 125). The principle entails similarities as well as differences between characters. I will first look at the different groups of actants in the novel and attempt to track the connections, similarities and shared character traits between Ryder and the other characters. I will also look at how these different groups of characters formulate and act within the major themes of the novel and how the Freudian concept of displacement can be applied to the study of an appropriating character.

4.1 Projections

Carlos Villar Flor and Barry Lewis have both studied the possibility of other characters in the book being projections of Ryder. Many of the supporting characters are subject to issues of loneliness, lovelessness and non-communication and Flor observes that Ryder himself is not “immune to the same evils affecting the strange characters he is trying to help” (2000, 161). The one theme that seems to affect all others in the book is the neglect of family relationships. There is a special emphasis on the prolonged suffering over the emotional wounds inflicted upon many of the characters by their family members.

Lewis discusses the similarities between the characters with special reference to Freud’s concept of displacement and condensation. Within the Freudian dream theory displacement “serves to allay emotional anxiety by substituting one idea or object or person for another” (Lewis, 2000, 105). The seemingly trivial elements in the narration take on a deeper, hidden meaning: e.g. a simple concert takes on enormous importance as a symbol of the cultural resurrection of the society in the minds of the town’s people, placing Ryder on a pedestal of immeasurable proportions. Flor also argues that “the narrating Ryder projects his own traumas into other characters that are more explicitly analyzed than himself” (2000, 166). Lewis has

studied the way the book displaces Ryder's anxieties on to the other characters, much in a same way as for example a childless couple would transfer their emotions to a pet or a hobby. It is almost as if the minor characters were standing in for him, his past/future and the characters closest to him. Flor also supports Lewis's hypothesis:

Many characters appearing in the novel, though basically "real", are likely to be projections or variations of the narrator himself. Since Ryder doesn't question the obvious absurdity of some of the events he relates, we are not fully entitled to doubt about the fictional existence of these characters: they are not necessarily his fabrication, but clearly many of them embody what must have been or indeed are Ryder's own traumas and injuries. (2000, 163)

Flor (2000, 163) divides the characters of The Unconsoled into five basic 'families' which exemplify the workings of the displacement:

1. Mr Ryder – Mrs Ryder - Ryder
2. Mr Hoffman – Mrs Hoffman - Stephan
3. Ryder –Sophie - Boris
4. Gustav – Sophie - Boris
5. Brodsky – Miss Collins (- Bruno)

The issues troubling the above "families" are varied. There is neglect, loneliness, expectations and needs not met, lack of communication, inability to be there for the other when presence would be needed, emotional coldness and inability to express true feelings. The children in the circumstances are without exception hurt in their childhood, witnesses to constant parental conflicts and suffer from subsequent neglect. The characters seem to care for each other, but something in the way they express / do not express themselves hinders them from having healthy relationships.

Whereas I basically agree with Flor's categorization, I would further divide these five categories into two subdivisions according to the types of relationships the characters have with

each other with some additional minor characters using the teleological model by the French structuralist Julien Greimas. In order to do this, I will briefly study the constituent parts of the model and the way in which it can be applied here.

4.2 Groups of Actants

Bal introduces a teleological model by Greimas for classes of actors in a novel (1985, 196-198). According to this model *actors* have an intention; they aspire towards an aim. The term actor is used here in broadly referring to any acting entity in a given novel, whether it is endowed with human characteristics or not. An *actant* is a class of actors that shares a certain characteristic quality. Bal describes the relation between the actor and its aim as similar to that of a subject to an object and this model is easily applicable to the relations between actors/actants and their aims in The Unconsoled for the purpose of highlighting the similarities, repetition and accumulation in my attempt to show that some of the other characters could be seen as mirror images of Mr Ryder. There are two paths of investigation through which I intend to explore these projections and their effects on the character of Mr Ryder: the private self vs. the public self.

Flor points out how the novel introduces the distressing notion that a child needs to earn his parents' love by means of achieving success (2000, 164). I feel however that this theme also reappears in connection with other types of relationships. A more public angle to grouping the actors concerns the musicians of the novel. They all wish to achieve, hold or regain professional success, but what I deem essential is that they all seem to have an underlying agenda behind their aspirations which is connected with their private selves. All the musicians of the novel have an ardent wish of regaining the affections of their parents, spouses or the general public by some profession related act or deed, or as Flor quite accurately expresses it, by "building up an external prestige for themselves, which would make them worthy of admiration and love" (2000, 165).

