



# Analysis of the Role of Scene Description in *The Child in Time*

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**Abstract:** This paper intends to analyze the scene description of *The Child in Time*. Through the author's detailed description and the development of the writing stage, this paper analyzes the psychological changes of the characters, so as to understand the protagonist's heart course and the central idea the author wants to express. This paper focuses on the analysis of the doomsday landscape, utopian landscape and natural landscape created by the author to experience the author's purpose: to reveal the social characteristics and the current situation of the British people under the rule of thatcher government, and reflect the author's vision of a harmonious society.

**Keywords:** utopian, society, harmonious

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## 1. Introduction

A Child in Time is an important work of Ian McEwan, a Contemporary British novelist. Ian McEwan is one of the most influential writers in British literature. He is good at drawing the inner restlessness and fears of modern people in delicate, sharp and cold writing, and actively exploring the problems of violence, death, love and good and evil. The story is set in London in the 1990s, and it is an English "condition novel". [1] This book is to investigate the novel from the perspective of cultural geography in the counties in London and the surrounding landscape, the landscape for the reader on a "utopia", and reveals the thatcher government under the rule of both British characteristics and status of people's life and society, and reflects the writer try to use utopian imagine the power of the vision to build a harmonious coexistence space.

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1 Expose and mock reality

Stephen is a children's novelist whose debut novel, *Lemonade*, accidentally became one of the bestselling children's books of the time and met publisher Charles Dark, who later became a government minister. On Charles' recommendation, Stephen served on Whitehall's official child-rearing committee. The story begins with Stephen walking from his flat to work in Whitehall on a morning in late May. London's public transport is almost block up:

*Subsidising public transport had long been associated in the minds of both Government and the majority of its public with the denial of individual liberty. The various services collapsed twice a day at rush hour and it was quicker, Stephen found, to walk from his flat to Whitehall than to take a taxi...He strode towards Vauxhall Bridge past double and treble files of trapped, throbbing cars, each with its solitary driver...Those drivers not reading listened stolidly. [2]*

"Cars" and "modern media" are the two characteristics of this urban morning scene, which are the portrayal of materialization and materialism of human beings. "Sleepiness", "loneliness" and "hot tin roof" reflect the daily life of London urbanites, vividly expressing the indifference and loneliness among people in the city and the objectification of people. Automobile, as a modern space technology, records the oppressive space experience of modern urban landscape, and conveys the tension and conflict between urban landscape and human existence. The body of the urbanite has been disciplined and transformed into an extension of the machine. Surrounded by material and technology, the body is gradually materialized. People living in a society highly dependent on technology can only use a variety of tools and media to control the society. In the novel, there are not only drivers who "listen to the radio stupidly", but also many TV addicts like Stephen.

According to the author, modern people are like a bunch of fools or dolls, being manipulated by technology. The threat of nuclear weapons, the dark clouds of war, and the cataclysm of a massive flood have all added up to a sense of impending doomsday.

*Television showed a military helicopter rescuing a young boy trapped in a tree, and news reports showed police chiefs or army commanders pointing at maps with sticks...It rained every day for 50 days. [2]*

This kind of realistic doomsday picture seems careless in the novel, but a variety of natural disasters and human disasters intertwined together, the surface of the doomsday is entering the public consciousness and life in a new form. The

words "soldier" and "military helicopter" in the quotation suggest that war is not a past because, globally, politics and war have always figured prominently in the course of the 20th century, with capitalism trying to expand its way out of its troubles. He tries to tell readers that war and political strife will only lead to the end of the world in a vicious cycle of destruction and reconstruction.

In addition, the novel pays a lot of attention to "the square" and "Whitehall", where Stephen works. Through the contrast between beggars near the square and various "official child-rearing experts" in Whitehall, the author clearly expresses his concern about the large gap between the rich and the poor in London and the neglect of the people at the bottom by the people at the top.

