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**THE PORTRAYAL OF FAMILY IN HANIF  
KUREISHI'S INTIMACY AND ELIZABETH DAY'S  
SCISSORS PAPER STONE**

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## **Abstract:**

This thesis concentrates on the depiction of family in two contemporary British novels. These are: Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy* (1998), written in the first person narrative, and Elizabeth Day's *Scissors Paper Stone* (2011), written in the third person narrative. This thesis analyses the novels from various perspectives with the main emphasis put on the theme of family. It also takes into consideration the different narrative modes used in the novels. In the theoretical part this thesis concentrates on the development of family with the main stress placed on the changes that took place in the second half of the twentieth century in Britain. The topics that it deals with are the breakdown of a relationship, fatherhood, dysfunctional communication and other themes concerning the family and interpersonal relationships.

## **Abstrakt:**

Předmětem této diplomové práce je zobrazení rodiny ve dvou současných britských románech. Jde o román *Scissors Paper Stone* (2011) od autorky Elizabeth Day, který je napsán v 3. osobě, a novelu *Byli jsme si blízcí* (1998), jejímž autorem je Hanif Kureishi a která je napsána v 1. osobě. Tato diplomová práce rozebírá zmíněné romány z různých perspektiv a bere v úvahu i jejich rozdílné formy vyprávění. V teoretické části se tato práce věnuje vývoji rodiny a zaměřuje se na změny, které se odehrály v druhé polovině dvacátého století v Británii. Témata, kterými se zabývá, jsou: rozpad vztahu, otcovství, nefungující komunikace a další motivy, které se týkají rodiny a mezilidských vztahů.

**Čestné prohlášení:**

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci zpracovala samostatně, za přispění vedoucího diplomové práce, a že jsem uvedla veškerou použitou literaturu i ostatní zdroje.

V Praze, dne

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**Abbreviations used in the text:**

*SPS*      *Scissors Paper Stone*

**Motto:**

All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Tolstoj, *Anna Karenina*

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## Introduction

It is the aim of this thesis to look at the portrayal of family in the contemporary fiction and analyse how it is depicted by the present-day novelists. Families as such are a source of great wonder, hope and a variety of emotions and therefore deserve attention and care not only from novelists but from the wide audience too. Since “[o]f all our social institution, the family is perhaps the one with which we are most familiar,”<sup>1</sup> it is probably also the one closest to us. Nowadays, however, the traditional family is losing its significance as new lifestyles are gaining more popularity, such as cohabiting, sole-parent and same-sex families. Since many of the problems in society are blamed on the family, this thesis tries to depict where the family fails to carry out its role in the current world.

For the purpose of this thesis two novels have been chosen. The first one is *Scissors Paper Stone* (2011) by Elizabeth Day. It is written in the third person narrative and tells the story of a family of three who are struggling to overcome wounds that the main characters suffered and that are tormenting them. The second is the novella *Intimacy* (1998) by Hanif Kureishi, which is a confessional narrative in which the protagonist, on the verge of leaving his partner and two young children, gives his account of the reasons pro and contra quitting. The first reason for choosing these two books is the role of the men which is in the centre of both of them and which is crucial for the functioning of the families. The second reason is that even though both fathers stand in the heart of the stories they are not given the same amount of voice and this fact enables an interesting examination to unfold.

This thesis attempts to analyse the theme of family from several perspectives but the main emphasis is ultimately put on problems that cause dysfunction in the individual families. In the theoretical part the thesis provides several facts concerning the development of family, with the focus on the change of family in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century, stressing the essential factors that contributed to its transformation from a traditional to a more diversified type. In the practical part of the thesis the books are analysed separately in order to present the workings of the individual families as smoothly as possible and also because thus the structure of the analyses copies the idea of a family as a closed unit. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Poole, Marilyn (2005) *Family: Changing Families, Changing Times*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin. p. 1.

final part the thesis looks at the different narrative modes used in the narratives and, to make the comparisons as clear as possible, in this part the books are analysed together.

## Family

The theme of family has always been a source of writers' inspiration. Especially nowadays when the western world is going through an economic and moral transformation writers frequently ponder on this topic, reflecting the many changes that the family is experiencing. With the alteration of the family, also “[o]ur understandings of what is meant by ‘family’ have changed.”<sup>2</sup> It is harder than ever to determine the role of the family in the modern society as well as the status it is given in the minds of individuals.

The definition of *family* in the Oxford Dictionary<sup>3</sup> says that it is “a group consisting of one or two parents and their children”. Although this description seems very simple, concrete families can have very different shapes and sizes. The basic and probably the most common type is a *nuclear family*, which consists of a father, a mother and children. It is considered as being the ideal in which to raise children. In a *single parent family* there is only one parent to raise the kids. An *extended family* consists of at least two more adults who are related either by blood or marriage, living in the same home. In a *childless family* there are no children and in a *step family* there are children from previous relationships of at least one of the partners. A *grandparent family* is one in which the child-raiser is a grandparent.<sup>4</sup> A further division can be made between a *traditional family* where the father is a bread-winner and the mother stays at home and tends to the children, and a *non-traditional* family which is anything but the arrangement mentioned in the traditional family.

The family could be further classified according to its structure, the nature of prevailing authority, type of residence and other criteria,<sup>5</sup> but it is not necessary to characterize the individual types for the purpose of this thesis. What is, however, important to list are the various functions that a family ought to fulfil in the society and for its members. The essential ones are satisfaction of biological needs, psychological satisfaction, economic

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<sup>2</sup> Poole, Marilyn (2005) *Family: Changing Families, Changing Times*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin. p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, 6th edition (2000). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> Blessing, Michelle. 'Types of Family Structures'. Family.lovetoknow.com. 18 May 2013. <<http://family.lovetoknow.com/about-family-values/types-family-structures>>.

<sup>5</sup> 'Family: An institution of culture and part of human'. insticeagestudies.com. 19 April 2008. 10 June 2013. <<http://www.insticeagestudies.com/library/family-an-institution-of-culture-and-part-of-human.shtml>>.

co-operation, maintaining the morality, giving legitimacy to the children and fulfilling emotional needs.<sup>6</sup> However, with the transformation of society and its ethics, these functions are more and more difficult to carry out nowadays.

In his study<sup>7</sup> Robert Cliquet enumerates the various ways in which the family has altered over the last century in response to the various changes that have occurred in society. He attributes these changes to three groups of factors: socio-biological, socio-economic and socio-cultural.<sup>8</sup> The socio-biological causes are connected with the demographic transition, especially mortality control which is very closely connected with fertility decline. Cliquet explains that “without mortality control, fertility decrease and all of the other observed family changes could not persist over time.”<sup>9</sup> The fact that life expectancy increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century signifies that families no longer need to produce a large number of children. At the same time, the possibility of forming relations between more generations is possible. The second factor discussed by Cliquet is socio-economic. In a modern society the duties that were previously carried out by families were taken over by other social structures. Individuals no longer depend on the members of their families in critical periods of life, especially at older ages, but are often provided for and taken care of by the society. “Their economic security depends much more upon their individual abilities and performances, and risk periods are covered by social security system.”<sup>10</sup> Modernisation of society also changed the position of women who are presented with better opportunities in education and career and so are less pressed to achieve numerous pregnancies. Moreover, the availability of various methods of birth control provides them with a degree of independence concerning the number of children.

Modernisation also brought attractive opportunities in terms of leisure activities which are not in compliance with family values. It is primarily materialism that diverts people from settling in marriage and building large families. Individualism, democratization and secularization seem to be phenomena that rule the behaviour of modern people. Traditional norms and values such as religion, faithfulness and loyalty were rejected and the result is a society dominated by ideological pluralism, relativism, changeability and tolerance “where

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Cliquet, Robert (2003). *Major trends affecting families in the new millennium - Western Europe and North America*. New York: United Nations Publications.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 16

individual and societal needs with respect to intergenerational continuity no longer coincide.”<sup>11</sup>

An important role in recent demographic and family changes has been, as Cliquet states, played by a number of scientific and technological innovations. Television, the Internet, more accessible and faster travel, modern contraceptives and medically safe abortion methods are only a fraction of the many factors that contributed to the changes. These and other inventions affected people’s behaviour in the domain of family building currently. One of the striking ones is medically assisted fertility, which, as Cliquet says, “is more and more considered in the narrow sense of methods to facilitate or replace natural conception.”<sup>12</sup> Ever increasing number of people turn to these methods as the only way of fulfilling their family building desires and means of reproduction.

According to Cliquet’s research of the causes mentioned above, the crucial consequences, that bring about the transformations of families, are the decrease of age of first sexual intercourse together with the fact that premarital sex has become a general behavioural pattern, new forms of unions such as unmarried cohabitation and living-apart-together (LAT), the postponement of marriage as well as delaying the first birth, problems with fertility, increased number of births out of wedlock, formation of single-person households (which has also significantly increased over the last decades although the recent worsening of economic situation has slightly slowed the process down); the economic independence of women and their subsequent possibility to leave an unhappy marriage which lead to the increase of divorce and rise in one-parent families, single motherhood by choice, smaller households and the like.

Cliquet notes that these changes in family structures are partly the result, but also partly the cause, of changes in relations:

Both partner relations and parent-child relations are characterized by several changes in the values that prevail, in the balance of power and decision making, and in the emotional content of the relations among family members. Partnership shows shifts from complementarity towards egalitarianism, from normative action towards individual choice behaviour, from a commanding towards a negotiating housekeeping. Parent-child relations equally undergo changes from paternal power to parental authority, from submission to self-development, from

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<sup>11</sup> Cliquet, Robert (2003). Major trends affecting families in the new millennium - Western Europe and North America. New York: United Nations Publications, p. 17

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 18

obedience towards exploration, from unilateral towards bilateral transmission of values and knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Relations between family members have undergone a change; they are marked by liberalism and individualism. Cliquet points out: “Family relations have consequently become more vulnerable, less stable, but also more satisfying.”<sup>14</sup> By saying this he proves that he does not see the changes concerning family as only black and white but holds a more complex view. Moreover, he expresses in his study his belief in the endurance of family, however unflattering the statistics are at the moment. He presupposes that the fear of relative deprivation together with increasing insecurity and changeability of the globalized world will make people doubt the governing values and seek stability within the family. Nevertheless, the revival of a traditional family where the father is the breadwinner and the mother stays at home is very much a utopia, because according to the recent studies women want to earn money and pursue careers. It is more probable that different forms of families will prevail in the future, mainly the one-parent family headed by the mother. Cliquet, however, strongly believes in the institution of marriage and in the maintaining of it:

Nevertheless, we may expect that, in the end, most people will continue to marry for a variety or a combination of reasons such as the emotional need for an enduring affectional relationship, certainly of paternity for the male, guaranteed paternal investment for the female, legal advantages, social status, pressure from other family members, social advantages, ideological grounds and the magic effect of rituals<sup>15</sup>

He believes that people will want to have children and will want to get married and rejects ‘the death of the family’ scenario, ascribing it to a quick reading of statistics. He further bears out his statement by saying that it is a human need to form enduring relationships for rearing of children.

### **The multidimensional crisis**

To look at the changes of family in a broader way one should bear in mind the situation and development of the present-day world. The economist Dr. Rodrigue Tremblay

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<sup>13</sup> Cliquet, Robert (2003). Major trends affecting families in the new millennium - Western Europe and North America. New York: United Nations Publications p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

conveys in his studies that the current world is experiencing several crises. These are the financial, energy, demographic, political and finally the moral crisis which stands in the background of all these and which “corrupts most institutions and makes them ineffective in promoting the common good.”<sup>16</sup> Dr. Rodrigue Tremblay further explains this crisis as a result of a “corrosive ideology that politics and business should not adhere to any moral principles but should only be guided by narrow political interests any by the ruthless pursuit of profits”.<sup>17</sup> He points out that the main cause of the present situation is characterized by the stance that says ‘the end justifies the means’, and that the deceit and greed that go hand in hand with this principle are excusable. He compares the existing state of affairs with the past and claims that the great financial crises (those of 1873-1880 and 1929-1939) had a very similar trigger, which was “a general collapse of public and private basic morality among a very small elite that pushed its exploitation of public institutions to the breaking limit. For such a small elite, there comes a time when all means justify the supreme goal of enriching itself at the expense of the rest of society.”<sup>18</sup> He highlights those components of society which are rotten and warns that such behaviour can have a fatal effect on the entire humanity. He further points out: “All combines, tricks and schemes become acceptable and justified by pious ideological slogans such as ‘the market always knows best’, the new ‘wealth (no matter how acquired) will trickle down’, or, for the more delusional ones among them, ‘God is placing all that money in my hands, therefore, I must be doing some good!’”<sup>19</sup> The decay of principles together with moral blindness and greed can have a destructive effect on the development and progress of the humankind. It is, however, the individuals that construct the society, their separate standards and personalities. On the other hand, there are some trends in the society that are not healthy and yet they are encouraged by state organizations, such as materialism and individualism.

In “The Spirit of Capitalism 2000”<sup>20</sup>, David Bosworth argues that the contemporary capitalism encourages immaturity in people since they no longer are able to “allow basic facts about the human condition to circumscribe our actions”. To support his idea he presents two real-life stories captured by the media. In the first one a white, middle-class married couple

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<sup>16</sup>Tremblay, Rodrigue (2011) ‘The Five Macro Crises of Our Times: The Financial, Energy, Political, Moral and Demographic Crises’. Globalresearch.ca. 7 October 2011. 20 May 2013. <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-five-macro-crises-of-our-times-the-financial-energy-political-moral-and-demographic-crises/26983>>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Furrow, Dwight (2004) *Moral Surroundings: Readings on the Crisis of Values in Contemporary Life*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 3-25.

decided that they need a winter vacation and so set on a nine-day long holiday leaving their two children aged four and nine behind. When these two siblings accidentally set on a smoke alarm, the neighbours contact the police who arrest the couple as soon as they return from their break abroad. The reason this news shocked the wide public so much was that the couple apparently acted from purely hedonistic reasons.

In the second case a terminally ill patient wanted to sue the doctors for not fulfilling his final wish which was to have his head cut off, before he died from his disease, in order to have it frozen. His plan was that in future when the medical science would be able to restore his life he would have it refrozen again. One could dismiss such a man for being silly had he not a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Chicago. He claimed only his head to be frozen because he trusted that his true self resided there and because to freeze only a head instead of the whole body was cheaper (private companies charged cryonic deep-freeze for the whole body for \$100,000 whereas the head for only \$35,000 at that time). Bosworth says:

I would suggest that if we think, and think hard, about a justice system that would entertain such a suit, about an economy that would spawn such a company, about the philosophy that predicated the man's reasoning, and about the ethical implications of investing one's resources in such a way, we might achieve an intimate comprehension of our culture's anatomy, its current form and deformation.<sup>21</sup>

However peculiar the man's request was Bosworth does not blame or ridicule him for demanding it. He basically says that it is the society's establishment and ethos that made the man want what he did. "This man's decision making was rooted in the basic premises of the prevailing practical philosophy of our day – which is, I would assert, a form of rational materialism largely stripped of Judeo-Christian values." The poor man acted exactly as a modern person would. He found out about his diagnosis, acknowledged its terminality and then acted accordingly claiming "a unique opportunity offered to him by the combined creativity of science and the marketplace."<sup>22</sup> Bosworth argues that this man could be perceived as an example of a good capitalist consumer because he was demanding both his democratic rights when involving the court and, at the same time, producing both prosperity and social progress.

