

Political Discourse in Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle*.

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Abstract: This paper analyzes British politicians' discourse in Jonathan Coe's *The Closed Circle*. More specifically, it examines the construction and production of Thatcherism as a radical political ideology. This paper intends to show the way in which political ideology carries along authoritative and divisive attitude that opposed individual citizen to government policies. British citizens have passionately expounded view of conservatism which is closer to nineteenth century liberalism. Our analysis is builds on intertextuality in order to show how Thatcherism shaped British life.

Keywords: Politics, Thatcherism, Identity, Radicalism, Discourse, Narrative

Résumé: Cet article analyse le discours des politiciens britanniques dans *The Closed Circle* de Jonathan Coe. Plus spécifiquement, il examine la construction et la production du thatcherisme comme une idéologie radicale. Cet article montrera comment l'idéologie politique conduit a des attitudes autoritaires qui divisent et oppose le citoyen aux décisions gouvernementale. Les citoyens britanniques ont passionnément présente leur opinions sur le conservatisme qui est proche du libéralisme du 19 siècle. Notre analyse se construit sur l'intertextualité comment le thatcherisme modèle la vie des britanniques.

Mots clefs: politique, thatcherisme, identité, radicalisme, discours, narration

Introduction

Every literary text emerges from a specific political context. Authors do not create independently from the political culture of their societies. Seen in this light, T.S Eliot pinpoints that: "each work exists within the tradition from which it takes shape and which it, in turn, redefines."(Eliot, 24). To put it differently, Eliot suggests that the text is the production of a socio-political culture. Through individual utterances, authors rewrite, transpose, transform and maintain an actual political discourse. In this respect, Leitch claims that: "Individuals are created by social and cultural systems, within which they are subjects" (Leitch, 20). In other words, a literary text is no longer a unique product of an author since meaning depends on the political culture of the moment.

Jonathan Coe's literary texts interact with the socio- political realities of his lifetime. What matters most in his narratives is the contextual and referential emphasis on the

1980s political discourse. Coe's work is a fabric woven on the tradition and history of Thatcher's era.

Coe's contemporary Nick Hornsby nominated him as "probably the best English novelist of his generation" (*The Polysyllabic Spree*, 108). His output includes experimental fictions, panoramic depictions of the British society, political satires, and above all, the fictionalization of Thatcherism as a political discourse. Moseley Merritt stresses this idea by underscoring that "Mrs. Thatcher, beyond anything else that she may have done for or to the country, served the useful purpose of providing a productive figure for novelists". (*Understanding Jonathan Coe*, 38). Actually, Coe fictionalizes Thatcher's policy in his work.

The Closed Circle is set in the hermetic environment of Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite Britain. The novel depicts the post-Thatcherite radical neoliberal consensus characterized by Tony Blair and Paul Trotter, the two outstanding characters of the novel. Paul Trotter with his political mentor, Tony Blair always works to implement Thatcher's political conviction. This attitude leads them to hold radical political stance differently from their own party's ideological line. Coe describes their radical political philosophies with specific narrative patterns proper to the former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher's policies.

The aim of this paper is to examine Thatcher's radical political discourse through Coe's representation of Paul Trotter in *The Closed Circle*. Specifically, it first seeks to show how Paul's radical political discourse coexists with Thatcherism, and how this political radicalism foretells the personal blossoming of every British citizen vis à vis the state? In fact, Paul's Thatcherite political discourse intends to place the other British citizens at the center of governmental policies. Then, the paper will discuss the influence of Thatcher's political conviction on the entire British political field in the fiction. Our first hypothesis is that Coe's treatment of alterity is more visible through Paul Trotter's Thatcherite radical philosophy, for it foreshadows that people are responsible for themselves. The second hypothesis questions the character's monolithic view of seeing British politics as a Thatcherite radical consensus one. The paper rests on the theory of intertextuality to analyse the relationships between Paul's Thatcherite political discourse and individual citizen's liberty. Julia Kristeva believes that any work of art is an intertext which interacts with the other texts, rewrites, transforms or parodies them. Kristeva's conception of literary text will help see how Coe rewrites the discourse of Thatcherism through the main character, Paul Trotter's political radicalism to portend that the state has no responsibility for providing for individual.