In modern society, the government often uses the progress of science and technology to control the masses, prevent the masses from participating in politics or fool the masses. Charles, the man with no political beliefs, rose through the ranks, becoming a young minister, preaching self-reliance to the poor, and saying things like:

*By creating a leaner, more appropriate public charity, the government has set itself a micro-ideal for which its economic policy serves. Millions of social Security dollars have been saved, and many men, women and children have returned to the self-sufficiency that has long been familiar to our business world. [2]*

Charles sees this as a good policy that benefits everyone, allowing the government to raise money and cut costs while the beggars have the law to follow and enjoy themselves. But in his view, this strategy is a bad example of government, because it disconnects public policy from personal emotion and kills people's intuitions about what is right and wrong. Therefore, the begging scene near the square in the novel aims to allusion to the political "incompetence" of the Thatcher government in Britain. In addition, the author also carefully designed the "official child-rearing committee" in Whitehall, which is aimed at the political corruption and centralized political system.[3]

## 2.2 An "artificial" utopian landscape

There is also a kind of urban landscape represented by supermarkets in the novel, which often blurs the geographical imbalance and tries to create an equal utopian commodity world. At the beginning of the novel, Stephen takes his daughter shopping at a nearby supermarket, which is full of goods and a crowd of people, most of whom leave with a lot of harvest and satisfaction. The beauty of the supermarket is that it is a rational, orderly space in which people feel safe and enjoy free choice and the desire to control their money. Stephen was so focused on shopping that he imagined his abductor, who had been following him, as a commodity.

*The uncertain shapes around him floated away, dissolving, unrecognizable..... He stood up straight, and perhaps for a moment he had also become aware that a man in a black coat was standing behind Kate. But it was hardly a consciousness, but only the flimsiest doubt born of hopeless recollection. The coat could be a woman's dress, or just a shopping bag, or it could even be purely in his imagination.[2]*

The words "black coat", "women's dress" and "shopping bag" all suggest that everything Stephen looks at is merchandise, and merchandise is the only thing in his consciousness when he enters the supermarket, forgetting his daughter's existence. It can be seen that commodities not only penetrate into every aspect of society, but also erode people's consciousness, and "there's no alternative" except technology and commodities for people in the supermarket. "There's no alternative" is the sentence Thatcher used to introduce common usage of new liberalism and the impression created by the author for her new liberalism has always opposed, to that end, he carefully designed a scene of Stephen daughter Kate abducted in the supermarket, alluding to the artificial utopia seem stable, unchanging, but will be out of control at any time.

The death of the beggar girl and the rapid deterioration of the once-cozy family are both hints at Kate's death and predictions for Britain's future. Similarly, Charles' twisted and tragic life clearly expresses the author's dissatisfaction with the British government at that time, and London and even the British people's excessive dependence on scientific and technological products, and their indifference to people and things around them.

## 2.3 Development and hope

Most of the chapters are narrated through The male perspective of Stephen, so Stephen represents a degenerate, degenerate and dying patriarchal society. But the good news is that he later regained trust and love, gradually abandoned the patriarchal discourse, began to understand, identify with and appreciate femininity. A trip to the country landscape was a transformative journey for Stephen.

*The pine forest suddenly gave way to the endless wheat field..... The yellow field is desert-like, and the only indication that it has a boundary is a line on the horizon..... He was walking through a void, and all sense of moving forward, all sense of time, had vanished.[2]*

The soft natural landscape is a stark contrast to the steel, glass and cement men's power Spaces in the city. In this free

and hopeful space, Julie begins an interesting reunderstanding of life and her place in it. It also influenced and changed Stephen. He became strong and mature and learned to listen. In this novel, the author wants to express that gender equality and love, trust, responsibility and fear for life are the best ways to fight against technology and indifference.

### **3. Conclusion**

The *Child in Time* shows the author's concern about broad social and political issues and how these issues affect and restrict individual survival and development. In the novel, a large number of scene descriptions are used to indicate the change of the protagonist's heart and express the author's dissatisfaction with the social status quo. In the author's view, the society of privilege, isolation and male hegemony should be replaced by equality.

### **References**

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