

## CHILDREN'S GEOGRAPHIES ANNUAL LECTURE 2015

### 'Childhood is measured out by sounds and sights and smells, before the dark of reason grows': children's geographies at 12

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**Abstract** This Keynote essay argues for a supplement to existing studies in children's geographies, one that explores the potential of a *non-child-centric* children's geography alert to the work done by the figure of 'the child' in all manner of worldly situations. Taking a cue from the poetry of John Betjeman, notably his 1960 *Summoned by Bells*, the essay considers both the intimate spaces of childhood – ones gauged by the immediacies of 'sounds and sights and smells' – and the challenges posed by a wider world raddled by adult preoccupations and abuses, those characterised by Betjeman as stemming from 'the dark of reason'. The essay builds from this foundation to address the 'darkness' in two sets of Nazi children's wartime geographies, as well as engaging with the complexities of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's claims, in the horizon of WWII, about the 'dialectic of enlightenment'. Within the latter – and also, notably, in Adorno's later writing – the figure of 'the child' surfaces as one miniscule crumb of hope, of experiencing and knowing the world otherwise, set against the face of adult Enlightenment's seemingly inevitable decay. At the close, Adorno's own brief dalliance with imagining a small slice of children's geographies allows the essay to arc back towards its original claims, and to a renewed sense of why childhood 'sounds and sights and smells' continue to matter far beyond just the domain of geographers researching children.

**Keywords** children; childhood; Sir John Betjeman; dialectic of enlightenment; Nazis

#### 1. Introduction

Children's geographies is growing up. While there have long been geographical inquiries into aspects of children's lives and worlds – since contributions in the 1970s and 1980s by Bunge (1973, 1975), Hart (1984), Hill and Michelson (1981), Piché (1981) and others – the formalisation of a subdisciplinary field under the rubric of 'children's geographies' is more recent. It has been largely coincident with the founding of the journal *Children's Geographies*, first published in 2003 and steered by the inspirational editorship of Hugh Matthews. As Matthews (2003, 5) speculated in the journal's inaugural editorial: 'We trust that this new journal provides an important signal that children's geographies has finally "come of age"'. The implication was that the field had *already* 'grown up', gaining sufficient coherence in terms of substantive focus, conceptual development and methodological application to be regarded as 'mature', well-rounded and well-conceived. I am not about to demur from such a judgement in the present essay, the second *Children's Geographies* Keynote (after Holloway 2014), but

there is arguably still warrant for wondering about whether something else or different might now be brought into the fold of children's geographies.

To play a little on this notion of 'coming of age', I want to ponder the state of children's geographies at age 12 years and, metaphorically, now at 'big school'.<sup>1</sup> In the UK most children transitioning into secondary education are between 11 and 13, although what is meant by 'coming of age' – maybe as linked with moves into and out of different tiers of education – varies considerably over time, space and circumstance (a core insight from, for instance, Jeffrey and Dyson 2008). Now at 'big school', though, it could be mused that children's geographies needs to 'grow up'; and – to play on another quote, not used for titling this essay, but it could have been – the onus becomes as follows from biblical text: 'When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things' (1 Corinthians 13:11). Here the demand is to adjust to all of the traumas of new surroundings, acquaintances and expectations, and thereby to put away 'childish things' when confronting the demands of an adult world disciplined by 'reason' (and to forsake 'reason[ing] as a child' in favour of reasoning as an adult). The emphasis here on 'reason' is significant for what follows, tying as it does to the quote that I *have* deployed for the main title above.

My remarks about children's geographies going to 'big school' and needing to 'grow up' are in part polemical, implying a more biting critique of existing scholarship in the field than I actually intend. Indeed, I am mostly thrilled by what has been contributed to the field, and by the standard, orientation and insight provided by papers published in *Children's Geographies* since 2003. Nonetheless, as a capsule description, it might be said that these contributions have amounted to defiantly *child-centric* children's geographies: wherein children's experiences, voices, circumstances, problems, exclusions, potentialities (for influencing the likes of policy/planning) have been centralised. Entirely understandably, studies have looked inward, *towards* the child, with childhood lifeworlds as the referent, ethico-political spark and, as it were, terminus of inquiry (pulling out the child dimension as the prime purpose and conclusion). It might be asked, with justification, what else should be expected from a field called children's geographies? To which, I might hazard a response contemplating the prospect of a *less* child-centric children's geographies: one which, instead of looking *in* at children's lifeworlds as the chief focus of concern, rather looks *out* from these lifeworlds to see what they illuminate – what they inform/tell us about – the wider matrices of societal/global change in which they are unavoidably embedded. It is to address the fate of children (and childhoods) bobbing up and down in the turbulent currents of capital, geopolitics, biopolitics, war, terror, climate change, technology and ideology (to give cursory names to the diverse tsumanis of global shift facing the world today and with historical antecedent).