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<sup>21</sup>Furrow, Dwight (2004) *Moral Surroundings: Readings on the Crisis of Values in Contemporary Life*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 4

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 4-5.

Bosworth raises the question whether it is fair to call such behaviour immature and realizes that, provided that the society consists mainly of adults who accepted the truths about the human condition, it is because it is expected of them that they will “bequeath both their wisdom and their wealth to the next generation.” Bosworth concludes by stating that both these examples (the request for decapitation and the selfishly vacating couple) are self-centred illustrations of irresponsible behaviour and are, therefore, destructive for the society.

Even though a few individuals cannot stand for the whole humanity, they represent a trend of the western world since their ways of thinking signify some of the new moral tendencies in society: the denial of death and egoistic self-centeredness. As Vanhoozer<sup>23</sup> says, the denial of death comes from the human’s need to justify oneself as an object of primary value in the world. Unlike animals the humans tend to philosophize about the meaning of life and without the belief in the next life all the efforts that one makes in this world are “tragic attempts to convince ourselves that we are heroes that will live forever.”<sup>24</sup> This human anxiety is solved by the denial of death, at least for a while.

Bosworth reflects the current situation of the behaviour of people in general and parents in particular and presents an example of the current trend of bringing up children. He uses the family model of the vacating couple mentioned above and creates a thought-provoking text which reflects the trends in raising of children today. In the portrayal he presents an educated couple who does as much as they can to ensure their children have everything they desire and deserve. For this purpose both parents take on more work, arrange the best child care and find the finest public schools. They provide for the best equipment as well as for the tutoring for the boy’s troubled learning to read and the girl’s special ability in math. “All of this, of course, means more expense and less time spent together, but they try to adjust by using cell phones and e-mail to stay in touch.”<sup>25</sup> The totality of domestic life is shaped by economic models and values and the household is stripped of wonder, curiosity and improvisational fun. The parents do not teach by example, instead they hire people to do the job. “His [the parent’s] role is less to cherish and chasten than to outfit and facilitate; less to shape meaning than to make money, furnishing each child with all the materialist gear and

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<sup>23</sup> Vanhoozer, Kevin (2007) *Everyday Theology (Cultural Exegesis): How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. P. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Furrow, Dwight (2004) *Moral Surroundings: Readings on the Crisis of Values in Contemporary Life*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

rationalist techniques the economy requires.”<sup>26</sup> The family values are sacrificed for the benefit of the economy.

What Bosworth presents is a very familiar trend of the parents today who, in their best belief, do as much as they can for their children. Such action, is, however, ruled by the skin-deep notion of materialism. Rearing children has been reduced to providing for the material needs, organizing their time and driving them from place to place. Families of higher economic status carry most of their activities outside their house and the house itself becomes a telephonic centre, where the preparations and making of contacts occur, and a storage place for equipment. The individual members of family have so many activities to carry out, too many exhibitions and lectures to go to that they cannot have the time nor the energy to sit down together and share their experience.<sup>27</sup> If the process of bringing up a child is handed down to the various specialists something essential is missing there.

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<sup>26</sup> Furrow, Dwight (2004) *Moral Surroundings: Readings on the Crisis of Values in Contemporary Life*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>27</sup> Bronson, Po. 'Analysis of family and social institutions excerpts on family as an institution'. pobronson.com. <<http://www.pobronson.com/factbook/pages/433.html>>.

## Changes of family in the second half of the twentieth century's Britain

“Much about modern family life is changing, but one thing that never seems to change is the notion that family is not what it used to be”<sup>28</sup>, is a quote by John R. Gillis with which Susan McRae opens her book *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. It is an undeniable truth that the society of Britain has changed substantially over the last decades and is much more complex and diversified today than in the past times. There is a great variety of households within which people live too, such as one-person, cohabiting families with children and families without, step families, lone parents, gay and lesbian and other. As McRae points out, much of this change has been done at the expense of tradition. An essential part of the British population considers it to be negative and perceives the changes of family as a social decline. “It is true that some changes have had devastating consequences for individuals and their families, perhaps across generations”<sup>29</sup>, admits McRae, but not all the transformation that occurred within families was destructive.

The transformation of family was partly triggered by the introduction of several family policies that occurred in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1967 The Family Planning Act enabled Local Authorities to provide free contraceptive supplies. In the same year The Abortion Act was passed which made abortion legal in the United Kingdom up to twenty-eight weeks gestation. Before that abortion was allowed only on medical and social grounds, or if the continuation of the pregnancy involved greater risk to the woman. Free-fault divorce law was passed in 1971 and it removed the previous duty to demonstrate a ‘matrimonial offence’. In 1970 came the legislation on equal pay and equal work, followed by legislation on equal opportunity in 1975. Women on maternity leave were allowed to be absent from work for a period of up to forty weeks with job security since 1976. All of these measures were meant to improve the position of women in society.<sup>30</sup>

There are many factors that contributed to the change of family but the most profound one was probably women's increased economic participation. As McRae says, in 1975 only half of women with employed husbands had a paid job, by the mid-1990s the number was

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<sup>28</sup> McRae, Susan (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Introduction.

<sup>30</sup> Kamerman, Sheila B. et Kahn Alfred J. (1977) *Family Change and Family Policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 33.

reaching ninety per cent.<sup>31</sup> The next essential cause for family change was the “widespread acceptance of ‘post-materialist’ values”<sup>32</sup>, which basically meant that every individual had his own autonomy and a right to choose. Furthermore, the second wave of feminism, according to some, also contributed to the change of family. McRae presents Chafetz’s observation:

the feminist message that a large segment of the non-activist public took on board in the 1970s and 1980s was interpreted as encouraging women to avoid economic dependence on men by becoming or remaining employed. Feminism was popularly viewed as urging women to define autonomy and self-actualization as the major goals of their lives and to cease devoting all of their energies selflessly to others (especially to men) who only exploited them. At that time it was often claimed that the two sexes were essentially the same and therefore that a gender-based division of labour at home or in the labour force was unnecessary and unfair.<sup>33</sup>

With women gaining paid employment, they were less likely to submit to their husband’s authority and therefore felt freer to leave an unhappy marriage which was no longer an unbeatable imprisonment. Divorce became ever increasing a phenomenon in the second half of the twentieth century than ever before. The statistics show that “8% of marriages would have ended by the husband’s age of 50 at the divorce rates of 1959, 13% at the 1966 rate, and 35% at the 1975 rate”<sup>34</sup> Not only the number of people getting divorced increased but also the amount of people who felt less inclined to join marriage at all enlarged. “In modern societies, marriage has moved from status to contract.”<sup>35</sup> It is no longer necessary for two people to get married in order to have legitimized children. Many parents choose to bring up their offspring and, at the same time, remain unmarried for all sorts of reasons. The proportion of children born outside marriage was less than five per cent until the 1950s, since the 1960s the number increased substantially, and in 1991 the figure was twenty-nine per cent; two thirds of the children were born to cohabiting couples.<sup>36</sup> Cohabitation among unmarried couples is one of the most felt changes to the family life that Britain is experiencing nowadays. The proportion

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<sup>31</sup> McRae, Susan (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71.

<sup>34</sup> Kamerman, Sheila B. et Kahn Alfred J. (1977) *Family Change and Family Policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Hakim, Catherine (2004) *Models of the Family in Modern Societies: Ideals and Realities*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

<sup>36</sup> Kamerman, Sheila B. et Kahn Alfred J. (1977) *Family Change and Family Policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p. 39.

of women who cohabited with their future husband rose from less than four per cent in 1966 to sixty-eight per cent in 1993.<sup>37</sup>

These tendencies in cohabitation, marriage, fertility and divorce are typical not only for Britain but also for most of the Western world. These trends have been given a collective name ‘second demographic transition’ and its purpose is to distinguish the first half of the twentieth century from the second with the borderline in the 1960s. It has three phases. The first phase, from 1960 to 1970, brought a halt to the baby boom followed by a decline of fertility, the introduction of contraceptive pill and acceleration in divorce. In the second phase, between 1970 and 1985, cohabitation between unmarried couples increased as well as the number of children born out of these liaisons. In the third phase, from 1985 onwards, the divorce stabilised at a high digit and the cohabitation between unmarried people increased.<sup>38</sup>

It was not only families and households that changed throughout the 1980s and 1990s but the economic situation and employment opportunities too. These decades are characteristic for economic turbulence with “high inflation and high unemployment, periods of growth and of recession”.<sup>39</sup> During these periods women found it easier to get employed whereas men remained out of work. In her article ‘Family Change: Revolution or Backlash’, Jacqueline Scott points out that if the male unemployment stays high there may be demand for a more traditional division of gender roles in future where the man earns the living and the woman tends to the house and the children.

The belief that women’s employment takes away employment opportunities for men, whether or not it is true, is likely to result in a backlash against women’s labour force participation [...] continuing mass unemployment and the limited and the generally shrinking capacities of the labour market in general conserve and re-stabilize the traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women.<sup>40</sup>

It has been even suggested that a neo-traditional family may solve the men’s “increasing level of disinvolvement with family life and rejection of the responsibilities of fatherhood”<sup>41</sup> Whether such a solution is possible and likely to come about is another matter.

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<sup>37</sup> McRae, Susan (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.73.

Individualism has also played a fundamental role in the transformation of society in general and the traditional family values in particular. In a modern society people have to construct their lives more actively than in the past. There are many options that a modern person has in all sorts of areas of social action, and the choice has become obligatory. In the pre-modern society it was tradition that provided a limited horizon of action. In the modern society there are also numerous authorities and it is up to every individual to decide which one he or she is to follow. Possibilities like these seem to make the life more liberating and attractive but on the other hand, “it is also profoundly disturbing, as all the ethical precepts taken for granted in the past are quite literally thrown into doubt.”<sup>42</sup> In the present-day society, where many competing values are offered, tradition does not necessarily have to vanish but it may be presented as a valued option. McRae points out that the demise of traditional values is associated with the era of risk society when if not quite ‘anything goes’ there is a limitless range of choice. She mentions Beck according to whom as modernisation advances the decisions and constraints on decision multiply in all fields of social action, especially in terms of sexuality and family.

With a bit of exaggeration one could say ‘anything goes’... Marriage can be subtracted from sexuality and that in turn from parenthood; parenthood can be multiplied by divorce and the whole thing can be divided by living together or apart. [...] New modernity [...] is equated with the risk society, and risk society in turn is a society where the normal state of love is chaos.<sup>43</sup>

Hand in hand with these changes came the sexual revolution of the 1960s, despite many attempts to restore morality both in Britain and the United States. Even though President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher were both defenders of traditional values, they presided over “probably the greatest revolution in sexual mores in the twentieth century, despite their best endeavour”<sup>44</sup> The reason is that there is a link between radical individualism in economics and in sexual and ethical values. “Individual freedom cannot stop at the market.<sup>45</sup>” When one has absolute freedom to buy and sell, it seems illogical not to have this freedom in choosing sexual partners, lifestyle, identity or fantasies. It is therefore believed that the market ethic is a powerful corrosive factor which “undermines the traditional

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<sup>42</sup> McRae, Susan (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 75-76.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

equations of sex with procreation and its containment in marriage.”<sup>46</sup> Although conservatives would want to protect the traditional values such as the traditional family, religion, morality and the identity of the nation, there are some benefits that the 60s brought in too, says Arthur Marwick.<sup>47</sup> To contrast the 50s and the 60s, a number of key features can be presented.

The fifties were typical for rigid social hierarchy; subordination of women to men and children to parents; repressed attitudes to sex; racism; unquestioning respect for authority in the family, education, government, the law, religion; Cold War hysteria; a strict formalism in language; a grey popular culture. On the other hand, the most striking features of the sixties could be: youth culture; idealism, protest, rebellion; the Beatles; search for inspiration in the religion of the East; massive changes in relationships and sexual behaviour; frankness in books and media; relaxation in censorship; the new feminism; gay liberation; drugs; the emergence of ‘the underground’ and the ‘counter-culture’.<sup>48</sup> It is an unquestionable truth that in the sixties significant things happened. However, not so clear is to tell whether these changes were overall good or not. Many argue about the benefits and damages of the period but it is certain that the changes in the modern family definitely gained its foundation in the 60s.

This enumeration is a little too simplified in order to make a comparison between the trends in the 50s and 60s. The boundary between the decades is, however, not as sharp as Marwick presents it since the 50s influenced the 60s in many ways and, in fact, the 60s would not have taken place without there being the 50s and their foundations for the changes in the 60s.

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<sup>46</sup> McRae, Susan (1999) *Changing Britain: Families and Households in the 1990s*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Marwick, Arthur (1998) ‘The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974’. *The Times*. 15 November 2013. <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/m/marwick-sixties.html>>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

## First-person narrator

Because this thesis also deals with the first-person and third-person narrator used in the novels discussed, these narrative modes are elaborated on here with the focus on their individual contribution to the narratives.

First-person narrative is a narrative mode where the story is told from the perspective of one character at a time. The narrator uses the pronouns “I” or “We” depending on the number of the first-person narrator. The reader relies only on what the character says and hence has an imperfect account of information. The advantage of this type of narration is that the reader is presented with the character’s feelings and thoughts and therefore perceives the message at first-hand.

Marra<sup>49</sup> points out that the entire text of a first-person novel is one of self-disclosure. The aim of this disclosure is to personalize the relationship between the narrator/protagonist and the reader. This bond then creates the atmosphere of honesty and sincerity; two criteria that help ensure trustworthiness. He stresses the fact that that what is lifelike is more credible than what is not and that is exactly what a first-person mode possesses. By means such as the quality of voice and the perceived personal one-to-one communication that occurs between the narrator/protagonist and the reader an air of credibility to the narration is insinuated. As Marra concludes, “the personal nature of first-person narration has the inherent advantage of producing in the reader the perception of a trusting narrator/protagonist”<sup>50</sup> He further points out that the receiver’s perception of trust on the part of the sender leads to a reciprocation of that trust from receiver to sender and so the reader is at the very beginning predisposed to trusting the narrator/protagonist.<sup>51</sup> Cohn<sup>52</sup> states that first-person narration is an existential relationship that joins the narrator to the protagonist, in contrast to the third-person narrator which is more functional.