1- Paul Trotter and Thatcher: The Discourse of Self Responsibility

This part discusses the links between Paul's political discourse and Thatcherism through Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. According to Bakhtin the dialogic aspect of language foregrounds class ideology and other conflicts, divisions and hierarchies within society. This means that the notion of "otherness" exists in every individual utterance. The meaning of every word or utterance is formed through the speaker's relation to other people, other people's words, and culture in a specific time and place. Bakhtin's conception of "otherness" is important to see how Coe rewrites the Thatcherite radicalism through the discourse of his Labour politician to indicate that individuals are responsible for themselves.

In a 1987 interview given to *Woman's own magazine*, Thatcher stated that:

There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbor (Thatcher, 1987).

In the excerpt above, Thatcher clearly indicates that people no longer need to have faith in the state institutions that have framed British society for the past thousands of years. She explicitly wants citizens who can help the government address social problems. This reliance on the individual rather than on the state was central to Thatcherite political radicalism.

In *The Closed Circle*, Coe gives some evidence on the ways in which Thatcher's political radicalism dominates the British political landscape. What seems particularly astonishing is that the Labour politicians have appropriated the perverse and radical rhetorics of the Iron's Lady. As a result, her language is completely redrafted into the Labour politician's discourse. This Thatcherite discourse is illustrated through a lengthy political conversation between Paul Trotter and his German friend, Rolf Beauman, a businessman. Their exchange is about Longbridge, a British private car company. When Thatcher allowed German businessmen to takeover of this British car factory, there was a huge popular discontent. She was invited to abandon her decision for the sake of poor workers. The narratives of *The Closed Circle* run into this event through the following lines:

Rolf fell silent for a while. 'Well, let me get this clear,' he said. 'you want me to persuade the board to change their minds about this- to perform a complete U-Turn, in effect- so that you can go home and tell the news to your Mr Blair, and present yourself as a hero. The man who saved

Longbridge 'Is that what you want me to do?' Paul could see no point in dissembling. (CC, 159-160)

In this scene, the writer consciously subverts the role of his two characters and the historical reality. Paul, the powerful Labour politician, is ironically presented as the one who is asking the German businessman to solve British citizens' job problems. Through this subversion, Coe first posits that Thatcherite state institutions focus on individual self responsibility over the state. The link between the Thatcherite state and individual is metaphorically constructed through Paul's and Rolf's relationship. By allowing Rolf to save Longbridge's workers from bankruptcy, Coe strategically implies that government cannot be responsible for individual workers. People have to cope with their jobs and housing issues. Given that Rolf turns the Thatcherite leader into a hero, it implies that the culture of dependency on the state is over. The government is expecting citizens to look after families' problems. This is the reason why Rolf finds solution for Longbridge workers' unemployment issues.

Coe also traces the correspondence between Paul and Thatcher. The term "U-Turn" implicitly echoes a clue of Thatcher's introductory speech at the Conservative Party's Congress on the 10th October 1980. She began her speech in these terms: "To those waiting with baited breath for that favorite media catchphrase the "U-Turn," I have only one thing to say: You turn if you want to But the Lady not for turning" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_lady%27s_not_for_turning)

In other terms, Coe might be alluding to the freedom of individual citizen vis à vis the state. By enabling Paul, the statesman, to ask for a particular citizen's assistance, Coe strategically demonstrates that Thatcherite neoliberalism places individual citizen at the center of everything. In that respect, Paul embodies the figure of the other citizens who seek to construct the image of the kind of citizen Thatcher wanted to shape. This is an individual who is able to undertake his own business without expecting anything from the state. Paul's speech and doing are presented as interchangeable with the world of the free citizen Prime Minister Thatcher admired. This blending is what Bakhtin calls "hybridization" of texts. For him hybridization is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance. Coe might have established this connection between Paul's discourse and that of Thatcher's time free citizen to unmask individual citizen's inability to challenge Thatcher's radical politics. It sounds like a mockery the author is making of Thatcherite political project. That is to say, it is giving false impression that people are controlling everything.