To an extent, such a *supra*-child stance has animated research and writing by the likes of Katz (1991, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2016), Ruddick (2007a, 2007b), Kjørholt (2007), Ansell (2009), Brown (2011), scholars fostering a political geography of children and youth

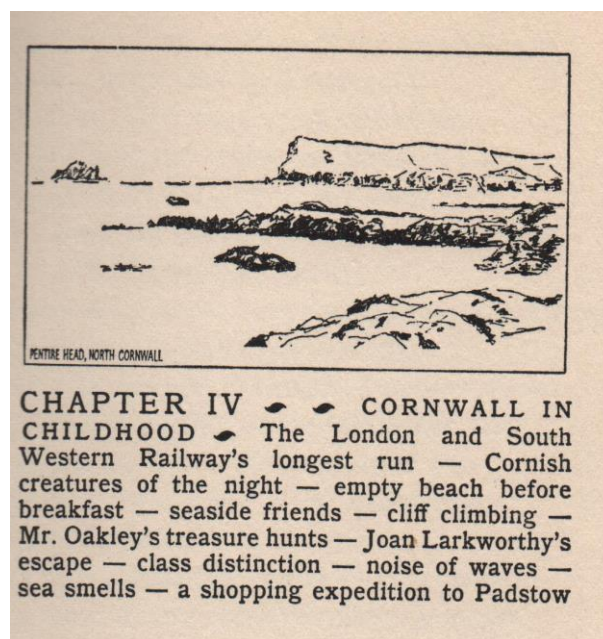
(Kallio and Häkli, 2013), and doubtless various others. Hence my claims are maybe not as radical as they might initially seem, but I still think it worth the provocation; and to follow up with the suggestion that there is much to be done in asking big questions about how ‘we’ (say, Western intellectuals/global citizens) have come to understand the figure of ‘the child’. To my mind, largely absent from the study of children’s geographies to date has been serious consideration of the *work* that ‘the child’ does in the constitution of Western (and perhaps other forms of) thought and self-identity,<sup>2</sup> notably with respect to absolutely fundamental principles of both the Judaeo-Christian heritage – as in the above-mentioned biblical injunction for proper Christian adults to ‘put away childish things’ – and the European Enlightenment – which, arguably at its heart, has depended upon a specification of Reason (of what it is to reason, to be reasonable, to be capable of reasoning, to act reasonably). Such a specification defines the capable, self-aware, autonomous, responsible human being over and against forms of life depicted as *lacking* Reason: a netherworld of human types, including women, people of colour and the mentally different, and, ultimately too, the *non*-human animals (‘brutes’ or ‘creatures’). A key representative of this non-Enlightened, unreasonable netherworld is ‘the child’; in which regard there is a vital critical-scholarly task of showing how the writer-architects of the Enlightenment (such as Locke and Rousseau) portrayed children, effectively fixing them as ‘lesser beings’, as mere human ‘becomings’ not proper human ‘beings’ (to echo a familiar line of critique from the critical social studies of children/childhood). Such a task is beyond me in this lecture (cf. Baggerman and Dekker 2008, 2009; Foyster and Marten 2010; Hilton and Shefrin 2009), but I strongly believe that it would exemplify a *non*-child-centric approach: examining ‘the child’ in Enlightenment texts as a vehicle for sharpening critical appraisal of Western Reason and its many accomplishments, both creditable and baleful, down the ages to the present day.

Instead, in what follows, I will approach aspects of such a task more obliquely: beginning with what might seem a strange source, the poetry of Betjeman, as both a small window on the meta-argument just stated and a ‘parable’ about children’s geographies (what they are and what they might also be). This material will arc into a disquisition on children in war-time, a reiteration of some themes about the so-called ‘dialectic of enlightenment’, a brief reflection on how ‘the child’ might be refigured in post-enlightenment thought, and then some final summary remarks.