On the other hand there are several drawbacks to the first-person perspective. One of these is the fact that a first-person narrator is not omniscient therefore he or she presents a

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<sup>49</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech Universit. p. 344.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 344.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 344.

<sup>52</sup> Cohn, Dorrit (1978) *Transparent minds: narrative modes for presenting consciousness in fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 144.

limited amount of information. As Marra explains, “criticism of first person narration is centred on just this point in that the narrator/protagonist has a restricted scope of characters and events. In short, the accuracy and clarity of his narrative fall prey to his own human limitations.”<sup>53</sup> Since the reader gets the entire story from one character, who is often the central character in the novel’s action, it is obvious that the conveyed message cannot be neutral and therefore thoroughly believable. The narrator, although the reader watches the story through his eyes and is apt to accept his point of view, is often perceived as an unreliable narrator. Marra argues that these first-person narration strategies can at first sight seem unfavourable but they validate the first person narrator’s purpose:

However, our contention here is that such potential fallibility and unreliability may serve to heighten and not lessen the reader’s perception of the narrator/protagonist’s credibility. The key word here is perception, for if the reader assesses the narrator/protagonist as human and applies real life experiences and criteria into that assessment, then the narrator/protagonist may be considered as credible as most others we would meet and know in life, including ourselves.<sup>54</sup>

This subjectivization in narration helps the reader to feel lifelikeness in the on-goings, and may override the objective verifiability of the communicated message. The result of this subjective account may be that the reader builds up a more intimate relationship with the narrator arousing in himself a touch of involvement, empathy or even identification.

When scrutinizing the first-person narration there also arises the problem of time. Since retrospection is common in this mode, the reader may have a sense of unreliability on the subject of time because the narrator’s memory may not be perfect and because he chooses what to include or disregard, the outcome is hardly perceived as objective in terms of time. The longer the period between the moment of an incident in the past and the moment of telling of it by the narrator, the less the narrator remembers and the less objective the final picture is. This may leave in the reader an assumption that he is not presented with the whole image of the story. On the other hand, the amount of time can also have a different, positive effect on the narrator’s account of earlier experiences. The narrator/protagonist can gain in the course of time a more detached view on the events. Marra explains “an increased interval should allow the narrator to reflect upon his past experiences with more detachment and

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<sup>53</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University. p. 314

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 314-15

perspective, to see himself more objectively, and to evaluate his actions in a more disinterested manner.”<sup>55</sup> If, however, the final picture of the narrator seemed unfavourable it might as well make him “arrange his version of events with a view to presenting himself to the listener or reader in a better light.”<sup>56</sup> While a short stretch of time seems to favour the narrator’s lucidity, it does not guarantee honesty or trustworthiness.

The amount of facts included in a story may also cause trouble in a first-person narration. The narrator has to limit the information he or she wants to deliver since the story is seen only through his or her point of view and so all the ideas, thoughts and emotions are believed to be the narrator’s own. The reader may well doubt the believability of the narrator/protagonist if there is in the text an undue quantity of information. On the other hand, Marra claims that the credibility is increased when the reader is presented with concrete facts and asserts that “the actions, motivations, attitudes, values, and personalities of narrator/protagonists are given more credibility when the reader has been provided with specific background data which, in all probability, will make those actions and the like more lifelike, better understood, and more reasonable.”<sup>57</sup> It is also possible for the reader, in order to enhance credibility, to admit that in recalling the past his or her memory is not perfect. This combination of reasonable limitation and the narrator’s sincerity maintains the reader’s trustworthiness because he is made to believe that the “forthcoming narration is more likely to be truthful and more accurate one.”<sup>58</sup>

First person narrator’s text as opposed to third person narrator’s text is constructed in such a way that by means of self-disclosure it tries to awake more trust and believability in the reader. It is through first person narration that identification or at least involvement with the protagonist is more easily realised. Marra explains that we are inclined to identify with the first person narrator/protagonist because he is more real and vivid. We pay attention to the narration in a similar way that we would in a real life exchange with another person.<sup>59</sup> Identification with the protagonist is more likely because of the personification of the narrator. On this account the reader can apply the norms of real life experiences.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University. p. 76.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 338.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 336.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 60-61.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

Another means for fleshing out a character is a lifelike “quality of voice.”<sup>61</sup> The reader hears a specific voice when reading a first person narrative and therefore adopts the role of not only a reader but also a listener at the same time. “As a result, there is a sense of one-on-oneness which we do not experience with third-person narration, even though the narrator could easily be said to be addressing us directly”<sup>62</sup> notes Marra as an afterthought.

Although numerous first-person narratives provide credibility and trustworthiness by establishing a close relationship with the reader, mainly by means of self-disclosures, this trustworthiness is not a rule. Fludernik explains:

In specific circumstances a narrator will lose credibility because s/he violates valid social norms in word or deed. Such an unreliable narrator [...] may give a distorted picture of (fictional) reality as a result of being obsessed by certain ideas [...] Alternatively the narrator may reveal her/himself to be an immoral or dishonest person [...] S/he may also turn out to be a naïve and unsuspecting party to the events portrayed, lacking any grasp of the background to the story – in contrast with the reader who arrives at an understanding of the situation by dint of reading between the lines.<sup>63</sup>

Such a narrator can hardly rouse trustworthiness and empathy in the reader. It is more probable that the reader will consider him as an egocentric, conceited character. The pretended honesty of self-disclosure can hardly help him to maintain his/her credibility. This is the case of the narrator in Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy* which will be dealt with later in this thesis.

Sometimes in the first-person narration the author chooses an unreliable character on purpose, thus making it more demanding for the reader to find truth for her/himself. Fludernik points out that “[u]nreliable narrative discourse creates the impression that the implied author is communicating with the reader behind the first-person narrator’s back.”<sup>64</sup> This type of narrative demands a more advanced reader and a more detached view. The reader has to read between the lines to figure out the veiled message. Such an unreliable narrator is for example Stephen in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*. His re-telling of the past events and the portrayal of himself and other characters in the novel make him an unreliable narrator. Stephen is a very unique first-person narrator because he seems to reveal most about himself

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<sup>61</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>63</sup> Fludernik, Monika (2012) *An Introduction to Narratology*. London: Routledge. p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

and his life when he is trying to obscure the truth.<sup>65</sup> His effort to deceive the reader is, however, fascinating and calls for the study of his psyche and his train of thought to act accordingly.

## **First-person narration versus third-person narration**

Third-person narration is usually connected with omniscience and objectivity where the narrator has the ultimate knowledge and control over the story. The narrator is only a projectionist; he is believed to stay detached and present unbiased truths. Marra says that this is a narrator “whose sole purpose is to run the machinery and stay out of projection’s way.”<sup>66</sup> He goes on explaining that this is not always the case and that the narrator can deliberately or unknowingly become more than a projectionist. However, in comparison with first-person narration, the third-person narrator is alleged to hold an objective reality.

Third-person narration, as Marra points out, does not have the ability to characterize the narrator/protagonist which is something that only the first-person narration can. In third-person narration the narrator is put aside. Marra states that “first-person narration offers greater potential for more vivid, lifelike, and intense characterization than does third-person narration, particularly in first-person narration where the narrator is also the protagonist.”<sup>67</sup> He also examines the use of pronouns and states that the “He” tends to be more detached whereas the “I” tends to be more involved. With the “I” the involvement is so profound that it combines the “characterizing potential of double exposure as both narrator and protagonist.”<sup>68</sup> In terms of the possessive pronoun “My” the narrator seems to be involved as a character to “whatever level or degree soon to be determined”<sup>69</sup>, in the case of “His” the narrator is not that involved, at least not in the extent of becoming a protagonist. In this respect the first-person narrator is advantaged because s/he is both a narrator and a protagonist. The third-person narrator is more or less removed, “though it should be clear that the narrator has taken

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<sup>65</sup> Bay, Lynn (2012) ‘A Great Butler’: the unreliable narrator in Kazuo Ishiguro’s ‘The Remains of the Day’, 20 May 2013. < <http://books.google.cz/books>>.

<sup>66</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University p. 32-3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 46

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 46

a definite stance of affinity with the protagonist whose life is being described,”<sup>70</sup> concludes Marra.

Reading a third-person narrative the reader has to shift her/his view constantly from narrator to character and vice versa because these two are entirely different persons. The result is that the reader’s attention moves from one to the other. Marra points out that “depending upon their respective emphases and weights within the text, the reader’s cognitive and affective responses would be directed to one or the other.”<sup>71</sup> In the first-person narration, however, the centre of attention is fixed by the pronoun ‘I’ and therefore the reader’s concentration and attention can be set on just oneself. Moreover, the first-person narrator’s self-disclosure is very life-like and because the reader has a vision of how personal and emotional such a self-disclosure is, it is easier for her/him to judge the narrator’s trustworthiness. The more the narrator wants to be believed and by variety of means tries to convince the reader, the more cautious the reader may become. Marra explains:

Indeed, since we may be primed for such subjective orientation on the part of the narrator, his apparent belief in his own objectivity and truthfulness may well make us that much more sensitive to his own bias or narrative machination. In fact, we may even become that much more critical and wary of narrative pretence. We may become suspicious of the world being described as an evaluative one, one lacking representative accuracy apart from the single frame of reference of the “I,” and one whose very shape, colour, and texture are controlled by that single focus of the narrator/protagonist.<sup>72</sup>

The reader sees all the actions, characters, scenes and the like solely by the first-person narrator’s eyes; it is only through them that the reader can come to interpretations and conclusions of the story. It is only right that s/he questions the narrator’s authenticity. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that every first-person narrator runs the risk of being considered unreliable. To that point Marra says that anyone who is interested in somebody else’s story immediately raises questions regarding its objectivity.<sup>73</sup> For instance, the reader may claim the narrator egocentric or doubt her/his memory in recalling the past.

It is almost a rule that first-person narrators/protagonists are never perfect people, on the contrary, they have a substantial amount of faults, problems or are bearers of undesirable

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<sup>70</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 174.

personal traits. Due to these imperfections, however, the reader is more apt to feel for the narrator/protagonist, like her/him or even identify with her/him. The mode of a first-person narration makes it possible for the narrator/protagonist to express all her/his emotions, ideas and doubts in such a way that the reader changes to a listener and is therefore better equipped to empathize with the character. First-person narration “has more potential than third-person narration for calling forth this quality of voice and thus adding to the fleshing out of the narrator/protagonist.”<sup>74</sup> In consequence, the narrator/protagonist becomes a more real life figure and is perceived as a speaking person. Owing to this the reader can build a relationship with her/him. The reader is made to listen to what the narrator has to say. By means of self-disclosure the reader is committed to the narrator’s voice and because self-disclosure, in real-life, has a healing, therapeutic effect, the reader projects his knowledge into fiction and the result is that as readers “we receive an intimate look at the narrator/protagonist, and this as we have argued throughout, creates more lifelikeness, personalisation, identification, involvement, and empathy.”<sup>75</sup> This established affinity evokes in the reader an impression of intimacy between the narrator and the reader. Marra goes on explaining, that with the first-person narration, “even if the background, occupation, or in fact the actions or personality type of a narrator/protagonist are on the surface dissimilar to ours, there is still the potential for our imagined or projected similarity.” The main point being made here is that the reader may like the narrator/protagonist however wicked s/he is. The reader may even identify with the narrator. Booth explains that “[s]ince we are not in a position to profit from or be harmed by a fictional character, our judgement is disinterested, even in a sense irresponsible. We can easily find our interests magnetized by characters who would be unbearable as acquaintances.”<sup>76</sup> There is an emotional, intimate closeness created by the narrator/protagonist’s confession-like self-disclosure. This is something that could not be achieved by third-person narration, or at least not to this extent.

When reading first-person narration the reader not only uses her/his knowledge of the fictional world but, because it so faithfully imitates the real world, uses the knowledge of real life too. “The first-person novel is, more than anything else, a novel of a single consciousness, a single personality, a single individual whose dominant presentation of himself controls and

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<sup>74</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University. p. 58.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 354.

<sup>76</sup> Booth, Wayne (1961) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 130.

guides the focus of our responses within a real life framework.”<sup>77</sup> The reader applies knowledge of the world as s/he knows it, the knowledge of interpersonal behaviour and of emotions that go with it. S/he applies real life criteria when judging the narrator/protagonist’s credibility.

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<sup>77</sup> Marra, James (1985) *The Lifelike „I“: A Theory of Response to First Person Narrator/protagonist in fiction*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University. p. 342.

## ***Scissors Paper Stone* by Elizabeth Day**

### **About the author**

Elizabeth Day is an award winning journalist and novelist. As a journalist she has worked for the *Evening Standard*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Mail on Sunday*, and, last but not least, the *Observer*. As a book writer she has written two novels so far: *Scissors, Paper, Stone* (2011), which is her debut novel and will be discussed in this thesis, and *Home Fires* (2013), which portrays a family coming to terms with the loss of their only child.

Elizabeth Day grew up in Northern Ireland although she originally comes from the South of England. In an interview for *Handsome and Pretty* she explains that when her family moved to Northern Ireland she was only four and she spoke with a strong English accent and therefore felt like an outsider there: “I didn’t like the fact that I stood out when I opened my mouth so I learned to listen, to observe, to stay quiet and to examine – all of which are crucial skills as a writer.”<sup>78</sup> Day’s ability to observe the world around her and her skill to put it down on the paper is extraordinary. Day remarks: “I realised...that often the most important things were left unsaid: that’s something that still interests me deeply in my novels; the tension beneath the surface and the conflict within families.”<sup>79</sup>

Day graduated with a double first in History from Cambridge and she lives in London.

### **The novel**

*Scissors, Paper, Stone* is a book about child abuse and about the frail relationships that can exist between members of a family. It won a Betty Trask Award which is a reward for first novels written by authors under the age of thirty-five.

The story revolves around a family of three: Charles, the father, Anne, the mother, and Charlotte, their only daughter. It is set in the present day but numerous flashbacks make the picture of the story complete. The reader arrives at the bonds between the members very slowly as Day unfolds the secrets that mark the family’s delicate character bit by bit.

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<sup>78</sup> ‘An Interview with Elizabeth Day’. 15 October 2013.

<<http://handsomeandpretty.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/an-interview-with-elizabeth-day/>>.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

The novel begins with Charles being knocked off his bicycle and taken comatose to the hospital where he stays for the rest of the story. Although his character is very passive from the moment of this accident, he remains to be one of the central characters, definitely the one who influenced the lives of his family in a disturbing way.

Anne is told about her husband being unconscious and severely hurt by two police officers who come to her house. She is in the middle of preparing a beef casserole and the news, strangely, does not take her peace. Her reaction when she is informed that her husband had an accident and is alive but only just is very emotionless and cold. She closes the door behind the police and takes her time to finish the casserole. The reader is taken aback by this unusual reaction and senses that something is wrong here. "She was conscious of the fact that she was behaving oddly and she wondered for a moment whether she might be suffering from shock. But Anne did not feel shocked. She felt-what exactly? She felt cocooned, un-tethered from actuality." (SPS 5) Only before setting for the hospital is Anne overcome by the idea of life without Charles.