Thatcher has acclaimed radical philosophies and values as the basic principles of her politics at the outset of her Premiership:

I came to office with one deliberate attempt. To change Britain from a dependent to a self-reliant society, from a give-it-to-me to do-it-yourself nation; to a get-up-and-go instead of a sit-back –and wait for it Britain. (Margaret Thatcher, quoted in Ruth Wittlinger's *Thatcherism and Literature: Representations of the "state of the Nation"*, 1)

This quotation reveals much of the radical policies Margaret Thatcher tried to achieve during her administration. She radically worked for a society based on values such as self-responsibility, individualism, entrepreneurship and capitalism. She actually aims at the construction of a new individual grounded on active citizenship.

In *The Closed Circle*, Coe's historic protagonist, Paul Trotter, continuously subverts the Labour Party's creeds in favour of the Thatcherite Conservative ethos of new individual citizenship grounded on the value of self-entrepreneurship. Paul embodies this transposition, as Madelena Gonzalez puts:

The only exception is Paul Trotter who in *The Rotters' Club* is mildly sinister sort; clever, selfish and apparently immune from the distress that he might be capable of causing. In 2000 he is a successful New Labour MP, a chameleonesque figure with (...) political ideals and propensity to follow any instructions, provided that they will ultimately be to his benefit (Gonzalez, 97)

As it can be noticed, Coe's Labour Politician is in a dialogical relationship with Thatcherite citizen. They have the same political identity. For Ricoeur identity has two meanings: sameness or selfhood. By sameness Ricoeur means that self belongs to other. He also posits the concept of "phenomenology." Ricoeur used this term of "phenomenology" to refer to the philosophies of Husserl and Levinas which have in common the pursuit of reciprocity and an emphasis on symmetry/asymmetry between the self and the other.

Reciprocity in Ricoeurian use means a connection between a fictional self with the capable human being. It is in view of this we establish a connection between Paul Trotter's political radicalism and that of Margaret Thatcher. As a tough political leader Thatcher never sets back on what she decided to do. She has diametrically held opposed ideology to the political status quo of her time. In effect, she toughly opposed her ideological purposes to that of her party. The same thing is true for Paul Trotter. In *The Closed Circle*, Mr. Trotter's ideological purpose is extremely opposed to the political status quo of the Labour's Party:

Mr. Trotter dismissed press speculation that his working relationship with said Minister had degenerated beyond repair. He insisted, rather, that after more than three years he had begun to find the role of parliamentary Private secretary increasingly constricting, and he resolved to find a more fruitful outlet for his ideas, which he had always tended towards, the more radical fringes of the party's thinking. (CC, 205)

In this passage, Paul explains why he resigns. In fact, he does not want any political consensus. This rejection of political consensus because of one's self conviction can signal Thatcherism. As a radical leader who smashed down post war political norms for a politics of self-conviction and determination, Thatcher wanted to find her own way of doing thing. In that sense, both, Thatcher and Paul have in common the same willingness to detach themselves and their thinking from the consensus of their respective majority. Paul overtly shows his commitment to subvert the Labour Party's political order as the narrator puts it: "He resolved to find a more fruitful outlet for his ideas, which he had always tended towards, the more radical fringes of the party's thinking" (CC, 205). Actually, Paul is dominating his cabinet.

Proportionately, Thatcher dominated her cabinet. By degrees she has gathered all threads of power into her hand. As Francis Pym argues, "she would ideally like to run the major departments herself and tries her best to do so." (Francis Pym, *The Politics of Consent*, 14). Paul shows the same envy to dominate. He resigns because of his party's refusal to let his view prevail. In effect, when one is motivated by the desire to dominate, he chooses his own way. Paul does not want to be dominated.

In broader sense, a political leader who resigns on account of his ideas is likely to be a tough, courageous and gallant individual. Paul Trotter refuses to behave like a timid or shy individual. He is courageous and tough. Margaret Thatcher was also a courageous and tough leader, since she is said to be the iron lady. She was desirous to rule as a leader with her own courage. It is clear that courage is a talent one can find in Paul Trotter and Margaret Thatcher. All their political discourse is about self imposed and self creation. They don't want to be dominated. It is in that sense, Paul rejects the said minister's decision, and carries out his radical thinking line.