### ***Summoned by Bells: from tiny phenomenologies to an opening world***

The quote marking the title for my paper<sup>3</sup> comes from Sir John Betjeman (1906-1984), a renowned British poet, if not necessarily accorded the status of ‘major’ figure in the poetic cannon (Williams, 2006), and in many respects a ‘national treasure’.<sup>4</sup> An initial remark is that the older Betjeman steadfastly refused to ‘put away childish things’, not least in his life-long attachment to his teddy-bear, Archibald (full name: Archibald Ormsby-Gore), which as a very young boy he treated as a ‘surrogate brother’ (Hiller

2006, 7) and which was there, resting in one arm, when he passed away on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1986 (*ibid.* 545). (Mention should also be made of Jumbo, Archie's companion, who also survived from Betjeman's childhood to be there, in the other arm, on that dying day.) A recurring presence in Betjeman's voluminous correspondence – 'A terrible thing happened last week. Archie's head came apart from his body, worn through at the neck' (letter to his estranged wife, Penelope, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1978) – Archie also featured in a children's story, *Archie and the Street Baptists*, originally penned in the 1940s and published in 1978, a story about Archie's dislocation when moved from his favourite chapel to a residence elsewhere (Wilson 2006, 161). Betjeman, a committed if sometimes sceptical Anglican with 'low Catholic' sensibilities, did not share Archie's religious beliefs, and neither, it appears, the bear's political beliefs. 'Archie is very well and pro-Hitler, I am sorry to say,' Betjeman confided in a letter to a schoolboy pen-pal on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1940, whereas it is clear that Betjeman's own mind-set was more pacifistic, suspicious of authoritarian states of any stripe, and opposed to both Fascism and Marxism (Wilson 2006, 135-137). The war-time cadence here is not irrelevant to what follows.



**Figure 1:** Page with illustration and summary of chapter contents (source: Betjeman 1960).

Defined by some as 'a poet of place' (Stanford 1961, 72), Betjeman was attuned less to the wonders of sublime nature and rustic landscapes, more to 'the attractions and sights of the ordinary town: the charm of railway stations, of non-conformist chapels, of parish churches, and Victorian houses' (*ibid.*). He had an abiding interest in suburbia ('subtopia'), where Southern England's 'green belts' abut spreading built-up areas, albeit often tinged with a melancholia – a veneration of the 'old' in the sense of being lived-in, made habitable – which warily eyed any knee-jerk favouring of the 'new' or the (overly) planned. It would be easy to imagine him being enlisted by the likes of geographer Relph (1976) in proclaiming on the 'authentic' and the 'inauthentic' in

place-making. More broadly, it is perhaps surprising that he has not featured more fully in geographers' reflections on literary representations of place<sup>5</sup> (not least those of E.W. Gilbert, a friend from Oxford days: Lycett Green 1995, 102<sup>6</sup>). Yet it is important to note that Betjeman was no simple *anti-modernist*: indeed, he was actually a convert to 'modernism', but evidently a qualified modernism, one with organic edges, favouring the smaller-scale and not the massive, and alert to the claims of nature and hesitant about an unalloyed technocentricism. Significantly, it is in this guise that Betjeman appears in Matless's superb (Foucauldian) 'genealogy' of the umbilical connections between 'landscape' and 'Englishness' across the earlier twentieth century, the poet's 'jolly-but-sad heritage laments' (Matless 1998, 280) teetering on the brink of, but never quite endorsing, a stark valuing of past over present (*ibid.* esp.35, 64, 193, 277).

Many of Betjeman's poems are about, or at least permeated by, such a geographical imagination; and nowhere is this truer than in the poetry that houses my title quote, *Summoned by Bells*, published in 1960, a book of blank verse poems – organised as separate chapters, not far from being prose – that are unmistakably an autobiographical rendering of Betjeman's own transition from childhood to early adulthood. Decorated by small landscape drawings (Figure 1) drafted by Betjeman but completed by Michael Tree, the book tracks the young Betjeman's early life around several distinctive places (Highgate [London], Cornwall, London, Marlborough and beyond). In diverse ways, the geographical textures of his own early lifeworlds are here evoked and gently dissected.

The key passage for my essay runs as follows:

Childhood is measured out by sounds and smells  
And sights, before the dark of reason grows.  
Ears! Hear again the wild sou'westers whine!  
Three days on end would the September gale  
Slam at our bungalow; three days in end  
Rattling cheap doors and making tempers short.  
It mattered not, for then enormous waves  
House-high rolled thunderous on Greenaway,  
Flinging up spume and shingle to the cliffs.  
Unmoved amid the foam, the cormorant  
Watched from its peak. In all the roar and swirl  
The still and small things gained significance.  
Somehow the freckled cowrie would survive  
And prawns hang waiting in their watery woods;  
Deep in the noise there was a core of peace;  
Deep in my heart a warm security.