Lewis argues that the other characters reflect actual or potential aspects of Ryder's artist identity and that each of the musicians represent "displaced versions of Ryder as he has been in the past or as he may be in the future" and he lists Stephan as the frustrated artist as a young man, his father Mr Hoffman as the artist manqué as an old man, Christoff as the rejected artist and Brodsky as the artist trying to make a comeback (2000, 111). I would have hesitations with including Mr Hoffman in this group of actors however, considering that his career as a musician was nothing but an accidental lie and never truly was more than a wish on his part. Mr Hoffman explains to Mr Ryder in chapter 24 how his relationship with his wife Christine, who had been born into a gifted family of artists herself, had been based on a mutual love for music and it had been only after the proposal that she had discovered that Mr Hoffman was in fact not an artist, as she had assumed and as Mr Hoffman had also led her to believe for a period of time. The deception, though never discussed, had had a destructive effect on their marriage, as Mr Hoffman lived in constant fear of her leaving him due to what he had interpreted as her resentment of his inadequacy (U, 346-355). As a professional projection of Mr Ryder, I would be willing to exclude Mr Hoffman, since Mr Ryder did build himself a successful career and it was on the contrary his success in his profession that caused problems in his relationship with Sophie. The only possible way in which I can see Mr Hoffman as a professional projection of Mr Ryder is as a potential Ryder-that-never-went-into-the-music-business. Had Ryder not been musically talented and pursued his career, he might well have turned out like Mr Hoffman, someone who transposes his professional ambitions onto his child. For me however, Mr Hoffman mainly reflects the private issues of Mr Ryder's rather than professional ones, which have already been discussed in the previous example and I would categorize him as being a mirror image of Mr Ryder's father rather of himself.

4.2.1 The Desire for Recognition

I will now try to establish that the aims and desires of the private selves are closely connected with their public hopes and dreams of the musicians of the novel.

Example 1 Following Greimas' model according to Bal, the actors (all musicians) in the novel aim to gain recognition and acceptance through professional achievements. Mr Ryder already has the acceptance and respect of the general public whereas the others do not. They all however share the common aim of trying to win the affections of an intimate acquaintance through professional acclaim.

Actor/actant-subject	function	Actor/actant-object
Mr Ryder	Wants to gain recognition and acceptance through professional achievements	His parents
Stephan	Wants to gain recognition and acceptance through professional achievements	His parents, general public
Brodsky	Wants to gain recognition and acceptance through professional achievements	Miss Collins, general public
Christoff	Wants to gain recognition and acceptance through professional achievements	Rosa, general public
*Mr Hoffman	Want to gain acceptance through the professional achievements of his son	Mrs Hoffman

I certainly agree with Lewis that Stephan can be read as a version of Ryder as a young man. They have crucially similar backgrounds with their lonely childhoods and parents that they desperately seek to please through professional means. In chapter 6 we experience the omniscient Ryder reading the mind of Stephan as he recalls his mother's birthday, on which his piano playing yet again fell short of his parents' expectations, as we can see in the following extracts:

Left alone with his mother, Stephan's first feeling had been one of sheer terror – that something he said or did would shatter her good mood, thus undoing hours, perhaps days, of painstaking efforts on his father's part...

Stephan, regardless of his crippling fear, starts to play for his mother, but fails to please her:

Several bars later, his father had turned his gaze away from Stephan...His mother was looking in the other direction across the room, wearing the frosty expression Stephan was so familiar with...(U, 69)

The fact that it is Ryder's thoughts, as opposed to Stephan's, that we are reading here, might serve as further evidence that we are indeed witnessing Ryder's own experiences of this nature being displaced onto Stephan's. In this way Ryder's identity intermingles with that of Stephan's and the boundaries between the two become less and less evident.