Charlotte, on the other hand, is horrified at the sound of her mother's voice in her mobile phone and calms down only after she is told that her father is alive. Her mental response, at least given the way the reader perceives it, is expected, more natural than Anne's, but then there is an afterthought which again puzzles:

Not dead.

Alive.

Still living; still part of her.

And then, she no longer knows what to feel. (SPS 6)

Both mother's and daughter's reactions to their loved one provide a fertile soil for an amazing story of tragedy to begin.

Since a substantial part of the plot is conveyed retrospectively the reader learns a lot about the beginning of the relationship between Anne and Charles, which is a move in time more than thirty years back. They meet at university, Anne is a real beauty, admired by men, and Charles is considered a "catch". They get together and after a two-year long relationship get married.

She thought to herself that she had never been so happy than standing here by the riverbank with Charles, a man who was desired and handsome, who was clever and self-assured, who was so physically broad that she felt protected by his sheer physicality, and a man who was now, indubitably, without question, hers. (SPS 72)

It all seems perfect, yet there are tiny indications that this is not going to last. Anne, purposefully, overlooks all the negative signals that would otherwise help her learn more about Charles's character. She is naïve and too much in love with him to realise that for him she is a mere trophy. Because the reader is given only Anne's account of their relationship, only her thoughts and memories, he is more apt to ascribe it to her failing that she married a man she knew nothing about. Her trust in him is so vast that she sweeps aside everything that should make her alert and watchful: "...she ignored any faint intimations of disquietude, pushing them to the far corners of her mind and telling herself not to be so ridiculous." (SPS 41)

The disillusionment, however, comes straight after the wedding. On the third day of their honeymoon Anne wakes up realising that her husband is no longer lying beside her and there is no sign of him for the whole day. He appears in the evening, ravenous, smelling of smoke and wine. He barely speaks with her and when she demands where he was he replies that he went to explore and, because he knows that Anne likes her sleep, did not want to wake her up. She is baffled by his behaviour but his explanation comforts her: "She decided to be conciliatory, almost jovial. This was a triviality. He had gone for a walk and left her to sleep. If anything, it was evidence of a degree of thoughtfulness on his part." (SPS 124) She concludes that this is what marriage brings, that it is somehow normal that her expectations are not met with Charles's action and is angry that nobody has prepared her for that.

Things are, however, to get worse than a decreasing amount of affection and a rising number of disappearances on Charles's part. At one of the next-door neighbour's parties they are invited to, Anne catches Charles red-handed with a mistress of the house in the kitchen in a very indecent position. For Anne this is beyond anything she had ever imagined. "She stared at him and hoped, beyond hope, that she wasn't seeing what was in front of her. And she realised, all at once, that this couldn't be explained away and the knowledge of that felt like a rock being thrown into a deep, deep well..." (SPS157) She suddenly knows that this cannot be clarified in any way and pardoned as she was used to.

What is crucial, though, is not the situation as such but what follows straight after that – Anne’s response to it. She ponders several things: to scream, to slap the woman in the face, to throw a glass against the wall, but the thing she does is that she turns around and walks away. “She swallowed the scream. Stilled her hand. She stifled the physical impulse to react.” (SPS 158) Along with this simple gesture of walking wordlessly away she gives up all active reactions in the future too. The unwillingness to deal with an unpleasant situation such as this one turns out to be the key mistake and has a devastating effect on her family and its healthy functioning.

After seeing her husband betray her “she had lost faith in her own judgement, in her own ability to read a situation, to decipher what it meant” (SPS 158), but although she feels terribly deceived, she wants to save her face. There is no way of telling her parents nor her friends what Charles’s true self is like since it would harm her personality too, it would show that her ability to estimate a situation failed.

She wanted to believe in what she had once taken for granted and, for this to be achieved, she had to sacrifice this new, uncomfortable knowledge. She had to push it on one side and pretend she had never seen it. Because, above and in spite of it all, she still wanted Charles. And although she hated herself for this, although she despised her own weakness, she knew with insurmountable certainty that this was the single most important fact of her existence. She was in love with him and she always would be, however trapped it made her. (SPS 158)

She decides to pretend that everything is fine. At the cost of losing her identity she sets up to create a happy illusion of their marriage.

Pretence plays an important role in the novel, too, since it is mentioned several times throughout the story and it affects the family tragedy. From all the members of the family it is Anne who exercises pretence the most. From her early childhood she is pretending to be asleep when her parents come home from a party late at night. “...she enjoyed the feeling of play-acting, of feigning something.” (SPS 9) And later on: “Her parents must have known that she was awake but they played along. It became a harmless childhood lie.” (SPS 9) The reader can watch as this childish game transfers to her adulthood, too, and becomes a trait of her character as life with Charles becomes unbearable. “... she had believed that pretending her life had some sort of meaning would actually give it some, as if the acting was half the effort.” (SPS 34) And one must say that she is not only good at pretending but also at persuading herself of the benefit of it. “Anne was able to convince herself that the appearance

of something was the best substitute for its actual existence.” (SPS 150) Anne’s way of dealing with things might have been acceptable had it not been devastating for her daughter Charlotte.

### **Double-sided betrayal**

Towards the end of the novel comes the real crisis. Even though it is foreshadowed throughout the book when it comes it is a real shock. The reader is presented with very upsetting child abuse because the abuser is the father and the victim is his only daughter.

Charles’s deviant nature is quite settled at this stage of the novel for he is rather promiscuous and, as Melissa Katsoulis says, “sexually voracious.”<sup>80</sup> The first hint is made by Charles himself in the opening pages of the book when we meet him lying on the ground after he had been knocked down by a car. He is recovering his consciousness only to lose it again soon but in the meanwhile there appears reminiscence:

...he has one startlingly clear vision of his daughter. She is twelve years old and lying in bed with the flu and he has made her buttered toast and she is too hot so she has drawn back the bedsheets. The last thing he sees before his mind collapses is the precise curve of the pale flesh of her kneecap and he is saturated by love. (SPS 2-3)

One does not give this reading a second thought to realise that there is something improper in the mentioning of seeing the daughter’s pale flesh of her kneecap together with the feeling of being saturated by love. Something ill, about which the reader is about to discover later on in the novel, is foreshadowed here.

The experience Charles has in his head is retold further in the book from Charlotte’s point of view. She is in bed with flu and because her mother goes out for the evening, her father takes over to supply the dinner. Charlotte is lying in her bed, waiting for her toast to arrive. She tenses when she smells it burning for fear of her father being angry. When he finally comes with the supper he is peculiarly caring. Charlotte is not used to him looking after her so she ascribes his behaviour to his good will of treating her nicely. She is less sure that everything is as it ought to be when her duvet is drawn back and because she is shivering with

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<sup>80</sup> Katsoulis, Melissa. ‘Scissors, Paper, Stone by Elizabeth Day: review’. 3 September 2013. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/8269495/Scissors-Paper-Stone-by-Elizabeth-Day-review.html>>.

cold he starts to rub her legs. Charlotte feels extremely puzzled by this sudden intimacy of her father. On the one hand, it is so unpleasant that she feels on the brink of consciousness, whereas, on the other hand, she reasons with herself that nothing particularly bad happens. She believes that, awkward as it is, it may be Charles's way of expressing fatherly affection. She is afraid to tell her mother for fear of being ridiculed and there are no friends to talk to either. She concludes that "perhaps she was at fault rather than her father" and that "she should have made the most of Charles's undivided attention, an attention she normally craved but felt ill equipped to deserve." (SPS 96) In the background of this scene is the smell of a burnt toast, a motif that gets repeated several times in the book foreshadowing this situation, or signalling Charlotte's feeling unwell which is connected with this suffocating stench. At the end of this incident the narrator informs: "That was the first time." (SPS 97) so the reader is sure (and a little anxious) that there is going to be more of this subject dealt with.

The secret that casts shadow over the family comes out in a chapter which begins with "THAT DAY" (SPS 177) written in capital letters. There are several other minor events that precede this day such as Charles's covertly watching Charlotte in the shower or an occasional bedtime kiss with the imprint of saliva left on Charlotte's face, none of which she ever confides to anyone for fear of being laughed at, but this time it makes an imprint in her memory. It is a school day and because the bus drivers are on strike Charles is supposed to take Charlotte to school by car while Anne has some duty with the local charity. Charlotte is nervous because she knows she is going to be late due to her father's reluctance to set off on time, but her unease rises even more as during the journey he lays his hand on her thigh. She tenses and waits for what comes next. Her father parks the car, unfastens his seat belt, turns to her and in a series of movements pushes her skirt up along with kissing her vigorously. She fights back but with no effect. The horror luckily does not take long for Charles stops suddenly because his attention is caught by something outside the car, behind Charlotte's head. When she turns around to look at it she sees her mother standing there with an expression of consternation on her face. Charlotte thinks she is safe now with her mum being there, having seen it all: "her mother was here. She was safe. Anne knew. There was no need to try anymore, no need to pretend or conceal or convince herself it was all right. It was out in the open. There would be no more lying." (SPS 183) But the thing Anne does is that she turns away and walks away not looking back.

While Charles's betrayal is somehow anticipated from the beginning, disgusting but digestible, Anne's comes out of the blue and is a terrible surprise at this stage of the novel.

She walks away from her daughter when she needs her most. When she gathers her wits, Charlotte manages to escape from the car and runs away from the terrible situation and her awful parents but because there is nowhere else to go she returns back to her home determined to show her parents that she is inviolable and that she does not need them.

For a week there is no sign of her father and although her mum never speaks to her about what has happened she indulges her daughter by all sorts of treats. She allows Charlotte to do things she could not do normally but she never utters a word concerning the event so vivid in the minds of them both. The closest she gets to the topic is when she gives Charlotte a peculiar piece of advice when she tells Charlotte that she could always visit a counsellor if she wanted to talk things through with someone. Yet, Charlotte desperately wants her mum to explain. When Charles comes back a week later he is welcomed by his wife as if nothing has happened. “‘ You’re back,’ said Anne with unnatural brightness.” (SPS 188) Charlotte realises that they are to behave as if everything was as it ought to be.

Pretending is one thing, real emotions another, and a mother’s betrayal is not that easily forgotten. Anne believes that “[i]f it was unspoken, it meant that all three of them could pretend it didn’t exist. It meant that they could go on acting like a normal family even if the performance had no depth.” (SPS 161) This is what she truly believes that works. She confides to her daughter that all the things that she does not want to keep in her head she pictures in her mind, then takes a big rubber and erases it and then paints the whole scene in red colour. Anne probably assumes that by this technique Charlotte can get over the unwanted condition unharmed. This conversation with Charlotte is also the closest Anne gets when referring to the excruciating situation.

None of her parents manages to produce constructive communication; no true feelings are ever voiced. Charlotte desperately craves for both her parents’ attention, she wants them to praise her, to think well of her. She wants Anne to acknowledge her maturity, her adult way of dealing with a ghastly situation. “Part of her hoped that Anne was impressed by her daughter’s maturity. Another part of her knew that, without even trying, Charlotte was now the dominant partner in the mother-daughter relationship...she liked the feeling of power it gave her but she also wanted to be looked after.” (SPS 187) She is determined to play the game their parents do, come out of it stronger and better than both of them but, at this part of the novel, she does not know yet that it is not enough and that she will desire more.

### **Craving for father's recognition**

For Charlotte to engage in a conversation with Charles is always a tricky thing to do. As a school girl she does her best to eliminate any encounters with her father to the minimum. Her talks with Charles are never easy-going chit-chats. He does not seem to possess the ability to talk to her as to his own daughter.

Because he never made any attempt to speak down to her, preferring to express himself in the complex language more suited to an adult audience, Charlotte could never fully understand what he was saying. She would try so hard to follow the gossamer trail of his rapid intellectual conjecture that the effort of it left her feeling simultaneously exhausted and more stupid than she had at the start.” (SPS 180)

The conversations with her father are always a source of huge stress that her contributions may not live up to his expectations. Hard as she tries to impress her father with her opinions she never succeeds. He always overargues her, chiefly because the topics are always of intellectual nature, and because he never lets her win an argument. It is, of course, unlikely for her to win an argument given his superiority both in his age and knowledge. Charlotte's wish is not as much to win an argument but crucial for her is to look good in his eyes. She craves for his praise, his admiration, his love. “What else was she apart from her father's love? What else was she worth? How could she possibly tell him all this? How could she make him understand, make him pay for what he had done when part of her had craved his attention all along?” (SPS 162) She wants him to know how she feels, how much he has hurt her, how much she still needs him to love her but she is not able to express her feelings.

The thought of facing him down, of accusing him, of telling him exactly what he had done to her, was impossible. It left Charlotte with a sense of nauseous trepidation. He would be able to out-argue her, as he had always done. But he was also in a position of power: he could withdraw his love. (SPS 161)

It is painful to watch how much she longs for his love, needs his affection and interest no matter how much he has ruined her childhood. It is heart-breaking to see that the biggest fear she entertains is that he may stop loving her.

Charlotte is in her thirties when her father has the accident. The reader learns that a few days before he was knocked down by the car Charlotte is invited by him for a dinner. They spend a nice evening together, a little strained, but altogether pleasant. Just as they are

about to part, Charles grabs his daughter's wrist so tightly that she, frightened, starts to cry. Then, suddenly, he says: " I didn't mean to hurt you...Dou you understand? " (SPS 68), and this apology seems to focus not only on this occasion of making her wrists ache but on the whole series of his abusive behaviour when she was only a little girl. This strange behaviour could be interpreted as Charles's peculiar way of making amends had he not in the very next moment drawn Charlotte, by force, once again close enough to him to pursue a kiss. This is the last time he sees her.

### **Passivity versus action**

Passive behaviour seems to pervade most of the book. No active way of dealing with problems ever takes place there. It is best perceivable on the character of Anne who prefers to overlook all the unwanted things that occur in her life. She dismisses all the unpleasant facts in her mind as if they never existed rather than facing the truth. Charles is also rather passive in his day to day functioning in the family. He is either absent or it is unbearable to withstand his presence. Charlotte points out that in their household there had been an "unspoken friction, a constant and wordless atmosphere of slights perceives and grudges held." (SPS 24) This air of unease is always established by her father, who, by means of uttering painful remarks, makes the whole situation unbearable. The things that Charles says are never as bad as the way he says them. Especially the time the family spends together is frequently a nightmare since Charles's taste is rarely met with Charlotte's and her mother's. "He would never shout but the repressed fury of his controlled breathing was somehow worse than anything else." (SPS 25) Charles's verbal display towards the female characters in the book causes them great pain, makes the time spent in his presence unbearable and thus prevents any warm feelings to flourish.