As a matter of fact, Paul Trotter's personality is downgrading the cabinet's decision to wage war in Iraq and solve the company's crisis. In fact the Longbridge industrial crisis and the Iraqi war have brought about division between Paul and the Prime Minister. He exposes

his doubt over the Prime Minister's decision to wage war in Iraq. Among the MPs, Paul is the one who vocally expresses his stance in newspapers as the narrator puts it:

Actually almost everybody seemed to be against it, except for the American, Tony Blair, most of his cabinet, most of MPs, and the conservatives, everybody else thought that it was a disastrous idea, and could not understand why it was suddenly being talked as if it was inevitable. The only person who didn't seem to have a definite opinion about the war, either for or against was Paul Trotter. This was ironic because he was regularly being paid large sums of money by several of the national newspapers, to express his opinion about it. The first of these pieces headed: "My Grave Doubt over war With Iraq" had appeared in the Guardian in November (CC, 304)

Indeed, Paul's political actions have allowed the emergence of Thatcherite political radicalism in *The Closed Circle* Paul accepts to radicalize for the reconstruction of a Thatcherite political identity, self-esteem and dignity. This self-assertion and maturity might open a new paradigm for the expression of post Thatcherite elites' responsibility. It might have as well been said that Paul's actions have helped convert New Labour into the political philosophy of Margaret Thatcher. Self-reliance and self-respect, thus pushes him to take his distance from the Party. Paul here is at the core of this transmutation of the Labour Party, because his opinion and ideals contradict the founding principles of the Labour Party. By leaking an article to the press about Blair's cabinet, he strategically shows a great Thatcherite sign. This leak gives the impression to the general public that there is not a consensus within the cabinet.

Paul Trotter as well as Margaret Thatcher shares this divisive characteristic in common. In conformity with Paul, Thatcher's style downgraded the cabinet's work during her time in office. Thatcher avoided bringing important matters before the cabinet. One of the most illustrative examples of that was the "Westland Affair."¹

¹ "The Westland Affair" was the most serious domestic political crisis faced by Mrs Thatcher during her premiership. The crisis revolved, at least superficially, around the fortunes of a financially troubled helicopter manufacturing company, Westland, which was badly in need of new funds if it were to escape bankruptcy. The Government preferred a private-sector rescue to investing in the company itself. The most likely private source of funds was an American company, Sikorsky, with whom Westland had done business in the past. Thatcher's Defence Secretary, Michael Heseltine, wished to find a 'European solution to the problem and attempted to create a European helicopter consortium in which Westland could take part. His initial efforts won cabinet approval, but by December 1985 both Thatcher and the Trade and Industry Secretary, Leon Brittan, were having doubts about the nature of the rescue package. They feared it would be too anti-American. Heseltine assumed the opposite and was furious to discover that Mrs Thatcher's view accorded with Brittan's. He therefore resigned and accused Thatcher of being autocrat. Following Heseltine's resignation, all the wets indulged in their usual complaints about Mrs Thatcher's allegedly autocratic style of government. The press was also full of leaks about the Westland affair, and emergency debates were held in the House of Commons.

In fact, the Westland was a trouble financial helicopter which Thatcher's cabinet was to rescue from going bankrupt. The cabinet initially agreed upon the Defense Secretary, Michael Heseltine's proposal. That is to find a European global solution. Shortly after, Thatcher bypassed this consensus and aligned with her Trade Secretary, Leon Brittan's proposal. She deemed the latter proposal workable and pro – American. Thatcher's abrasive approach to the issue divided her cabinet. Her defense secretary, Michael Heseltine resigned and organized a press conference in the course of which he leaked a lot of controversial information to British people. Westland affair was the most terrible domestic crisis which asserted Thatcher's divisive characteristic. She was viewed as an authoritarian leader who undermined her cabinet's work. The frameworks of these Thatcherite codes govern and shape Paul's manner in the fiction: "The professor and his wife were interested to hear Paul's view on the impending of Iraq, they seemed to be in some confusion, even after reading many of his newspapers articles, as whether he was in the pro- or anti war camp" (CC, 32)