Christoff and Brodsky's situations are very similar. They have both enjoyed success in the community professionally in the past, but each has been rejected and they are now trying to restore their earlier artistic prestige. They both seek to regain the recognition and through that they are convinced they would win back the affections of their loved ones. Brodsky has been long separated from Miss Collins already, but Christoff is still married to Rosa, but is convinced that she will leave him. Christoff's explanation to Ryder in chapter 13 about the conditional nature of Rosa's love echoes the relationship between Mr and Mrs Hoffman:

'While I enjoyed the pre-eminence I did in this community, she was able to love me. Oh yes, she loved me, she genuinely loved me. I can say this with utter conviction, Mr Ryder. Because you see, for Rosa, nothing else in life would be more important than to be married to someone in the position I was in. Perhaps that makes her sound a little shallow. But you mustn't misunderstand her. In her own way, in the way she knew, she loved me deeply. In any case, it's nonsense to believe people go on loving each other regardless of what happens. It's just that in Rosa's case, well, the way she is, she's able to love me only under certain circumstances. That doesn't make her love for me any less real.' (U, 189)

While Ryder still enjoys the respect of his audience, there are nonetheless indications that not everyone shares that view as was established earlier in the chapter dedicated to Ryder as a musician and there are scenes in the novel where he expresses his fear that "they turn on" him

referring quite obviously to his public. Ryder's fears of public rejection are reflected in a conversation he has with Sophie in chapter 30:

'They'll probably turn on me tonight, it wouldn't surprise me. When they get unhappy about my answers, they'll turn on me, and then where will I be? I might not even get as far as the piano. Or my parents might leave, the moment they start to turn on me...'

'Look, calm down,' Sophie said. 'It'll be alright. They never turn on you. You always say they'll turn on you and so far no one, not a single person in all these years, has turned on you...' (U, 444)

Ryder then accuses Sophie of taking his success for granted and gets exceedingly agitated as always when the domestic demands distract him from his professional duties (U, 445). The popularity in the public eye in a modern society is fickle and the loss of the esteem can have devastating effects on an individual and Ryder's fears are not entirely unfounded, as for example the journalist and his photographer in chapter 12 hold him in not very high regard at all. It is not at all unlikely that the fates of Christoff and Brodsky both represent a dreaded image of the future for him and mirror his fears of losing his status in the music community.

While both can be seen as projections of the Ryder of the future, Christoff represents a more immediate possible outcome, as Brodsky stand for a much older version of Ryder. Brodsky suffers from an injury - the wound - he has gotten many years ago, which seems to have incapacitated him, led to a drinking problem and a subsequent separation from Miss Collins as the following extract reveals. Brodsky and Miss Collins had not been interacting for years. Miss Collins recounts their first meeting after years of non-communication and a long time apart:

All that happened was that Leo came up to me and said: "You're looking very lovely today. "Just the sort of thing you'd expect Leo to say after twenty years of being drunk. And that was just about all there was to it. (U, 273)

The wound is a pivotal factor linking Brodsky to Ryder. In Brodsky's own words, he desperately wants to reconcile with Miss Collins, because "She'll be like the music. A consolation. A wonderful consolation" (U, 313), much in the same way music has been a consolation in Ryder's

life. There are also hints to the effect that there has been a period of excessive drinking in Ryder's life as well thus linking him again to Brodsky. While visiting their old apartment with Boris, Ryder comes across an old neighbour who recalls the disturbances that had been going on in the flat largely because the male partner had had a drinking problem and had been away a lot from home due to his work. Ryder gets excessively upset by these accounts and as Lewis points out "The obscure logic of the The Unconsoled is such that it is quite possible that the neighbour is really referring to Ryder himself. The musician's shame at his own behaviour is displaced, dreamily, on to someone else" (2000, 115).

By the end of the novel all the four musicians are left unconsoled. Stephan manages to deliver a successful piano recital at the concert, yet his parents remain unimpressed and leave the auditorium during his performance. Christoff's prospects of regaining his status, and with it very possibly his possibilities of holding on to his wife, are efficiently cut down by a single statement from Ryder as he presents a differing view on the subject of Kazan from that of Christoff's and Christoff becomes the object of the community's loathing. Brodsky's hopes of resurrection are crushed as he collapses on the stage while conducting the orchestra at the concert. As he mentions yet again his wound, his hopes of reconciliation with Miss Collins are buried as she exclaims in rage:

I know how it will be even if we managed to build something all over again. The music too, that would be no different. Even if they'd accepted you tonight, even if you became celebrated in this town, you'd destroy it all, you'd destroy everything, pull it all down around you just as you did before. And all because of that wound. Me, the music, we're neither of us anything more to you than mistresses you seek consolation from. You always go back to your real love. To that wound! And you know what makes me so angry? Leo, are you listening to me? Your wound, it's nothing special, nothing special at all. In this town alone, I know there are many people with far worse. (U, 498-499).