Charlotte is the first one who starts to act dynamically. Even though she is determined at first to pretend and play the awful game their parents do, then she meets her boyfriend Gabriel and realises what a relief it brings to confide real emotions, make things clear, and she is so sorry this never happened at her home between her and her parents that she starts to act.

The first thing she does is that she turns up, unexpectedly, at her mother's house and demands that her mother tell her why she never left her father. Her mother is taken by surprise by the query and adopting her usual stance claims that she wanted to live up to her wedding

vows. "Marriage is not something to be disposed of, thrown away, when things start to go wrong. It's something your generation doesn't seem to understand...and really, dear, I don't see that's any of your business" (SPS 140) Anne does not allow herself to admit that her failed marriage to Charles could have harmed her daughter and she is determined to pretend everything is just fine. Charlotte leaves in tears, hurt and angry at the selfishness of her mother. She wonders about "Anne's startling capacity to remove herself, to choose detachment when faced with too much truth. Was it a defence mechanism? Maybe, thought Charlotte but how could she stand it when her own daughter was standing there, crying, asking her for help?" (SPS 142) Charlotte does not know what to make of her mother's behaviour. The moment of her betrayal is still vivid in her memory and she cannot forgive her.

Charlotte is devastated by her mother's pretended indifference towards her and her sorrow. She knows that Anne is not speaking the truth when defending her motives for staying in the wedlock. Charlotte believes that Anne is fully aware of where the pain and estrangement between the two of them comes from but yet she does not concede it.

On a Sunday morning, a time of day when Anne does not visit her husband at the hospital, Charlotte goes there to see him. Instead of the usual one-way talking about the daily things, which is motivated chiefly by her mother's presence, and it helps to create the illusion of a wholesome relationship with her father, Charlotte stays silent. She reflects on her unhappy childhood, her strained relations with those that should have been her dearest and is all of a sudden overcome by all sorts of emotions which get manifested in a most startling way. Charlotte starts to hit her father. At first it is only a slap across his jaw but then she begins to hit him vigorously, shouting at him swear words, punching, scratching and beating him until she is pulled away from his bedside by a nurse. This is an important moment for Charlotte because from then on she is no more a passive victim.

### **Mother-daughter relationship**

Anne loves her daughter very much but her love is darkened by a crime she commits when Charlotte is only a little girl. She walks away when her daughter needs her most, when Charles's violent behaviour should have been brought to a halt. The narrator says: "Anne loved her daughter so much it felt like a glass splinter lodged deep in her heart. Yet she found

herself incapable of expressing it and this, more than anything else, seemed to drive them apart.” (SPS 29) This metaphor for love evokes a feeling where pain prevails, so it is clear from the start that there are wounds to be healed. For years Charlotte and Anne exist without any of them pursuing the true feelings to come to light, but Charles’s sudden accident brings them together and they are forced to spend time in each other’s presence by his bedside and finally confront each other.

Anne’s adoration of Charlotte comes right after the birth but although she is a devoted and caring mother she never puts her feelings into words. Charlotte suffers from her early childhood for not being loved enough. Nobody at home praises her for doing well at school; nobody makes her feel beautiful and precious. Yet, she craves this verbal reassurance of her mother’s praise: “...while Charlotte’s success might have been obvious to her mother, it wasn’t obvious to her and she needed someone to tell her.” (SPS 114)

Charlotte watches over her behaviour and in difficult situations wonders what would an adult do. She is never childish in this sense, always wanting to prove her maturity and to be commended for it. After her mother walks away that day when she is the witness of Charles’s pervert behaviour Charlotte wants her mother to be impressed by her grown-up way of managing it all. Nevertheless, Anne does not utter a word concerning the ghastly situation. This unanswered want of expressed care leads, in course of the women’s lives, to estrangement and on Charlotte’s part even to disfavour. She has little to say to her mother and prefers to see as little of her as possible, too.

Recently she found that she could not even pretend to relax in her mother’s presence: every time she saw her, the whole situation felt so stilted and unreal that their conversations had become defined more by the gaps between what was said than by the words themselves. (SPS 22)

On the other hand, it is not easy to spend time with Anne because the years she lived under Charles’s dominance mark her temper and she slowly becomes a sour, disappointed woman hardly pleased by anything. She has the habit of reprimanding her daughter, who is already in her thirties, of trifle misconducts. Her love, however, is not lessened by Charlotte’s lack of interest in Anne.

Anne is never a particularly warm-hearted mother but as Charlotte becomes older the intimacy shared between the two of them seems to bleak out and, at the time of Charles’s

accident, there seems to be none. It would be unfair to claim that there is no affection on Anne's part towards Charlotte because, even though she tries hard to conceal it, she is obsessed by her:

...she noticed every tiny movement Charlotte made. It was her substitute for spoken intimacy. If nothing else, she could watch her. She could know her like a collector knows his butterflies: beautiful samples, pinned down in glass cases, wings outstretched so that every marking was clear. And by knowing her this way, by checking every nuance of her light and shade, by detailing each twitch and tremble, every gentle susurration of an unintended sigh, Anne could move as close to her as she dared. She gazed at Charlotte from a safe distance. (SPS 30)

Anne is aware that she has not been a good enough mother and assumes that by letting Charlotte know how much she cares for her would reveal the terrible failure she has been as a mother. By watching Charlotte from a distance Anne's motherly affection seems to be satisfied and no shortcomings are revealed although one can see that her methods show some traces of awkward behaviour. For example, comparing the mother-daughter relationship to a collector watching his butterflies seems wrong. Further on in the novel Charlotte is likened to a faun: "It felt to Anne as if an exquisite faun had appeared in the middle of a dense forest and the slightest noise of snapping twigs would scare her off." (SPS 138) From what Anne says about Charlotte it is clear that she loves her deeply but is scared of displaying her feelings since Charlotte seems to protect herself from all of her mother's emotions. She escapes Anne's attempts at intimacy which is the reason why Anne compares her to a delicate faun prone to vanishing when startled.

### **Making amends**

Things begin to be put to right after the day when Charlotte arrives at her parents' house and accuses her mother of all the things she put them through by staying with Charles at all costs. Anne does not allow herself to admit her fault but she is, for the first time from that day, reminded that things are not yet forgotten, nor forgiven. She retains her attitude this time and does not let anything truthful be voiced, helping herself by adopting her usual stance of distance.

Anne took two small steps backwards. It was a barely perceptible movement, but the tiny physical retreat enabled her to adopt her usual cool detachment when faced with the

unpredictable squalls of emotion. She took herself out of the sphere of sentiment, removed herself from its clawing grasp, and acquired a lacquered coating of impenetrability. When she spoke, her words were deliberately dry, denuded of intensity. She spoke as if Charlotte were no longer her daughter – at least not recognisably so. She had to do this, otherwise she would feel too much and it would all dissolve in front of her – all the carefully constructed half-truths and acceptances would crumble. She could not, for this moment, allow herself to love her daughter too much. She had to gather herself together. She had to buy some time to think. (SPS 140)

A few days after that Anne receives a phone call from the hospital in which she is told by a nurse that her daughter Charlotte has made an attack on Charles, hitting him and shouting accusations at him. Anne is asked to collect her daughter at the hospital because she had to be given some tranquillizers. Once again Charlotte is helpless; needing her mother to come and take care of her, but Anne is unable to do it. She brushes the nurse off telling her that she is definitely not coming and that she can hardly think it is a good idea for she knows nothing about it.

Anne sees her daughter's suffering and yet she is afraid to bring the dark past to light and do something about it. Throughout the years she has convinced herself that the wrong that happened is very well hidden, obliterated from the memory and now comes the moment when she becomes conscious that she has been wrong the whole time.

She thought that day had been dealt with, the brutal truth of it concealed, hidden, disguised from their everyday consciousness. She thought it had been best that way: that enforced ignorance was a means of coping with the ugliness of real knowledge. But now, here it was to be confronted all over again and Anne simply didn't know if she could bear it. It was too much. The past was too dazzling to look at; too blindingly bright and uncompromising. (SPS 172)

She slowly realises that she has been wrong in assuming that by ignoring the truth it stops existing. She suddenly understands how much Charlotte is harmed by the past. Looking back at her life with Charles she sees what a failure it has all been and she hates herself for

being so weak, so gutless, so hopelessly in thrall to a monster of a man. She was sickened by her inaction and crippled by her guilt, but she could not face up to it. She could not bear to look at Charlotte's thin, pale face, at her silent, accusing eyes across the breakfast table. She had done what she thought was best: to carry on as if nothing had happened, to ensure the daily routine was as normal as possible, to wipe clean the surfaces of their consciousness and

to make them all believe in it. And so, gradually, she blotted everything out. If she had not seen it, she reasoned, it need not exist. (SPS 193)

When searching her memory for the reason why it all happened the way it did, she asks herself questions. She needs to put her finger on one specific moment when she made a mistake in her role of a mother.

Was it that she had never paid her [Charlotte] enough attention? Was she too concerned with Charles, too in love with him still, too obsessed with keeping his emotions on an even keel, too desperate to grab hold of the wayward threads that were un-spoiling in front of her? Was that why it had happened? Was protecting the appearance of her marriage more important to her than helping her only child? (SPS 213)

Then the real reason dawns on her:

Was it that she craved her husband's love more than her daughter's? Had she spent the last three decades desperately chasing the impossible, desperately attempting to make a man incapable of human warmth return her embittered love? Was that what her life had amounted to? (SPS 213)

She feels a sudden urge to put things right with Charlotte and, at the same time, she is scared to death that Charlotte may not have enough sympathy for her. Nevertheless, she turns up at Charlotte's work and takes her out for a coffee, claiming that they need to talk. At the café she apologizes for everything Charlotte has gone through. Anne asserts that she meant no harm and that everything that has been done was out of love. Charlotte learns that Anne talked to Charles after that day. She threatened that she would take Charlotte and leave him if anything similar occurred.

It is a part of a therapy for Charlotte, too, to know that her father did not want to lose her and therefore tried hard to be good. Likewise it feels good for Charlotte that Anne did stand up for her in the critical moment, although in a way that was the only one possible for her.

### **Points of view**

The book is divided into a prologue, part one, part two and an epilogue. In the prologue the reader meets the members of the family and is presented with their mental

processes: Charles is lying on the road and becomes conscious for a little while to remember the evening when he took care of Charlotte; Anne is cooking at home and receives the tragic message that the police has come to tell her; and Charlotte is answering her mother's call, instantly knowing that there is something wrong.

The individual chapters are named after the characters in the book and it helps the reader to predict bits of the story because he knows about whom each chapter is going to be about before he starts to read. Majority of the book is told from the point of view of Charlotte and Anne. There is some space given to Janet too, who is a friend of Anne's, but it is definitely Charles who is given the least space in terms of his thinking. All the reader knows about him is mediated by Charlotte, Anne or Janet. From what these three women tell, it is quite clear that he is an immoral, evil man. Toward the end of the book, however, there is a chapter called Charles, which shakes the already established perception of the father.

### **Everybody is a victim**

The reader might find himself wondering about the character of Charles in numerous parts of the novel. Why does he behave the way he does? Why is there such a sudden change in his treatment of Anne after the wedding ceremony? What drives him towards abusing his own daughter? These are just a few. He is a really mysterious person.

Charles is given only a small part of the novel. In the very beginning when we meet him lying on the ground after he was knocked down of his bike by a car. He is only coming to his consciousness to lose it again soon after that. The second time is near the end when the reader is presented with his childhood reminiscence. In it he is a small boy and he is severely beaten by his mother with a heavy saucepan for making the floor mucky. The whole scene is very dark and the mother does the whole thing very coldheartedly. She is obviously very pretty and her prettiness contrasts with her twisted nature.

...too quickly for him to raise his arms to protect himself, she brought the saucepan down, hitting him across one side of his head with a clattering thud that sent him crumpled to the ground. The pain was so blinding, so acute, that he wanted to scream but he found that no sound came. His mother was shouting at him but he could no longer see her face, so that his entire sensory perception was taken up with the sound of her words. "You filthy little bastard," she screamed. "How dare you. I cook and I clean and I do it all and for what? For a stupid,

ungrateful boy like you to ruin it all” [...] After a while, he heard his mother walking away, her step incongruously dainty against the floor tiles. (SPS 223)

This piece of information shades a different light on Charles and his character. The reader has to step back and feel sympathy for him after all. He is, like everybody else in the novel, formed by the past and the present and. This is also a device Day uses to show the reader not to be judgemental. In one of her interviews she is asked what advice she has received that she wants everyone to benefit from. The answer is: “Not to be judgemental – of people or of situations. We live in an age of instant response and commentary, but most people are more complex than they initially appear and situations that can, at first, seem daunting are often the ones that reveal the biggest opportunities.”<sup>81</sup> Day has certainly achieved that not only the characters of Anne and Charlotte are pitied by the reader but it is also the character of Charles himself.

### **The minor characters of Gabriel and Janet**

All in all there are not many characters in the story, which makes it a little bit more unrealistic. There are no relatives except the mentioning of one of Anne’s parents here and there, no real friends and no classmates. On the other hand, it prevents the story from being thematically divergent. The reader’s attention is drawn towards the core. There are, however, two minor characters that are very helpful in the development of the plot. These are Janet, Anne’s friend and Gabriel, Charlotte’s boyfriend.

The perception of the character of Janet undergoes the most significant change throughout the novel. From the beginning she is pictured as a lonely, diligent widow, always too anxious to please. Even though Anne cannot stand her most of the time, she succumbs to her frequent invitations for theatre plays and other social performances. The reason she does this is merely for the feeling of being unconditionally loved and sought. From the opening of the novel Janet is portrayed as a burden with her frequent phone calls inquiring how Anne is coping and what Charles’s condition is like. As the story proceeds, it is more and more obvious that Anne has an insight in the relations within the Redfern family and, more importantly, sees the tension between the mother and the daughter. She knows that Anne does not approve of her daughter’s not-yet-divorced boyfriend Gabriel, for fear that she might do

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<sup>81</sup> ‘An Interview with Elizabeth Day’. 15 October 2013.  
<<http://handsomeandpretty.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/an-interview-with-elizabeth-day/>>.

the same mistake as Anne has done with Charles. It is only right that Janet is bold enough to tell Anne to trust Charlotte to choose her partner herself. "I'm not sure that talking to Charlotte would do all that much good, dear. I do think that you can't choose who you love and –" Janet broke off and leaned forward [...] 'Anne, you should know that better than anybody,' she said quietly." (SPS 109) These moments where more than the usual polite conversation occurs are scarce and Anne prefers to avoid them because she is not the one to confide in a friend. She likes to keep her distance and her face. Janet is well aware of this personality trait of Anne's and even though she sometimes oversteps the boundaries that Anne has set, it is only for the sake of wanting to help.