(Betjeman 1960, 38)

The deeply embodied – sensed, felt – phenomenology of childhood is referenced here, immersed in the sounds, smells and sights of immediate environments, here the howling wind and crashing waves of a late-summer storm thrashing the family's holiday bungalow on a Cornish coastline. The tangling with social life in the bungalow

– ‘making tempers short’ – is indicated, but so too the deep sense of ‘warm security’, an affective state on the part of the young Betjeman, pre-10 years old, cocooned in this small scene of a holidaying family in the safety of a bungalow, however rickety, from which the wild elements beyond can be visited or viewed. Telling is the mention of how ‘the still and small things gained significance’, a notion oft-rehearsed in the best of children’s geographies research on the intimate spaces/places of childhood experience, dwelling and memory.<sup>7</sup> In the lines directly following the ones quoted, the appeal to the senses continues: from the ‘ears’ hearing the wind and waves to ‘Nose! Smell again the early morning smells; congealing bacon and my father’s pipe’ (*ibid.* 38: with a rich set of further examples from the local ‘smellscape’), to ‘Eyes! See again the rock-face in the lane; Years before tarmac and the motor-car’ (*ibid.* 39: with numerous instances lent of ‘excitement for the eyes’ and not least ‘Imagined ghosts on unfrequented roads’ [*ibid.* 40]). In which regard, yes, much of this passage can stand as emblematic of children’s geographies work concerned, compellingly, with the tiny phenomenologies of childhood life-worlds, bound into processes both natural and social, but often cast at the scale of the immediately domestic or proximately local (Philo 2000).

*But* – a crucial ‘but’ for this essay – there is also this nagging remark about ‘before the dark of reason grows’: the hint that these tiny phenomenologies of domestic childhood lifeworlds are under threat or, rather, time-limited – that their all-encompassing embrace for the child is about to be broken, with new demands about to mushroom. In the narrative of *Summoned by Bells*, these demands deepen as the young Betjeman grows older, and as he is wrenched from domestic intimacy into wider realms – and different, less comforting, less secure spaces/places – revealingly characterised by Betjeman with the title chosen for the book’s *last* chapter: ‘The Opening World’. More specifically, from his Cornish holidays Betjeman chases his 11-year old self to a ‘private school’ in Oxford (known as ‘The Dragon School’) in 1917, complete with beatings, scuffles with older boys, voyages further afield (‘bicycling off to churches in the town’: *ibid.* 46), an impending architectural interest, and also news of adults at war in distant lands. The ‘Skipper’, the headmaster, periodically announced the names of old boys who had died on the fields of battle, and Betjeman recalls how such news afflicted the school but as yet did not intrude overly on the boys’ ‘smaller’, everyday obsessions:

And then we’d all look solemn, knowing well  
There’d be no extra holiday today.  
And we were told we each must do our bit,  
And so we knitted shapeless gloves from string  
For men in mine-sweepers, and on the map  
We stuck the Allied flags along the Somme;  
Visited wounded soldiers; learned by heart  
Those patriotic lines of Oxenham  
    What can a little chap do  
    For his country and for you –  
‘He can boil his head in the stew’,  
We added, for the trenches and the guns

Meant less to us than bicycles and gangs  
And marzipan and what there was for prep.

(*ibid.* 45)

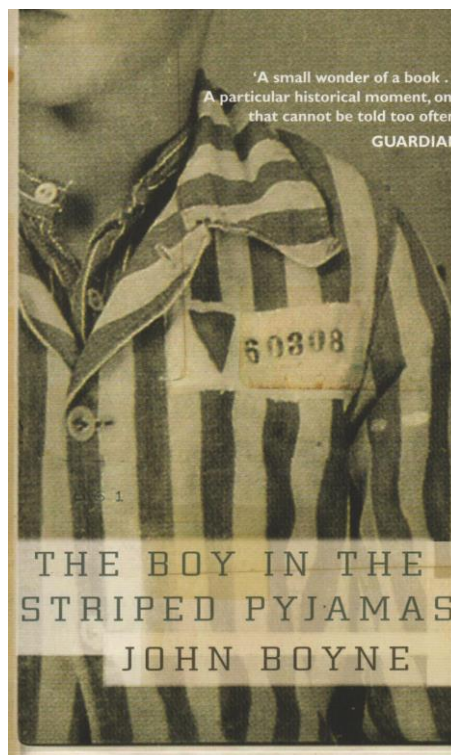
Broadly similar claims can be offered about later chapters in the book, as Betjeman charts his return home to London, to a new home in Chelsea not Highgate, and then to Marlborough College (another private school commenced in 1920 when he was aged 14 years), via adolescent experiences of his Cornwall holidays (and his failing relationship with his father), through to 'The Opening World' of being an undergraduate student at Oxford (he 'went up' to Magdalen College in 1925) – with his 'First college rooms, a kingdom of my own' (*ibid.* 93) – and finally to becoming a private schoolmaster in 1928 (after being 'rusticated' for failing his Divinity exams). 'But in the end they send me down', Betjeman laments, 'From that sweet hothouse world of bells' (*ibid.* 108). This spatial separation, from the 'hothouse' of Oxford University life, sites, sights and sounds, was the final dislocation of Betjeman from the circumscribed lifeworlds of his younger years.