Miss Collins tells Brodsky to go on his own with his silly wound. Ryder's "wound" in my view is the relationship with his parents and his frantic attempts to impress them through his professional

achievements come eventually between him and Sophie. Sophie’s father Gustav has just died and Ryder has even then managed to not be there for her while fussing about the arrival of his parents who fail to make an appearance. As Ryder eventually comes to offer his condolences to her, Sophie, disillusioned, delivers the final blow to their relationship: “Leave us. You were always on the outside of our love. Now look at you. On the outside of our grief too. Leave us. Go away” (U, 532). In the end they are all the unconsolated and I have to agree with Shaffer’s poignant statement: “At bottom, The Unconsolated suggests that narcissism and masochism – a self-absorbed, self-enclosed, self-hating addiction to pain and vanity – rule the contemporary artist’s passions (1998, 114).

4.2.2 The Desire for Consolation

I will now study the private side of Mr Ryder, plagued by the lack of communication and rejection and the functions which link him to the other characters: their desire for consolation and their search for love and acceptance.

Example 2 This example exposes the vastness of similarities between the aims of the ‘unconsolated’ actants of the novel. They all seek to a certain degree to reconcile with their loved ones, look for consolation for their emotional wounds as well as love and acceptance.

Actor/actant-subject	function	Actor/actant-object
Children 1. Mr Ryder 2. Boris 3. Stephan 4. Sophie	Seeks love and affection	Parent(s) 1. Mr and Mrs Ryder 2. Mr Ryder and Sophie 3. Mr and Mrs Hoffmann 4. Gustav
Spouses 1. Mr Ryder 2. Mr Hoffmann 3. Brodsky 4. Christoff	Seeks to reconcile and rebuild a future together	Estranged spouse 1. Sophie 2. Mrs Hoffmann 3. Miss Collins 4. Rosa
Friends		Estranged friends

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fiona Roberts 2. Jonathan Parkhurst 3. Geoffrey Saunders 	Seeks to become re-acquainted or accepted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr Ryder, Inge and Trude 2. Mr Ryder 3. Mr Ryder
Parent <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gustav 2. Mr Ryder 	Seeks to build a better relationship	Children <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sophie 2. Boris

The linking element for the children and their parents of The Unconsoled is silence and in particular rejection in the form of silence is shared by Ryder and the three other characters. The silence manifests itself in the many repetitions, the omissions, the contemplated acts in the novel and it becomes the crucial obstacle within the relationships. If one looks at the all these combinations of children and parents as projections of Ryder's life, they replicate the relationship between Ryder and his parents in different ways showing different sides to the initial trauma that still effects him in so many ways. Ryder also replicated the trauma of his childhood onto his relationship with Boris as well as onto the narration of the fates of the other characters. Rogers discusses the Freudian *attachment theory* in connection with literature and argues that "All major attachments in adult life constitute versions, or permutations, of earlier attachments, which is tantamount to saying that adult interpersonal relationships reflect the object-relational history of the individuals concerned" (1991, 29) and I believe this a phenomenon that one can observe in action throughout the The Unconsoled.

There is very little actual fact presented to us about the domestic situation in Ryder's childhood home, though many things are hinted at and as Ryder's subconscious mind does seem to displace his own experiences onto others, there is some information available for examination. Ryder's past is seen very much through a veil of mystery, but in almost every flashback recounted from Ryder's childhood however, we find him playing alone, finding ways to keep himself occupied in his loneliness and finally developing coping mechanisms such as immersing

himself in music or convincing himself that he actually likes to be alone. The lack of presence and communication with the parents can be observed repeatedly in Ryder's recollections. Even as an adult now Ryder expects his parents to come and see him perform at the concert, but he is let down as he seems to have been every time: his parents have never seen him perform. The silence between Ryder and his parents at present is the ultimate kind. There is no word from them, no phone calls or letter, no communication at all explaining their absence. They are just not there and this is the source of almost all problems Ryder encounters in his other relationships.