She knew that the image Anne projected of herself was extremely important to her and that Anne needed to feel in control of their friendship in a way that she had never managed to stay in control of her marriage. Janet didn't mind this. She felt she could put up with Anne's obvious slights and unsubtle displays of irritation because she knew they were not intended for her, but for Charles. (SPS 230)

Janet helps a lot in remedying the situation not only by saying the right words at the right time, but she supports her words by action too. She invites Charlotte, Gabriel and Anne to dine with her one evening and she is very pleased when it all goes exactly according to the plan and Anne is defeated both by Gabriel's charm and his love for her daughter. The evening culminates after the diner when the atmosphere of total ease and cheerfulness is abruptly ended by a phone call from the hospital informing that Charles has died.

Gabriel and Janet have one thing in common and that is their help and patience without which the Redfern family recovery would be impossible. Gabriel does for Charlotte the same that Janet does for Anne – he stays close to Charlotte no matter how unfair she can be, he listens to her and by such care he makes her realize that she is unconditionally loved. In Gabriel Charlotte finds the love she misses from both of her parents. He helps her discover the amazing relief when the truth is voiced and the healing effects inevitably come. After telling Gabriel all the things she has gone through she feels instantly better, "she felt a calmness, a sense of sureness about herself that she had never before possessed." (SPS 209)

### **All's well that ends well**

In the epilogue of the novel the reader gets a harmonious picture of a blooming garden warmed up by the sun where all the main characters are present, except for Charles who has been cremated and his ashes scattered in the Thames. Anne is holding her drowsing little granddaughter Grace, Janet is reading newspapers and Charlotte is washing up with Gabriel somewhere in the house. The whole atmosphere is very pleasant and satisfying.

The ending of the story may be for some readers a little too ingratiating to digest. It gives the impression that all the wounds, that a father's abuse made and a mother's ignorance confirmed, are healed only by talking things through. It reads like a fairy-tale.

On the other hand, the conclusion is full of hope. It installs in the reader the notion that the wrong can be put right, all the strained relations renewed, and all the grievances forgiven. It has a comforting effect to know that there is no more injustice in this family going on and that everything is as it ought to be in a functioning home.

## ***Intimacy* by Hanif Kureishi**

### **About the author**

Hanif Kureishi is one of the most influential British born writers of Asian origin. He is the author of plays and screenplays, novels, short stories, essays and a memoir. In 2008 he was awarded C.B.E for his services to literature, and, in the same year, he was also included in the list of 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945' by *The Times*.<sup>82</sup>

Born in 1954 in London to an English mother and a Pakistani father, he experienced racism in his youth. He started to write around the age of fourteen as a way of getting away with the anger that he felt towards the racial discrimination he experienced. Together with racism the main themes he writes about are sexuality, relationships, drugs, politics and family. He read philosophy at King's College in London and in 1982 he became Writer in Residence at the Royal Court Theatre, London.

Kureishi's first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), set in the 1970s' London, portrays young, mix-raced Karim, who through a numerous dilemmas and conflicts seeks his identity and gains his maturity. It was awarded the Whitbread Prize for Best First Novel. In Kureishi's second novel, *The Black Album* (1995), the main protagonist Shahid falls for fundamentalism and rather than making Shahid a prey of evil-doers the novel shows the reasons why one would be attracted by Islamic fundamentalism at all.<sup>83</sup> *Intimacy*, a novella written in 1998, portrays the breakdown of a relationship and will be discussed later in this thesis. In *Gabriel's Gift* (2001), Kureishi carries on in the theme of a broken family, though this time from the son's perspective.<sup>84</sup> *The Body* (2003) illustrates what happens when an aging man is given the body of a thirty-year old. *Something to Tell You* (2008) presents a divorced psychoanalyst Jamal, who is haunted by memories from his youth. There is another novel on the way titled *The Last Word* which is to be released in 2014.

Among the screenplays there are *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), in which a young Asian man takes over his Uncle's dilapidated cleaning business and makes a success of it. His

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<sup>82</sup>The Times (2008): 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945'. *The Times*. 5 January 2008. 11 November 2013. <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/books/article2452094.ece>>.

<sup>83</sup> Joßner, Ulrich (2003): 'The future is mixed'. *The international artist database*. 23 May 2003. 11 November 2013. <<http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?559>>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

gay friend, a formal racist, helps him with running the company<sup>85</sup>. It presents not only controversial themes concerning sexuality but also politics since it depicts Britain under Thatcherism, with its heavy criticism. It was nominated for the Oscar. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988) presents the theme of a free choice of sexual, political and societal conditions; *London Kills Me* (1991) is a sympathetic depiction of a group of homeless drug takers in the early 1990s' London. *Sleep With Me* (1999) is a comedy presenting a love triangle; *The Mother* (2003) tackles the theme of a sexual relationship with a man half the protagonist's age; and *Venus* (2007) is a comedy about an aging man and his love for a young woman.

Kureishi is also an author of collected stories *Love in a Blue Time* (1997) with the claustrophobia of marriage as the main theme; *Midnight All Day* (1999) where the male characters struggles to settle in a newly-formed household; and *The Body* (2002) in which the aging protagonist borrows the body of a youth.

Among his non-fiction works there is the memoir *My Ear at His Heart* (2004), which is about Kureishi discovering an unpublished manuscript written by his father. Kureishi's "deceased father's unpublished works of fiction reveal aspects of his character, experiences in London and the Subcontinent - and frustrated literary ambitions - which reflect back upon Kureishi's own development and highly successful writing career."<sup>86</sup> The memoir also depicts the clash between the father's and the son's views and values.

### **The novella**

*Intimacy* (1998) is an account of thoughts and memories of a family-leaver on the day and night preceding his departure. The reader becomes acquainted with the subject matter of the novel by the very first line which says: "It is the saddest night, for I am leaving and not coming back." (*Intimacy*, 3) The protagonist is a middle-aged man Jay who plans to leave his girlfriend of ten years and their two little sons (aged five and three) to lodge himself in a room in a friend's flat. In the pages following the opening line he states his intentions for his leaving as well as the reasons why staying in the relationship is unbearable.

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<sup>85</sup> Smith, Jules (2013): 'The starting point of Hanif Kureishi's thoughtful memoir *My Ear at His Heart* (2004) is the discovery of 'a shabby old green folder containing a manuscript I believe will tell me a lot about my father and my own past'. This proves to be true of both'. British Council. 15 November 2013. <<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/hanif-kureishi>>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

The story is situated in the present-day London. Jay, such as the author himself, works as a screenwriter for the television and films. He lives with his partner Susan, a busily employed woman, and their two adorable boys in a house in London. There seem to be everything a man should desire, yet Jay is not satisfied. He can no longer stay in his relationship with Susan.

### **Autobiographical features**

*Intimacy*, more than any other novel Kureishi has written so far, is inspired by his own personal life to a substantial extent. Not long before the publication of the novel he himself left his partner Tracey Scoffield and their two sons for Monique Proudlove, a woman twenty years younger. Although Kureishi defended himself that writing *Intimacy* was not an act of merciless vengeance against Scoffield but something writers do – an investigation into one’s own life for inspiration; only a fraction of the critics believed him. He was widely criticised and by some even despised for using his family for writing purposes. Such a reproach did not make him feel good, and he certainly had not expected that publishing the novel would raise such an intensive reaction, but he maintained his perspective. “You have to write what you want to write. Other people have to take care of themselves,” Kureishi said in an interview with Sylvia Brownrigg.

Yet the question is whether a writer can write what he feels to, or whether he should consider other people and the impact of the writing on them too. His family, as well as his former partners, definitely do not like the fact that Kureishi uses them in his fiction and exploits them as it suits him. After seeing the film *The Mother*, where Yasmin Kureishi, Hanif’s sister, discovered herself in the character of a daughter whose boyfriend is seduced by her mother, she was annoyed. “It was like he'd swallowed some of my life, then spat it back out”<sup>87</sup> Scoffield is upset too, bringing up their sons, she is aware that their family will be connected with what has been written about them in the novel: “No one seriously believes that the book is only fiction. It all shows how little responsibility he feels towards his children.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Sandison, David (2008) ‘Keep me out of your novels’: Hanif Kureishi's sister has had enough’ *The Independent*. 4 March 2008. 22 November 2013. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/keep-me-out-of-your-novels-hanif-kureishis-sister-has-had-enough-790839.html>>.

<sup>88</sup> Joßner, Ulrich (2003) ‘The future is mixed’. *Culturebase.net*. 23 May 2003. 24 November 2013. <<http://culturebase.net/artist.php?559>>.

Kureishi, on the other hand, is more cautious with putting his children in the novels, “the children are much more preferable to a novel”<sup>89</sup>, and he makes sure that the teenagers in his novels are like all teenagers, he is not so thoughtful regarding the rest of his family, claiming that one should write exactly what one feels.

In *Intimacy* the autobiographical traits are more striking than in any other Kureishi’s novel. Because it is an account of a break-up of a long relationship it is not an easy read as such, let alone if the reader knows that it is inspired by real people, namely the author himself and his former partner. This fact, actually, gives the novel another dimension. Even though the worst character to come out of it is Jay, of whom Kureishi can be seen as a prototype, it does not lessen the malice Scoffield must have seen when reading herself in Susan. Kureishi and Scoffield have resumed cordial relations since then but the controversy still provokes, all the more because Kureishi never admitted that he had gone too far. “I’m just the messenger. I’m writing a book about divorce – an experience that many people have had - or separation, children, all that. [...] That book was a record of that experience. I don’t see why I should be vilified for writing an account of it.”<sup>90</sup>

By stubbornly adopting his stance that no boundary was exceeded, Kureishi seems to articulate that taking into consideration other people’s feelings would bring self-censorship to one’s writing and then the message would no longer be a truthful account of the experience but an artificial improvisation and as such could not communicate the emotions and dilemmas that go hand in hand with a difficult decision such as the abandonment of one’s family.

### **Broken home**

Family is generally perceived as a closed unit where the individual members have faith in one another. What is not expected is a violation of this trust. However, sometimes it happens and when it does it is worse than the same experience from anybody else due to the intimacy shared with the members of one’s family. The way Jay is leaving his family is extensively coward for he intends to slip out of the house first thing in the morning by which time Susan is already at work and the children are taken to the park. None of his family

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<sup>89</sup> Jamieson, Teddy (2010) ‘ Hanif Kureishi on fatherhood and the ageing process’. *Heraldscotland.com*. 15 March 2010. 24 November 2013. < <http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts-ents/book-features/hanif-kureishi-on-fatherhood-and-the-ageing-process-1.1013475> >.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, Mick (2008) ‘A life laid bare’. *The Telegraph*. 23 February 2008. 24 November 2013. < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3671392/Hanif-Kureishi-A-life-laid-bare.html>>.

suspects him of anything like that, not having a clue that he intends to walk away - no hints have been made, no discussion has preceded his thought-out flight. Susan, an organised and dutiful woman as she is, is sure to be bewildered by this unexpected move. There is not only selfishness in such a step but vengeance too, and it only adds to Jay's immature personality. He cannot be bothered to voice his aim and discuss it with Susan. He underestimates the whole situation, and by saying "I should leave a note [...] [p]erhaps it would be better to ring [...] [o]r I could visit at the weekend" (Intimacy 3), he clearly shows that he has no idea what a step he is taking. He makes the act of leaving worse by making it deliberately unexpected. On top of all, his style of parting is undoubtedly going to humiliate Susan excessively.

Susan is a modern woman. She works hard on her career in a publishing house and she does her best to keep the family working, too. Every day she leaves the house early in the morning for her job and comes back again in the evening to cook the dinner and take care of her family, in case there is not a dinner party to attend or a cinema or a theatre to go to. She takes "a lot of trouble to shop well and make good meals" (Intimacy 11), too.

Our fridges and freezers are full of soup, vegetables, wine, cheese and ice-cream; the flowers and bushes in the garden are labelled; the children's clothes are washed, ironed and folded. Every day there are deliveries of newspapers, books, alcohol, food and, often, of furniture [...] Chalked on a board are instructions for the week, with several underlinings. Susan is always thinking of how to improve things here. She will, too, have strong, considered opinions on the latest films and music. In bed she reads cookbooks. (Intimacy 28-29)

On the whole, Susan is an organised diligent woman who knows what she wants. Yet, it seems that Jay enumerates all her virtues with a bit of scorn. Even though he admits that it was mostly her "humdrum dexterity and ability to cope" (Intimacy 29) that made him fall for her, now he complains that he has never seen her girlish. Her feelings are described as shallow because, as Jay says, she has never been disillusioned or disappointed. This is hardly believable because nobody can be as one-sided as Jay portrays Susan here. It is more probable that Susan is of a balanced nature, not lucubrating "on the splendours and depths of her mind" (Intimacy 30), which is something that Jay confesses to do himself frequently. He also accuses her of being deliberately involved with people that count in the upper-class, portraying her wilfully as an unscrupulous woman in terms of making new acquaintances with lofty members of society. One can imagine that these are particularly the lines that must have made Scoffield incandescent with rage. On the other hand, portraying Susan as a down-to-

earth person makes Jay an unsettled character even more. His inability to settle his uncontrollable mind contrasts with her day-to-day endeavour to keep her family going.

He is more considerate with his children. They are the only significant reason why he doubts his going away. He is sure that by such an act he is to leave them scarred and devastated, if not ruined. "If I tear myself from the boys, don't I tear them too?" (Intimacy 114) He ponders the effects that his departure will have on them throughout the novel but nevertheless at the end of the book he says: "I fear for my sons, but it is essential that I leave them tomorrow." (Intimacy 146) It is a heart-breaking decision for him because his admiration and love for them is quite obvious.

In the novel Jay discusses the breakdown of his relationship with Susan with two of his friends. They are outright opposites leading contrary lives and giving Jay advice based on their contrasting lifelong experience. The first one, Victor, is a middle-aged man who divorced his wife eight years before and since then "had only unsatisfactory loves" (Intimacy 6). He picks the women at bars but except for the sexual pleasure there is nothing else that motivates him to stay with one of them. Nevertheless, he "wants to have another chance at an ideal love, to marry the right woman [...] to see if he can do it as it is meant to be done." (Intimacy 102) Jay's second friend, Asif, an irreproachable happily-married teacher and a father of three is the embodiment of morality. "He refused all that eighties cynicism. His beliefs give him stability, meaning, and a centre." (Intimacy 41) He is a man truly devoted to his family. He admits that staying in a life-long relationship can be hard at times, but at the same time "[I]t makes [him] feel unique for loving the same person continuously for a number of years and not covertly planning an escape." (Intimacy 131) These two men and their different points of view and opinions accompany Jay in his quest for the right decision.

Victor is supportive of the idea that Jay leaves his partner and the children, claiming that for him it was the worst but also the best thing he has done. The good that came of it is the freedom he now enjoys with all the parties he attends and women's company, the bad was the effect it had on the children. "For two years after I left I was aware at the back of my mind that something unforgivable had happened." (Intimacy 134) After Victor left his family, the younger child threw his belongings out of the window and then thrust a broken bottle in his arm. He would not let Victor visit him in the hospital and Victor is still repairing the damage.

