

## Spatialising Memory: Trauma, Subjectivity and the Utopian/Dystopian Community in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*

### Introduction

- Ishiguro's narrators – nostalgia as a way of 'longing for a better world' filtered through idealised recollections of childhood
- Trauma studies and Bergsonian temporalities – spatialisation of Ryder's past through memory – questions coherency of his identity
- Dialectical oscillations between dystopian and Utopian invocations of community – questions idealised notions of collectivity

### Ryder's Leap into Ontology: Spatialising Memory Through the Dystopian Community

- Ethical or Utopian community; community of *The Unconsoled* – location of acute nostalgia, mourning and bitterness
- Bergson – recollecting memories involves detachment from the past
- Townspeople as 'versions' of Ryder – Ryder displacing traumatic memories onto the community – 'leap into ontology'
- Spatialisation of memory is illusory – conflates space and time – cannot actualise his 'pure' memories into recollection
- Leap into ontology spurious – Ryder's double failure – community that should help him actualise traumatic memories is illusory

### The Positive Community: Nostalgic Journeys and Utopian Corporeality

- Utopian moments of community – determined by childlike satisfaction of material needs – food and journeys
- Positive but illusory sense of community – Ryder supplants traumatic memories of childhood with fictitious nostalgia
- 3 Utopian journeys: (1) Geoffrey Saunders' description of the night-bus; (2) Ryder's bus ride with Boris to the artificial lake; (3) morning circuit tram
- Spatialisation of nostalgia – Utopian scenes in which Ryder never arrives at any tangible destination
- 2 Utopian strategies: (1) satisfaction of material comfort (actualised and imaginary); (2) portraitist narratives
- Utopian corporeality – narratives of comfort – illusory, recurring ideal of relaxed, sated body – fungible and transient

### Conclusion

- To what extent can we read *The Unconsoled* as a Utopian narrative?
- Transcendence of space and time – a revolutionary or traumatic spatiality?
- Halbwachs' collective memory – recollection must be part of a totality of thoughts common to a group