Ryder's relationship with Boris, as already discussed in this study at length under Ryder's role as a father provides yet another interesting instance of the present displacing the past. Ryder's relationship with Boris is equally problematic as the one with his own parents quite as Shaffer remarks: "the dysfunctional qualities of Ryder's childhood family triangle are replicated in his adult family triangle" (U, 109). Ryder's greatest failure is in communicating with his son even to the extent that he takes out his rage towards his own parents on Sophie and little Boris. The conversation between the two is forced and Ryder seems utterly at a loss as to how to connect with his son.

Stephan, the only son of the Hoffman's, resembles Ryder mostly in his desire to win his parents affection through his music and he never succeeds in having a healthy relationship with them, much like Ryder himself. Lewis also suggests that the similarities encourage a reading of Stephan as a ghost of Ryder's past (2000, 111). Stephan has been under the impression since he was thirteen or fourteen, and he is not entirely mistaken, that his parents' happiness depends on his blameless piano performance (U, 76). He is a talented young man with great potential who diligently rehearses his piano playing, is consumed with insecurities and there is a sense of emptiness about his demeanour and all these elements are also constituent parts of Ryder's character. He, much in the same way as Ryder, finds himself rejected by his parents, who refuse

to encourage him or even stay in the audience for his performance. Shaffer points out how they “intentionally make him feel like a mediocrity, a major disappointment, and a laughing stock when it comes to his artistic abilities” (1998, 117).

The most puzzling case of silence troubles the relationship of Sophie and her father Gustav. “The truth of the matter is that Sophie and I haven’t spoken to each other for many years. Not really since she was a child...what I mean is, we don’t speak” (U, 29). Their relationship was shattered in the aftermath of an argument in Sophie’s childhood and an “understanding” of silence was established between them. The circumstances of how the understanding came about, is explained by Gustav in chapter 7:

“You see, we’ve had this understanding now for many years...We were very close when she was small. This understanding only started when she was eight years old...” (U, 82)

“It just became a norm between us. I don’t want you to misunderstand me, sir, we weren’t quarrelling as such, there ceased to be any animosity between us fairly quickly. In fact, it was in those days just as it is now. Sophie and I remained very considerate towards one another. It’s simply that we refrained from speaking.” (U, 83)

They talk to each other via Boris and even though both clearly would wish to end the silence between them, they seem to lack the tools and courage to take the initiative. In the same way as Ryder’s parents failed to communicate with him, the way Ryder fails to communicate with Boris, Gustav also fails to communicate with his daughter and the displacement is repeated yet again in the form of another character. Towards the end of the novel in chapter 29 Gustav realizes he has not got much time left as his health is rapidly deteriorating and he asks Ryder’s help in breaking the “understanding” with his daughter and to bring her to him. Ryder fails to notify Sophie of her father’s condition before it is too late and the dying man’s last wish is never fulfilled.

Ryder is also accused by three of the minor characters, all old friends from his past, of ignoring them, of not keeping in touch or getting in touch with them when in town and not recognizing their needs. Geoffrey Saunders is the first one to confront him of his negligence:

‘I’ve been expecting to hear from you. You know, to tell me when you’ll be popping round...when I heard you were coming, I immediately popped out and bought a selection of tea cakes. That was the day before yesterday. Yesterday, I thought they were still presentable, though the icing had got a bit on the tough side. But today, when you still hadn’t called, I threw them away.’ (U, 45)

Fiona Roberts explains to Ryder how she had invited all her acquaintances to her apartment to meet her famous pianist friend, how she had waited until ten-thirty before starting the dinner and how she had utterly lost her face when Ryder had not made an appearance at the gathering after all (U, 173). Jonathan Parkhurst voices the feelings by telling Ryder: “You can’t afford to forget your old friends any more than I can. It’s right, you know, some of these things they say. You’re downright complacent and you’ll pay for it one day. Just because you’ve become famous!” (U, 328). All of Ryder’s old friends are all faced with Ryder’s bizarre resistance, as they make special efforts to meet him, yet he is unable to communicate any reasons for his reluctance and fails to acknowledge them to their satisfaction. Ryder persists in his silence and never managed to reconcile with his friends.

Silence also comes between couples. Ryder and Sophie fail to come to an agreement about most issues troubling their relationship and not least because of the lack of communication. Sophie’s attempts at trying to discuss these issues are repeatedly shut down by Ryder:

(Sophie) ‘If you want I’ll make a completely clean breast of it. I’ll tell you everything. Everything you want to know about...’