Clearly, Trotter has caused confusion with his article. Paul's controversial stance visa vie the Iraqi issue can metaphorically be interpreted as parallel to Thatcher's controversial stance regarding the Westland affair. The phrase: "confusion" indicates this idea of inconsistencies or paradoxes of Paul's article. The same paradoxes were to be found in the Westland story. Divisive figures are keen on using paradoxes with story to create confusion in people's mind. Paul Trotter is a tough leader who has the tendency to discredit the Prime Minister and his cabinet. The following lines illustrate that as the narrator continues:

He listened as Tony Blair said: I think the case we have set out in respect of Iraq is a good case I hope that if people listen to it and study it in detail they will accept that if we do have to act and go to war, it will not be because we want to, but because of the breaches by Saddam Hussein of UN resolutions. Paul was not convinced by this argument. He had never been convinced by it. And still he remained puzzled by the way this man, this apparently principled man, clung to his half truths and would not be swayed – either by public opinion or by the words of his colleagues- from the path he had chosen, this narrow, unswerving path. (CC, 350)

In Paul's opinion, Tony Blair is a radical leader who hangs on his commitment to invade Iraq. In fact this attitude of the fictional character, Tony Blair, evokes the radicalization of British politicians in general. They are accustomed to clinging on their belief, vision and strength and. The same commitment was observed in Thatcher's attitude.

On top of that, Paul Trotter is stubbornly confrontationist. His confrontationist approach to the Iraqi issue violates the principle of consensus among Blair's cabinet. He does not strive

for harmony and balance in his party. He rejects the Prime Minister's argument and adopts a very complex and confrontationist attitude as the narrator explains:

The figure of Paul Trotter kept coming to mind. And it was all far too complicated to put into words. Sometimes he would draft a paragraph or two, and read it back only to discover that he himself had started to sound like a far right sympathizer; and then half an hour later he would look at it again and find that it now seemed to be coming from the radical left (CC,273)

Actually, the narrator's use of phrase such as: "far right, the radical left" is very relevant to us. A politician who belongs to one of these two groups is viewed as a confrontationist. Paul Trotter embodies ambiguity. He is shown as an ambivalent politician who stands in the crossroads of a far right politician and a radical left leader. What are those positions? Ambivalence and confrontationist seem to be contradictory terms. Please, be more explicit about those terms! (In fact, far right and radical left politicians are considered as extremists. That is to say they are always craving for confrontation with other moderate groups or political organizations. In that sense, Paul Trotter is likely to have a considerable contempt for the politics of the Prime Minister. The fact of drafting a complex paragraph which stipulates a far right and radical left view translates a personal grievance. Paul is angered by the government position. The use of radical left and far right mode of expression in the paragraph indicates Paul's confrontationist nature.

Like Margaret Thatcher, Paul comes to preach a politics of new departure. That is a break from the recent past and a rejection of the notions which had governed it. The notions: "far right, radical left" are used by Jonathan Coe to pinpoint Paul's envy to break with the past and adopt a Thatcherite economic policies. These Thatcherite economic doctrines permeate Coe's texts.

2- Coe's Text as a Mosaic of Liberal Economic Discourse

Following Kristeva, the literary text is not a unique and an autonomous entity. It is rather the product of a number of pre-existent codes, previous discourse and texts. Therefore a word in the text must be read in terms of its relation with other cultural discourse existing outside the text. Seen from this perspective, Coe's writing is a mosaic of quotations from Thatcher's economic discourse. In this section we attempt to uncover the presence of Thatcherite economic discourse through Paul's Trotter.