Asif, on the other hand, claims that for him only going to work feels like Sophie's choice. When explaining the benefits of a life-long relationship he says that every day there is

something built upon. He disapproves of Jay's short-term affairs and compares them to reading only the first chapter of a book. For Asif responsibilities are there to be met, not shrugged off.

It is quite clear that Jay's interests are more like Victor's. He longs for freedom and pleasure. The domestic life, as well as the relationship with Susan, makes him feel claustrophobic. "I would say that there is a new restlessness about" (Intimacy 131) says Jay in order to excuse his behavior. Susan presents her theory too. She says that

we live in a selfish age. She talks of Thatcherism of the soul that imagines that people are not dependent on one another. In love, these days, it is a free market; browse and buy, pick and choose, rent and reject, as you like. [...] Fulfillment, self-expression and 'creativity' are the only values. (Intimacy 68-69)

Susan observes that the general freedom in choosing promiscuously one's partners is the consequence of a market where to choose freely is a rule. What it encourages in people is a blind following of one's desires. Jay asks himself what makes him think that he should have what he wants. "Surely you can't constantly be replacing people who don't provide what you need?" (Intimacy 68) Society where the individuals prefer their own desires above anything else produces a generation of self-centered and selfish people. Jay is a perfect example of such a person. He is leaving his family for the search of his own pleasure and satisfaction. When he says that "I want to be loyal to something else now. Or someone else. Yes; myself" (Intimacy 42), it is quite clear how deep his selfishness is rooted. He frequently blames it on the society whose fault (or virtue) it is that he satisfies his desires: "I am of a generation that believes in the necessity of satisfying oneself." (Intimacy 79) There are, however, spells of Jay's reflections on his ill behavior although they end in the verbalization of an idea and do not proceed into action, such as when he says: "I should, too, consider what it is about life and other people. Otherwise I will turn the future into a wasteland, eliminating possibility before anything can develop." (Intimacy 14) He is, at least, aware that one cannot endlessly flee from partners at the premise of not being stimulated enough. He also raises a sincere doubt when he asks himself whether things will improve with the next partner or whether he is undergoing something that will get repeated. The question is, "what is the point of leaving if this failure reproduces itself with every woman? Suppose it is like an illness that you give to everyone you meet?" (Intimacy 61-62) Jay holds a strong faith that Nina, whom he is pursuing, is the last resort and that she will answer all the desires Susan could not.

## Unproductive conversation

For a family to work properly, communication is vital. No movement forward can occur in a relationship without the individuals expressing their wishes and worries to one another.

Conversation between Jay and Susan seems to fail thoroughly. There is no shared intimacy between them as they do not open their inner selves to each other either. At dinner time when Susan brings the meals they sit down and, instead of the relaxed dialogue that one expects to unfold, Jay picks up the newspaper and Susan switches on the television to watch a soap opera. The narrator points out: “You’d think, if she wanted domestic drama, she could look across the table.” (Intimacy 22) There are attempts, on Susan’s part, to discuss the practical issues such as what ice-cream Jay prefers, but he turns all the invitations down.

‘What meals do you fancy?’

‘I don’t want to think about it now,’

‘What’s your favourite ice-cream flavour at the moment? Is it the nut crunch or the vanilla?’

‘I don’t know.’

She says, ‘It’s not like you to be unable to think of food.’

‘No.’ (Intimacy 27)

He is deliberately uncooperative to make her angry. He also admits that sometimes he goes along with what Susan wants, but in an absurd way, hoping that she will realise how foolish he finds her, but much to his annoyance the cooperation pleases her. It is no wonder that their relationship is falling apart when nothing is communicated. Problems can hardly be resolved or wounds healed when none of them presents the thoughts and opinions. Kureishi says that “[o]nly when you stop talking honestly about what goes on inside human beings [does] evil happen in the silence.”<sup>91</sup> Yet, as Jay says, people have good reasons for not speaking, “silence, like darkness, can be kind; it, too, is a language.” (Intimacy 8)

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<sup>91</sup> Hari, Johann (2009) ‘Hanif Kureishi on the couch’ (interview). The Independent. 2 February 2009. 22 November 2013. < <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/hanif-kureishi-on-the-couch-1522837.html>>.

There is a considerable hidden part of Jay's personality too. He does not present the whole scope of his personality to Susan, keeping most of it secretly concealed. "It isn't surprising that you become accustomed to doing what you are told while making a safe place inside yourself, and living a secret life." (Intimacy 36) On the one hand, he wants Susan to love him; on the other hand, he hides what there is to be loved. Susan can never love him unless he presents himself in full light because what she would adore would be only a caricature of Jay, not Jay himself.

Their inability to build a constructive dialogue derives partly from their inability to open themselves to one another. Where there is no sharing of ideas there can be no development of the relationship either. Jay says that when they really talk it is about the children, "something they have said or done, as if they are a passion no one else can share or understand." (Intimacy 7) The topic of their children seems to be the only one they can talk about. It is a saddening fact that a couple living together for so many years has so little to discuss.

### **The misconception of love**

A loving relationship between parents is known to provide the best foundation for the well-being of children. There can hardly be enough space for a healthy development of children without parents loving one another. However, love as such is not that easily won, let alone sustained, and many families find themselves lacking it.

The theme of love pervades *Intimacy* from the beginning to the end. It is the quest for love that becomes one of the central motives for the main character to leave his partner and abandon his children for another woman. There are, however, moments when the concept of love is mistaken for the concept of lust as these two notions seem to merge into one in Jay's mind.

It is almost impossible to give a definition of love since it is "more easily experienced than defined"<sup>92</sup>, says the nun Catherine Wybourne, one of the five masters in their fields that were approached by *The Guardian* to answer the most popular search on Google in 2012, which was: 'What is love?'. This question was given to a physicist, a psychotherapist, a

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<sup>92</sup> 'What is love? Five theories on the greatest emotion of all.' 13 December 2012. 20 November 2013. <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/13/what-is-love-five-theories>>.

philosopher, a romantic novelist and a nun. All of these experts offered their perception of love based on the field of their work. For the purpose of this thesis we can put aside the physicist's theory which says that love is a neurological condition. The romantic novelist does not help either by claiming that love can be as necessary as air or as consuming as an obsession depending on where one stands in relation to it. The psychotherapist presents many variations of love distinguished way back in history by the ancients. These are: *philia*, a non-sexual intimacy typical for close friends or family, *ludus*, a more playful type characteristic for flirting, *pragma*, the mature love which needs to develop over a longer period of time, *agape*, love for all humanity, *philautia*, the self (not selfish) love; and *eros*, sexual passion and desire. The nun sees it as a theological virtue as well as a life's blessing manifesting itself in the life of another by acts of kindness, generosity and self-sacrifice. Finally, the philosopher claims it to be a "kind and passionate commitment that we nurture and develop"<sup>93</sup>, and stresses that "[w]ithout the commitment it is mere infatuation. Without the passion there is mere dedication."<sup>94</sup>

It would be wrong to regard someone's love as lust without substantial analysis since one can never look inside another human being or assess somebody else's emotions without being invited. Therefore all one learns about another person's inner self derives from what the person presents about himself or herself. The assumption that Jay unites the concept of love and lust in one is based on what Jay tells the reader about himself, and on the observation of his treatment of women in general and Nina in particular. He says, for example, that his feelings towards Nina were so profound that he had to reduce her in his mind, because, as he says: "If there's nothing more likely to make you feel abandoned, desolate and left out than sexual betrayal, perhaps the only way not to feel it, is to feel nothing for the woman." (Intimacy 83) His idea is that by encouraging Nina to see other men too and then listening to her telling him all about it, would reduce her in his mind and he would feel freer. This is, indeed, a very shocking logic. The trigger of thoughts like this one is his fear of being hurt or even left by her. "The more I removed myself, the more I hoped she would pursue me [...] but I was also afraid of her feeling discouraged." (Intimacy 83-84) When she wants to detach herself from him he asks Victor to keep her company. They see each other for some time and then she distances herself from Victor too. By the time Jay plans to walk away from his family it has been several months since he last saw Nina and he does not know where she is or

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<sup>93</sup> 'What is love? Five theories on the greatest emotion of all.' 13 December 2012. 20 November 2013.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/13/what-is-love-five-theories>>.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

whether she is single and would be willing to come back to him. Only hope makes him believe that he will find her and that their secret relationship they had enjoyed clandestinely before will be resumed. As a matter of fact he looks for her during the night before his departure but does not find her. The next morning, when he finally, and after all the doubts whether he should leave or not, turns up at Victor's, he finds out that she heard about him looking for her and rang Victor to get in touch. So, in the end there is the hope that they might get together after all.

It is more than difficult to imagine Nina to be a real person at all because there is little said about her character except that she offers herself frequently and willingly, to Jay's pleasure. She is pictured as "an unhappy and changeable girl, who often [loses] herself in inexplicable moods." (Intimacy 85) It is, however, quite comprehensible why Jay falls for her. Nina offers what Susan does not possess - her vulnerability and bashfulness. "I swore I could love, protect and support her" (Intimacy 141) claims the infatuated Jay. For a man who hardly knows what his position in society is or what function he should serve in his own family, it is difficult to connect his existence with a woman like Susan, who is emancipated, self-sufficient and independent. The prospect of attaching himself to Nina is more appealing because Nina seems to be the one who is lost in the world, needs support and guidance. Whether Nina would be appreciative of any longer relationship, however, remains unanswered. Her favour of parties and freedom might be endangered by Jay's attempt to win her for himself and she might withdraw. All in all, Nina does not seem particularly inclined for life-long commitments, nor does she look like a future source of long-term happiness.

Even though there may be faults regarding the quality of love of the people present in the novel, the book itself puts forward several truthful thoughts concerning the notion of love. It is, for example, when Jay says that "perhaps the quality of life can't be measured by its duration" (Intimacy 102), or that "life without love is a long boredom." (Intimacy 14) These observations are examples of deep thoughts that the novel presents. In an interview for *The New York Times* Kureishi says: "[w]hat else is it that people need to make a life?" It might be very easy to find sexual satisfaction, but getting someone to love you for a long time or loving someone might be more interesting."<sup>95</sup> Love can have many faces. It can be passionate or very modest but the undeniable truth is that it plays a key role in the functioning of a family as well

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<sup>95</sup> Donadio, Rachel (2008) 'My Beautiful London'. *The New York Times*. 8 August 2008. 22 November 2013. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10kureishi-t.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10kureishi-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>.

as in the personal development of its members. It is, fascinatingly, something that the humans can never get enough of.

### **Fatherhood**

Fatherhood is Kureishi's big theme. His own father came from a wealthy Pakistani family and he himself wrote novels but none of them got published. He worked as a clerk and, as Kureishi says, it was hard for him to see his son's novels being published and claims that his father was jealous of him. Kureishi says that he "was a bit bewildered, because he thought that the stuff I [Kureishi] did, was [...] dirty, and his stuff [Kureishi's father's] was philosophical, and he couldn't understand why the world would want dirty rather than philosophical."<sup>96</sup> When his father died in 1991, Kureishi "binged on alcohol, drugs, self-loathing and suicidal thoughts for [...] six months."<sup>97</sup> What helped him get over this period was first and foremost writing and then his own children that came. In an interview for *The Independent* he says: "I think about my dad every day. The whole time, [...] I still want to be like him, and I still hope one day to coincide with him... Sometimes, I think I go to my desk only to obey my father."<sup>98</sup> This warm confession illustrates the importance of the father-figure for Kureishi and can be traced in several of his novels. His father is also the central theme of his memoir *My Ear at His Heart*.

In *Intimacy* Jay is the father of two small boys but he is also a son of his own father, and he compares his father's fatherhood to his own repeatedly throughout the novel. In a similar way, he wonders what his father would say to this or that. His father represents an authority: he is a man of strong character, loyal and dignified. He comes from the time before the 1960s change of the society. "He didn't approve of leaving, and he liked to be chivalrous. He didn't see that the women could take care of themselves. The man had the power and had to be protective." (*Intimacy* 56) To demonstrate the vastness of his admiration of his father Jay says that "[h]e, more than anyone, was the person I wanted to marry." (*Intimacy* 54)

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<sup>96</sup> Ballou, Emily (2008) 'Whims of the father'. *The Weekend Australian Magazine*. 15 November 2008. 15 November 2013. < <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/whims-of-the-father/story-e6f8g8h6-1111118058817> >.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Hari, Johann (2009) 'Hanif Kureishi on the couch' (interview). *The Independent*. 2 February 2009. 22 November 2013. < <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/hanif-kureishi-on-the-couch-1522837.html> >.

Jay is probably a teenager of the 1960s, an era when the liberation of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll took place. It is also a period when the notion that one can follow one's pleasures at all costs, even at the expense of the wellbeing of others, was adopted and profoundly practised. On the one hand, there is the character of Jay's father who represents stability, responsibility and loyalty; on the other there is Jay who stands for irresponsibility, self-centredness and pleasure principle. Jay is brought up in an age of rebellion against the traditional values and the obligation to others. Satisfying of one's desires is the crucial motive behind all effort. This change in attitude, however, brings confusion in terms of roles in relationships. Jay wonders what Susan will think when she learns that he has gone:

she will ask herself, if she hasn't already, what men are for. Do they serve any useful function these days? They impregnate the woman. Later, they might occasionally send money over. What else could fathers be? It wasn't a question Dad had to ask himself. Being a father wasn't a question then. He was there to impose himself, to guide, exert discipline, and enjoy his children. We had to appreciate who he was, and see things as he did." (Intimacy, 115)

The male characters in *Intimacy* show how difficult it is for them to find a place in the society. On the one hand, there is the desire for fulfilling one's fantasies but, on the other hand, when they do follow their longing they suffer too because there are the children whom they love and whom they leave behind, often wounded. Malik points out:

Intimacy speaks to, and for, a lost generation of men: those shaped by the sixties, disoriented by the eighties and bereft of a personal and political map in the nineties. The kind of man who wants his women to be strong but fears being humiliated by them, the kind of man who wants to get in touch with his inner feelings, but loathes what he sees there.<sup>99</sup>

It is not only the character of Jay, as Malik points out, who tends to escape his responsibilities and abandon everything for the pursuit of freedom. He is a representative of a trend which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. Conway<sup>100</sup> refers to this tendency in men as a 'midlife crisis'. He explains that the baby boomers' parents were the first generation who felt guilty if they did not give their children everything. In consequence, these baby boomers have grown expecting it all and therefore there is "a deep sense of failure in the lives of many boomers."<sup>101</sup> Conway further explains that although there is no biological event that causes

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<sup>99</sup> Malik, Kenan (1998): 'Hanif Kureishi: Intimacy'. Kenan Malik. 3 May 1998. 15 November 2013. <<http://www.kenanmalik.com/reviews/kureishi.html>>.