(Ryder) ‘Look, how many times do I have to say this? I’m not in the least interested...’
She continued to hold my arms and for a while we walked together in silence.(U, 88-89)

For all his concern for Sophie’s well being and obvious affection towards her (U, 90, 259, 277, 280, 282), Ryder seems unable to communicate these feelings to her in a meaningful way. Even Miss Collins, who seems to be intimately acquainted with Ryder’s domestic situation in the past as well as in the present, tells him “It really would be a great sadness to me if you were to

continue making your mistakes over and over” (U, 147), suggesting that this is not the first time Ryder has failed to bond with Sophie and Boris.

Mr and Mrs Hoffman are similarly caught in the web of silence. Stephan describes his parents’ lack of communication in chapter 6: “I mean, that’s when I realized. That my mother and father had barely spoken to each other for months.” (U, 73) Mr Hoffman recounts to Ryder the way he was thrown off balance at a visit to see a composer Jan Piotrowski when he found out from Piotrowski that his wife loves the poems of Baudelaire, a passion that she had never discussed with her husband (U, 352). His humiliation and shame of his ignorance concerning his wife’s likings highlights the void the non-communication has created between them. Much like Ryder and Sophie, they never discuss these issues, but they allow them to poison the relationship to the core. Mr Hoffman’s insecurity, his wound of inadequacy, climaxes in the end when urges his wife to leave him as he deems the concert he has been organizing a failure in every aspect:

‘Why was I ever allowed to put my clumsy hands anywhere near such divine things as music, art, culture? You, from a talented family, you could have married anyone. What a mistake you made. A tragedy. But it’s not too late for you. You are still beautiful. Why wait any longer? What further proof do you need? Leave me. Leave me. Find someone worthy of you’ (U, 506-507).

Mr Hoffman echoes Sophie’s words to Mr Ryder towards the end of the novel, when her father Gustav has died and Ryder yet again fails to be there for her. “Leave me.”, “Leave us.” (U, 532) are the words left echoing in the emptiness. The consequence of the lack of communication is always the same: solitude in its various forms, sometimes voluntary or self-inflicted, sometimes involuntary. In the final part of this thesis I will look at the result of all these events to the multiple self of The Unconsoled.

4.3 The Solitary Selves

In moments of crisis that shape and define the self, people may seek autonomy to gain an opportunity for reflection and self-awareness. Engelberg describes it as follows: “Autonomy is the desire of the individual to achieve freedom to facilitate the act of what Garber calls self-making” (2001, 12). He argues that a modern isolate is portrayed often as cherishing solitude or as “welcoming its severance from all human relationships, and fixating on the Self so narcissistically that solitude is aggressively sought and eagerly embraced” (2001, 9) even though he feels that such a representation of solitude in modern society is partially misleading. For Ryder and his multiple projections solitude certainly seems like an appealing path of escape from the anxieties of the world. He does not however seem to hear the calling to know himself and his feigned desire for solitude clashes with what he perceives as his duties to society. In his arrogance and illusory self-sufficiency, Ryder creates a self-imposed alienation and much in the same way as Brodsky and Mr Hoffman. He withdraws from his relationships and seeks autonomy out of misguided ambition, guilt, shame and fear.

The synonyms for solitude: loneliness, aloneness, isolation, estrangement, exile, alienation, seclusion all primarily conjure up negative associations. Engelberg lists causes for the phenomenon of the modern isolate: “modern technology has dehumanized us; the value system of modern morality has been more than disingenuous; God’s death has left us forlorn; isolation breeds anxiety and social emptiness”. He also states that “by and large the modern solitary is characterized as a voluntary outcast, the outsider” (2001, 9) and this could not be more true for the characters of The Unconsoled. The multiple Ryders of the novel all seem to have their moments when they seek out solitude, yet there are times when they also deeply yearn for human companionship. No one really flaunts solitude as such. They seem imprisoned in solitude’s

enclosures and yet it is a captivity from which they desperately attempt to escape for the sake of grasping at human relationships or even at those with an animal, as Brodsky with his dog Bruno. Ryder is also divided against himself, torn between engagement and detachment, the rewards and dangers of solitude. “Solitude may be one of the outcomes of achieving autonomy” states Engelberg, and Ryder similarly feels the effects of his choices towards his autonomy. In the end all the characters in the novel are ‘the unconsoled’: fragmented and lost in an unattainable world. Alone or in company, always failing to connect, their desires remain unfulfilled. The final result of all their half-hearted efforts towards reconciliation in their relationships culminates in the utterly adverse effect: solitude.