Actually, Paul Trotter has come up to adopt an economic policy similar to Neoliberalism. He passionately exposes this liberal policy in *The Closed Circle*. Although he belongs to the Labour party, Paul Trotter's political discourse foregrounds some features of Conservative liberal politics of 1970. The Labour party is familiarly known as a pro- state political organization. Paul Trotter subverts this notion with that of Conservative liberal economy. He self consciously expounds this liberal ideology in the course of his conference as the narrator explains:

His overriding sense was that every system of values seemed to be in a state of flux, of meltdown, and that somehow New Labour itself was symptomatic of this, constantly talking a language of belief and idealism. But in fact behaving with as much ruthless pragmatism as anybody else, and as deeply in thrall to its own God (the free market economy) (...). The figure of Paul Trotter kept coming to mind (CC,27)

Actually, this above statement is a mixture of different political ideologies among which the liberal view emerges as paramount. The phrase: "free market" for instance evokes a liberal policy. The narrator does not end up with it at random. In effect, Paul Trotter as well as Margaret Thatcher cares much for business. Business people had been high in Thatcher's estimation for many years. She grew with an understanding that business made the world go round. The same thing is true for Paul Trotter, he shows his trust and belief in business initiative through his business commission as the narrator explains:

Responsibility for substantial areas of health provision, state education, local government, prison services and even air traffic control were now in the hands of private companies whose duty of care lay towards the interest of shareholders rather than the general public. In order to advance this programme ever further – to roll back the frontiers of the state, to a point whichever the author of that phrase (Margaret Thatcher) would not have recognized members of *The Closed Circle* were going to have to Think the unthinkable and imagine the unimaginable. His own task; as an enabler was simply to provide them with a context in which this could be possible. (Mr Trotter concluded his address at this point, and asked the other member if they had any questions (CC,207)

Along these lines, it comes out that Paul marries Thatcher's idea of less state intervention policy in economy. The narrator mentions Thatcher's phrase: "to roll back the frontiers of the state" to highlight Paul's option for Conservative less state's intervention policy. Coe has borrowed the phrase "to roll back the frontiers of the state" from Thatcher to recall her economic belief in Paul's Trotter. Thatcher used the expression to strongly assert her opposition to government's intervention in economy. In effect, Mrs. Thatcher was said to follow the beliefs of Professor Friedrich von Hayek in economy. Hayek held that the function

of government was not to redistribute wealth but simply to establish the conditions of order in which market forces could create it. Jonathan Coe has apparently translated Professor Hayek's views of economy into Paul Trotter. In fact, Paul Trotter has accepted Professor Hayek's beliefs of economy in the sense that he is shown as an orthodox practitioner of Conservative liberalism. For Paul the role of government should thus be kept to a minimum in economic affairs. The following sentences illustrate these 1979 market-oriented economic policies in Paul's statements as the narrator says:

Mr. Trotter reiterated that his institution had always been for the commission to remain totally independent, free thinking only in this way, he remained convinced could it hope to achieve its aim: which was, he reminded them, to find ways in which the involvement of the business community in the provision of public services could be promoted to a greater extent ever than the Labour party had achieved in its first term (CC,206).

Actually, the kind of government Paul Trotter admires is the one which allows business individuals to rule state's property. He does not admire the captain of industry, but rather freeboating entrepreneurs who have built from nothing. That is the reason why, he insists on the fact that his commission should remain independent from any government's interference. Paul is in that respect turning a blind eye to the Labour's party economic policy. He rejected it, in the sense that he stresses the primacy of market forces, individualism and monetarism. Paul's economic view is in harmony with Margaret Thatcher's view of the relationship between business and state. In effect, Thatcher was in favour of this kind of interaction between the state and the private sector. She admired independent businessmen, in the sense that, she praised Franck Taylor during her era. Franck Taylor built a small building firm called Taylor Woodrow. This firm became one of the largest construction companies in Britain and had a worldwide presence. According to Hugo Young Franck Taylor was an example of the most worthwhile kind of life for Margaret Thatcher. As a result, she raised him to the peerage in 1982.²

Furthermore, Paul's management skills are in league with the conservative radical one under Margaret Thatcher. These skills can be seen in his use of rhetoric or myriad facets of self presentations, as the narrator underlines:

The aim of the Circle then was to create a space within the commission where the most radical and far reaching ideas could be floated for the first time. It would remain clandestine only so that its members had more freedom to speak their minds, not less. Mr Trotter reminded his fellow-

²Hugo Young, *One Of Us*, Macmillan London,1989, P. 360

members that private finance initiatives had now made their way into the Public sector in ways which would have been unthinkable ten years ago, under the conservative government(*CC*,206)