<sup>100</sup> Conway, Jim (1997) *Men in Midlife Crisis*. U.S.A.: David C Cook.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, P. 13.

these changes (like menopause) the manifestation of this change in mood is similar, including depression, anxiety, irritability, fatigue and self-pity. The man in midlife crisis feels sorry for himself because he feels trapped in his own life. He feels he is in his prime and from then on things can be only getting worse. He is ready to rebel against all the things he has established, abandon his wife and work and behave like a teenager again. “When middle-aged men go messing around, they are not really looking for new partners, they are looking for reassurance of their potency”<sup>102</sup> says Pittman. It is extremely painful for a man to talk about his problems so most of them end up telling no one, yet with desperate bewilderment inside. Jay in *Intimacy* admits “how I stammer within”, but Susan does not have a clue of what is going inside him.

Being brought up somewhere between the sixties or seventies Jay sees the world differently than people born in earlier or later periods. From the accounts of his life, it is quite clear that he is a man obsessed with pleasures. It is freedom of action that he prizes above anything else, trying to enjoy life to the full. Behind this picture, however, there is a beaten person without stability, robbed of sustaining values chasing the impossible.

During the night preceding his leaving, Jay is wandering through London streets and he meets drugged children there. He is overwhelmed by the scene and he asks himself:

Where have all the fathers gone? [...] Do they think about their children? What better things do they have to do? Is it when their women become mothers that they flee? What is it about the mothers that makes it so essential that they be left? Where are the fathers hiding and what are they doing? (*Intimacy* 140)

He realises that the answer can be provided by him, because he too is abandoning his children for purely selfish reasons, leaving them behind to get on on their own. Jay gets worried sometimes by the state of things but the concern is not pondered for long, there is the pleasurable to which he has to pay his attention. “I believe in individualism, in sensualism, and in creative idleness. I like the human imagination [...] I prefer this to everything else on earth, apart from love and women’s bodies” (*Intimacy* 132), admits Jay to make his priorities clear. He is a man who wants to enjoy himself to the full.

While most of the readers wish that Jay would overcome the mid-life crisis and decide to stay in his family after all, it is quite obvious that no such thing can happen. “As ever in

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<sup>102</sup> Pittman, Frank (1993) *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons, and the Search for Masculinity*. New York: Penguin.

Hanif Kureishi's fictional world, there's no happy ending, but a recognition of uncomfortable truths about human beings."<sup>103</sup> *Intimacy* is a novel about the devastating truths that a man has to face when leaving one's partner as well as the most beloved - his children. It also presents the dilemma between the choices of one's freedom and the sacrifice of one's desires. It sincerely portrays what goes on inside a man's head when taking such an awful step with all the inevitable damage which goes hand in hand with it.

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<sup>103</sup> Smith, Jules (2013): 'The starting point of Hanif Kureishi's thoughtful memoir *My Ear at His Heart* (2004). British Council. 15 November 2013. <<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/hanif-kureishi>>.

## Different narrative perspectives

Both *Intimacy* and *Scissors Paper Stone* depict families where things go wrong. Each of them, however, uses different tools to portray what causes the dysfunction. Of these tools the most significant ones are the different narrative modes.

In *Intimacy*, a novella written in the first person narration, the narrator and protagonist is Jay. The whole story is mediated to the reader through his confessional narrative and he is the only character whose perspective regarding his family is presented. The reader relies solely on what Jay says about the members of his family or his relationship to them. *Scissors Paper Stone*, on the other hand, is written in the third person narrative, therefore the narrator and the characters are different people. With the narrator being removed, it is believed that the presentation of the family and their behaviour is more objective and that less biased truth is conveyed.

### The man as the villain

Both of the books deal with the theme of a father's failure but the voices of the fathers are not given the same importance in the narratives. In *Intimacy* it is Jay who is in charge of the story. He has the ultimate power over what gets revealed and what not. The portrayal of his family is his own and the reader has to make his own picture based on what Jay conveys and about what he stays silent. Since *Intimacy* is a confession of a family leaver it is obvious that Jay, because he is abandoning his family for his own egotistic reasons, is in the first place considered a selfish person and the blame is put on him. The mode of the first person narration, however, enables Jay to arouse empathy in the reader. The account of his departure is presented as a confession where the reader is a listener, therefore the sincerity with which Jay speaks adds to the reader's involvement with Jay's feelings and struggles. There is a personalised relationship established between Jay and the reader based on Jay's honesty. It is not necessarily true, however, that increased intimacy of disclosure leads to increased liking, and therefore it is not probable that the reader will come to like Jay.

Whereas Jay is a character who speaks all the time, Charles, the father in *Scissors Paper Stone*, is silent for most of the book. Yet, the impact of his failure as a father is no less

felt by the members of his family. The majority of his wrongdoings are presented from the points of view of his wife Anne and his daughter Charlotte. No motives which would explain his inappropriate behaviour towards his family are presented. All the reader learns are his abuses and the terrible effects it causes to the women. Because the third person narrative is considered objective since the narrator has little to no interest to present a biased portrayal of the characters the reader has no reason to doubt the message conveyed. Charles therefore comes out of the story as a truly vicious man.

Jay and Charles have a lot in common. They are both men following their various desires, leading a hidden life of which their women have no idea. They are also to a great extent self-centred. Love for their children is also typical for both of them although it gets manifested differently. There is also strong contempt felt against their women connected with a tendency to escape the household frequently. Given this account it is quite clear that Jay and Charles are very alike, yet they are perceived differently in the course of the novels. This division is caused by the various narrative modes. In terms of Jay, many of his faults tend to be forgiven due to the first person narrative mode since by admitting his feelings, thoughts and weaknesses he basically says that he is not a perfect man and it only helps to humanize him. Charles, on the other hand, has a more tricky position. His faults are mediated in connection to other, solely female, characters and their sufferings and therefore he has little chance to arouse pity let alone sympathy in the reader.

### **The women's share**

“*Intimacy* is like reading only one half of a more complicated story”<sup>104</sup>, says Iyer and by this statement stresses out that when things start to go wrong in relationships there is not only one party to be blamed. Jay's account of the relationship with Susan presents only partly what causes dysfunction in their family. Susan's point of view would be very interesting to get as well as her reaction when she finds that her husband left her alone with their two sons. This is something that the first person narration cannot afford. What is, however, possible to trace are Jay's motives for his departure as regards Susan. Since she is a woman of strong character, very ambitious, hardworking and stubborn, brought up in an era when feminism flourished, it is difficult for Jay to be with her. From these hints it is clear that although the

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<sup>104</sup> Iyer, Sandhya (2009) '*Hanif Kureishi's Intimacy*'. sandyi.blogspot.cz. 5 December 2009. 1 December 2013. <<http://sandyi.blogspot.cz/2009/12/hanif-kureishis-intimacy.html>>.

blame for cowardly abandoning his family is put on Jay, he surely is not the only one whose fault it is that the family breaks up. He seems to lose all of his masculinity in her presence and therefore it is humiliating for him that he cannot oppose her. It seems clear to Jay that their characters do not suit one another and therefore the leaving is inevitable.

In terms of *Scissors Paper Stone* it is again the man, Charles, whose behaviour goes too far and who is directly perceived as the evil character. On the other hand, there is also the character of Anne and her reluctance to intervene and stop him when she could do it. One can say that she has a share in her husband's offences too.

Regarding the voices given to the individual characters, it can be said that while Susan is silent in *Intimacy*, her partner Jay has a lot to say about her and about their relationship too. In *Scissors Paper Stone* the situation is reverse. Charles is the one who does not speak whereas Anne and Charlotte say a lot. This division of voices is connected with the causality of the men's misdeeds as well as with the types of narrators. Jay is a first person narrator and as such introduces his intention in the very first sentence of the novella and in the rest of the book gives an account of the motives to leave. He also invites the reader to feel pity and empathy for him. In *Scissors Paper Stone* Charles's character is revealed very slowly as well as the amount of transgressions that he committed is revealed little by little. The narrative structure has to follow the structure of the novel. The individual events are organised in order to make the picture of the novel comprehensive.

Talking about the use of language in *Intimacy*, Kureishi says: "I am much more interested in a piece of writing that is broken up, fragmented, unfinished [...] I liked *Intimacy* being a rough book in that sense; the cruelty, the fragmentation, the lack of smoothing out or over [...] I wanted the book to be an experience."<sup>105</sup> The mode of first person narration makes it possible to achieve an unfinished narration because since it is a spontaneous flow of thoughts it is more authentic in the mind of the reader. Third-person narration is usually a more thought-out text and the reader feels that the information expressed is presented to him from a third person and therefore is less compelled to be involved with the characters.

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<sup>105</sup> Thomas, Susie (2005) *Hanif Kureishi: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. China: Macmillan. P. 135.

## Conclusion

The theme of family is a popular one since almost everybody has experienced a kind of one in the course of his/her life. Family is a “perpetual source of encouragement, advocacy, assurance, and emotional refuelling that empowers a child to venture with confidence into the greater world and to become all that he can be”<sup>106</sup>, but family can also be, on occasions, a source of overwhelming pain. This thesis concentrated on the aspects where the main protagonists failed to accomplish the duties and privileges that were imposed on them by their role in the family. For the purpose of this analysis two contemporary novels have been chosen: Elizabeth Day’s *Scissors Paper Stone* and Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy*. Fatherhood is among the themes that are discussed to a great extent in both of the narratives. What the books have in common is a father-figure who is driven and absorbed by his own desires and due to them fails to meet his responsibilities towards the members of the household. It is, however, more than perceptible that the father’s power and guidance is desperately sought after by the children.

The different narrative perspectives of the works helped to look at the theme of family from two points of view. In *Scissors Paper Stone* the story is portrayed by the third person narrator and it enabled to see the effects of a father’s failure first and foremost whereas in *Intimacy* it is the motives that are elaborated on by the first person narration and the effects are given only a brief afterthought by the narrator. Because *Intimacy* uses a first person narrator, the reader is compelled to share Jay’s dilemmas as he is leaving his family. In *Scissors Paper Stone* the reader does not learn anything about Charles’ motives for the violation of the position of a father. Further analysis is presented based on the different readings of these two types of narrative mode and the influence on the reader.

The events presented in the novels were put in a broader context by presenting the turning points in the development of society in general and family in particular in the second half of the twentieth century. Special emphasis was put on the influence of the 1960s and the change of values that took place in the Western world, mainly in Britain.

Dealing with devastating topics the reading of the narratives can be gloomy and depressing but in both books there is hope present towards the end. The last chapter of

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<sup>106</sup> Neifert, Marianne (1996) *Dr. Mom's Parenting Guide*. USA. Penguin Group.

*Scissors Paper Stone* basically says that even the worst things can be dealt with and healed provided that there is communication. Bad deeds are voiced, apologized for and forgiven. This assumption may seem oversimplified but there is definitely an element of truth in it. On the other hand, in *Intimacy* too there is a therapist mentioned in connection with Victor. By talking to him Victor believes that he will get over his family break-up. Nevertheless, the outcome is not as promising as in *Scissors Paper Stone*. “Three times a week he [Victor] weeps at his therapist’s. Five years and no sign of cure.” (Intimacy 76) The hope in *Intimacy* is, however, of a different nature. It is not self-expression that is to make a difference but the leaving of an unbearable relationship itself. “It would be an optimistic, hopeful act, guaranteeing belief in the future – a declaration that things can be not only different but better.” (Intimacy 6) The abandoning of an empty liaison is seen as the only way out of an undesirable future. This move is connected with the belief “in the possibilities of intimacy. In love.” (Intimacy 133) and stands in the heart of the protagonist’s conviction. That this belief may come true is insinuated on the last pages of the novella, when, after Jay left his partner, he has the hope to meet Nina soon.

In both of the books the change of feelings towards a partner of a long-term relationship is elaborated on. In *Scissors Paper Stone* a loving couple at the beginning of their relationship turns into a sour pair thirty years later. Carroll du Chateau in her interview points out:

There are also some sensitively written scenes that help us understand how people gradually change: how they let their personal beliefs and morals slide. There's the first time Anne decides to ignore Charles' philandering, by saying nothing, turning away, shutting herself off. And on the story weaves, slowly revealing Charles' growing cruelty and depravity and his wife's inexorable shut-down. Until finally she turns into the repressed, critical, angry housewife we meet on page one.<sup>107</sup>

Elizabeth Day portrays how this change slowly takes place and leaves the people behind broken and disoriented. Marriage between Charles and Anne turns into an imprisonment very soon after the wedding and since none of them shows any effort or will to change it, it can only get worse.

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<sup>107</sup> Chateau, Carroll (2011) 'Book Review: Scissors Paper Stone'. nzherald.co.nz. 9 June 2011. 29 October 2013. <[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1501119&objectid=10731177](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10731177)>.

*Intimacy* too seems to convey that a long-term relationship is full of boring housework and care of the children. Jay hates the idea of sacrificing himself for the family's sake. "The family seemed no more than a machine for the suppression and distortion of free individuals." (Intimacy 72) He feels tied by the responsibility he has towards his family and he is frustrated by domesticity too. He never married Susan because, as he says, he "enjoyed making her the only unmarried woman in her group of friends from university." (Intimacy 72) The reason for not marrying her is not only his spitefulness but also the fact that he believes that "[t]here is little pleasure in marriage; it involves considerable endurance, like doing a job one hates. You can't leave and you can't enjoy it." (Intimacy 57) Jay values his freedom above anything else and the interesting thing is that whereas a part of the readership considers him a coward, the other part praises him for being courageous enough to leave.

It is interesting to notice that in *Scissors Paper Stone* the family is very traditional in terms of its composition. There is a working father and a stay-at-home mother, married and bringing up their only daughter. They stay together till the end even though they undergo devastating blows. On the other hand, in *Intimacy* there is the modern, cohabiting couple of Susan and Jay where she spends more hours a day working away from home and he has a share in the housework. This couple is about to experience a break-up. In *Scissors Paper Stone* Anne is blamed by her daughter for staying in a marriage which was a failure and Anne's inability to leave Charles is generally seen as a fault, in *Intimacy* Jay is blamed for finding the courage to go and abandon a relationship that stopped being fun for selfish desire. It is, however, impossible to say where lies the boundary between the necessity to leave and the whim to leave. Nevertheless, it is self-enriching to watch the characters struggle for their decisions.

I would like to finish my thesis by saying that being myself from a large and harmonious family I can appreciate the happiness it can bring. I believe that it is first and foremost in the family that the values are passed on from generation to generation and that as long as there are families that work humanity is safe and the civilization can thrive. Broken homes are a source of worry to me because the most devastated members to come out of it are usually the children, the most innocent ones. This assumption was confirmed by the books that were analysed. Both Day and Kureishi are great social observers and they recorded exactly what the present-day family is facing.

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