Greimas’ model, as presented by Bal, also provides another angle of further interest for my study with the analysis of “the powers” at work within the novel.

The intention of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object. There are always powers who either allow it to reach its aim or prevent it from doing so. This relation might be seen as form of communication, and we can, consequently, distinguish a class of actors – consisting of those who support the subject in the realization of its intention, supply the object, or allow it to be supplied or given – whom we shall call the power. The person to whom the object is ‘given’ is the receiver... The power is in many cases not a person but an abstraction: e.g. society, fate, time, human self-centredness, cleverness. (Bal, 1985, 198-199)

In The Unconsoled, there are clearly powers stopping Ryder and the other characters from finding that desired consolation, but those powers become exceedingly difficult to name. The powers keeping the characters imprisoned in their solitude is nothing as straightforward as spatial or temporal divide, another character or society. The forces separating the characters from the objects of their desire remain largely inexplicable, even though the reasons for the lack of communication can be distinguished. The powers that inhibit the characters from making even the basic verbal connections with their counterparts also fall into the category of abstractions: doubt, fear, guilt and shame. The characters are not wholly victims in their situation and for very

similar reasons they all seem encouraged to remain apart. Ishiguro creates a new level to Solitude: it becomes a paralysis, a silence and an unmaking of the relationships.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the multi-layered and fragmentary self of Mr Ryder and to form a cohesive portrait of his persona through a close analysis of the text itself. The task has been approached mainly through theories of the narrator and of characterization.

Mr Ryder the narrator could be clearly categorized as an unreliable first-person narrator. An abundance of similarities could be found between him and some of the typical characteristics of unreliable narrators in the literary tradition that revealed several interesting traits about him. Mr Ryder's tendencies, such as his drifting nature, self-delusions and his attempts to conceal the flaws of his character are also some of the typical features of the *Picaro*. With the Clown, he has in common his excessive imagination as well as the comic and grotesque elements of his accounts. He resembles the Madman narrator in that he also suffers from spells of irrationality, lacks a moral centre and he is a victim of a trauma. Mr Ryder has the least in common with the Naïf narrators, but he is similarly unaware of the implications of his narrative as they are and there is a perpetual superficiality to his interpretation of events also typical of the Naïf narrator.

Through the studies of memory, reliability and nostalgia, an image started to form of the psychological profile of the narrator, to the extent that the entire landscape of the novel could almost be seen as reflection of Ryder's psyche. It has been established that the reader is not only experiencing the accounts of the narrator's conscious mind that he deliberately renders, but that parts of the novel are glimpses into his unconscious mind: his dreams, figments of his imagination and his involuntary memories and feelings are reflected in them, which reveal more about him than what he would wish to expose. In a surreal way we are experiencing a more realistic view into the psyche of a narrator. Ryder, as much as the reader himself, is operating under the influence of the experiences of his past, the involving events of the present, as well as his fears and dreams for the future. The past of Mr Ryder entails traumatic neglect and domestic

disturbances from his childhood, which cast a shadow on the way he interprets the present situations and relationships, and how he reacts to them. The amnesiac and omniscient elements to his narration both reveal some of the coping mechanisms he has developed to shelter himself from rejection. His emotions and his imagination alter his subjective reality and through the combination of the two he forms preferred or even false interpretations of the present events, as much as his fears of the future lead him to displace his own anxieties onto other characters while narrating their stories.

Secondly, one of the aims of this thesis has been to examine Mr Ryder the character: his personality traits, actions and roles. Mr Ryder as a character, very much in the same way as The Unconsoled itself, tends to resist easy categorizations and classifications. While attempting to define the elusive essence of Mr Ryder's character, I find it interesting to compare Ryder with other literary characters in the conclusion of this study. First and foremost, Ryder is a musician. His professional duties are of great importance to him, not least because he wishes to gain the acceptance of his parents through the success in his career. It is an objective which controls all other aspects of his life and subordinates them below this one overriding aim. One could compare Ryder to Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn in Doctor Faustus, in that Ryder also makes a pact with a devil of a sort, for a life of musical genius. The price they both concede is that they will never experience love. Only Ryder's devil is the one embedded within his self and it is not his musical ambition, but rather the reasons underlying his musical ambition that drive him to the choices that stop him from experiencing love - thus leaving him unconsoled. Mr Ryder is compared by Lewis (2000, 124) to the prominent literary figure K in Kafka's Trial and certainly I can see similarities between the two. Much in the same way as K, Ryder cannot seem to get beyond waiting (for his Godot); his life is spent in a state of paralytic solitude in front of "a gate". Only Ryder never realizes, even when it is too late, that the gate was open for him all the time,