Clearly, Paul's mention of the term: "private initiative" is important in the sense that it unveils privatization. This particular economic policy was especially notable in Thatcher's policy. She was one of the first post war leaders who opted for the privatization of the public sector in Britain. She cut down state intervention by allowing private initiative to take over. Through Paul's commission for business and social initiative (CBSI), Coe sorts out the same topic of privatization under Thatcher. Paul hangs on privatization until he believes that there are people who are committed to the same radical economic policy. Paul's mention of the prepositional phrase: "under the conservative government" connotes his conformity with Conservative economic belief, commitment and singleness of purpose. Paul does not want to be improved by any state. This politics of self improvement is another characteristic of the Conservative nineteenth liberal economic politics.

Above all, Paul Trotter is someone who cares for Thatcher's strategy of privatization. In 1980s when British industries were severely hit by crisis Thatcher opted for denationalization policy of state's industries. Several nationalized industries were forced to return to the private sector. The objective of this privatization was to make British industries more conducive to competition so as to reduce public sector borrowing. Jonathan Coe echoes this privatization of state's owned industries through Paul's stance about the Railway network. The narrator reports:

Mr. Trotter reminded the other members of the Circle that the next meeting of the commission would concentrate on the subject of the railway network, in view of the current crisis at rail track. Loss of public confidence in the wake of a series of fatal rail accidents had resulted in an operating loss of \$534. There had been speculation that the government might rationalize the railways in response to public opinion but Mr. Trotter insisted that this was not an option (*CC*, 207)

Indeed, the phrase "rationalize the railway" metaphorically refers to the nationalization of industries. Coe has reversed the "N" into "R" to show that Thatcherite elites were preparing British industries for privatization. Paul Trotter opposes the nationalization of industries as the narrator says: "But Mr. Trotter insisted that this was not an option P.207" In fact, Paul keeps on rejecting the rationalization policy which means nationalization of industries. Through Paul Coe is alluding to Thatcher's government refusal to allow state ownership of industries rule the country. In fact in 1981 Thatcher's government adopted a more radical approach to state's industries. This radical approach started with an investigation of the nationalized

industries by the Think Tank. Coe alludes to this Think Tank's investigation through Paul Trotter's commission, *The Closed Circle*. This commission, *The Closed Circle*, is Paul's Think Tank organization that is supposed to investigate about the railway subject in Coe's *The Closed Circle*. In fact, Paul is Coe's synecdoche to underline that the birth of Thatcher's neoliberal society has created trans-national and trans-cultural elites who pursue their own interest. Although Paul Trotter is a Labour party MP, he is also a strong supporter of Hayek and Milton's economic theories. Milton and Hayek were strong supporters of Thatcher's neoliberal economic policy. Paul helps us see that Labour's social system has been altered and dominated by Thatcherism and its neo-liberal economic policies.

Lawrence Driscoll in that respect argues that "the purpose of literature is to secure and maintain a hegemonic position for the middle class" (Lawrence Driscoll, *Evading Class in Contemporary British Literature*, 14). Although many contemporary British fiction writers attempt to illustrate themselves as liberal left wing intellectuals, their fiction is not a radical example of the counter hegemonic discourse. Driscoll also suggests that Coe is a middle class intellectual who helps reproduce the Thatcherite radical and dominant ideology. Most British fiction writers reproduce the bourgeois ideology of Thatcherite neoliberalism to appeal for individual citizen's happiness.

Conclusion

In sum, it has often been argued that British novelists at the turn of the Twenty-First Century have been too condescending and compassionate with Thatcherite political movement. While disapproving this reality, Dr Taylor argues: "the novel of the Thatcher years eschews its social function and self-sabotages its political might" (Taylor, 12). All the same, Novelists such as Coe and Kazuo Ishiguro do not produce subversive writings. Instead, they espouse the Conservative middle class, elitist and dominant worldview. It would be appropriate to conclude that Coe's depiction of Paul Trotter's political radicalism is his way of focusing on the individual British citizens' blossoming for the construction of a Thatcherite neoliberal society.

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