waiting for his choice to enter. He does not allow himself to be emotionally available for those closest to him, but builds his own wall and is finally denied access altogether to his family. Lewis also mentions Alice in Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and even Gulliver himself in Swift's Gulliver's Travels (2000, 125) in connection with Ryder. He wanders through the surreal world of imagination and dreams in The Unconsoled as aimlessly and with an equal sense of bewilderment as Alice and Gulliver roam through theirs. Ryder's world however is not without rules and it does not incorporate fantasy in the traditional sense. He is nonetheless the outsider in a world that is at the same time alien and familiar. He is the outsider on the inside.

Finally, in my introduction I suggested that the self of Mr Ryder could be read as including several of the other characters. When I found Brown discussing the method of rendering selfhood in Joyce's Ulysses and how it constitutes a kind of "fragmentation montage" I immediately found the description applicable to The Unconsoled. "Slowly, elaborately, with infinite detailing, it builds up its main 'characters' out of a myriad contrasted perceptions and reflections, memories and fantasies, feelings and concealments", Brown writes of Ulysses (1989, 82) and the very same words ring true for The Unconsoled. The characters in both are no characters at all in a conventional sense, but the selfhood is formed in self-multiplicity where the boundaries between the selves become blurred and difficult to define. Through memories and imagination the self can be multiple and in relationships it is possible to merge, if only temporarily, into another's self. Through the fates of the other characters in the novel, it becomes possible to read the past, the present and a possible future of Mr Ryder. Boris and Stephan represent the young Ryder: the neglected child with talent and developing coping mechanisms, striving to win his parents affection. Brodsky and Christoff stand in for the potential Ryder of the future: the aging artist who has lost the respect of his public, desperate to win it back in order to redeem himself in the eyes of his loved one. The multiple reflections of Ryder all suffer the same

fate in these parallel universes created by Ryder's unstable mind. All the meaningless words in this chaotic world are not enough to convey what they really want and not enough to close the gaps created by the self-imposed silence in the lives of these characters and from beginning to the end, they all remain unconsolated.

Finally it can be concluded that regardless of the amount of information that a reader can extract from pages of the novel on this narrator-protagonist, the self of Mr Ryder remains an enigma to Mr Ryder. He is man without a self that he would be aware of, without control over his actions or his fate, without an understanding about his situation or his motives. This self-fragmentation in The Unconsolated is build up by the narrative technique, as much as it is woven into the characterization and only the study of both I felt could provide an attempt at understanding the entity called Mr Ryder and yet as Elbaz states (1987, 153): "If a self is created in and through language, it can never be a finished product; it cannot be analysed or described since the description is in ceaseless movement". Ishiguro's novel leaves us wondering whether a self in any form, literary or other ways, can be described in its infinite complexity. At the beginning of this study Ryder was known only as the acclaimed pianist in an unidentified town, yet after all the investigation into his enigmatic self, Ryder remains just that and nothing more. He does not change. At the end of the book, he continues down the same path he has been on and if we are to believe the images of the future that his mind has created in the form of Leo Brodsky, he will continue to do so for years to come. Lewis notes how the entire novel ends in "loop", and how Ryder is left "orbiting round the O-shaped suburbs of the town" (2000, 109). The novel indeed ends without a satisfactory closure and yet it is precisely that what makes Mr Ryder humane. "The disclosures are more often too painful or too elusive to confront and accept or alter" (2004, 79) explains Wong and Ryder, as well as his alter egos, avoid those disclosures to the very end as so many people would. Ishiguro reveals the extent in which people often are

unaware of their own selves and thus unable to attain an understanding of the self that would enable them to have fulfilling relationships with others and free them from their burdens. People can remain as alien to themselves as they can to others and as to the question, who is Mr Ryder, one could answer: perhaps he is not.

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