Hence we can discern something of what he meant by his remark about the impending 'dark of reason'. At one level, it meant the encroaching of an adult world upon a childhood one, caught in the chronology of Betjeman's own early biography, narrated in *Summoned by Bells*, as the 'bells' of Oxford 'summon' him from his childhood reveries on a Cornish coastline to the adult learning, pleasures and indeed setbacks provided by Oxford (and beyond). Maybe too, however, there is something else afoot, something more generic but at the same time cold, even sinister, about the impending 'dark of reason': the loss of earlier securities and the exposure to uncertainties, to traps and dangers perhaps, residing in and around the expanding borders of adult lifeworlds. To me, moreover, the brief intrusion of WWI – touching the children at The Dragon School, even as they retained their focus on the immediacy of bicycles, gangs and marzipan – is significant: an oblique reference by Betjeman to the 'darkness' at the heart of worlds made and unmade by supposedly rational (reasonable, reasoning, reason-bearing) adults, the 'darkness' towards which children are unavoidably sucked by both the inevitability of their own ageing and the folly of adults which can so often shatter the comfort-zones of young lives. It is, I regret, the alertness to such 'darker' geographies of childhood that I take as a message from my engagement with Betjeman: an alertness that, I argue, needs to *supplement* the more intimate, social and phenomenological study of children's lifeworlds which has more typically featured in the earliest years of work in/on children's geographies. Let me now pursue this claim in a different register.

### ***The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas: children in wartime***

The Betjeman quote about childhood and the impending 'dark' of reason is used in an opening frame of the 2008 British film, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, directed by Mark Herman. This film closely follows the narrative in the novel of the same title

(Figure 2) by John Boyne, published in 2006, although the Betjeman quote does not grace the novel. Both novel and film tell a simple tale of a young boy, Bruno, aged 9 years, the son of a high-ranking German soldier who gets transferred in 1942 from his Berlin posting to being the Commandant in charge of a Nazi concentration/death camp set in Poland (it is evidently meant to be Auschwitz, but is never named as such except through the boy's consistent mispronouncing of it as 'Out-With'). The whole family leaves Berlin for a new home in a house adjacent to the camp, which Bruno – and his sister, Gretel (also known as 'The Hopeless Case') – initially find to be a horrible place, sundered from friends and their comfortable childhood lives in the urban settings of Berlin. Somewhat improbably, Bruno makes friends with Shmuel, a 9-year old Jewish boy (they share the same birthday) confined in the camp: they meet most afternoons, sitting cross-legged and chatting on either side of the massive wire fence that demarcates the perimeter of the camp (there being a small corner of this perimeter that is un surveilled and otherwise unvisited). Unsurprisingly, the story does not end well for either boy, with a harrowing denouement that destroys the family as well as forcing the father, the Commandant, to confront directly the abuses over which he had been presiding.



**Figure 2:** Front cover of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (source: Boyne 2006)

While not told in the first person, the novel essentially recounts the story through the eyes, thoughts and feelings of Bruno – with occasional glimpses into the perceptions of Gretel – and, as such, the work has a similar sense of repetition, indeed the breathlessness of a young child chattering squarely *in* the ongoing 'push' of the world, as found in many books authored specifically for older children. (Some of Boyne's



other novels are deliberately aimed at younger readers, and one review implies that *The Boy* could itself be read by 'children over 10'.) The upshot is that the story is conveyed largely through Betjeman's intense 'sounds and smells and sights' of childhood, leading readers into the immediate geographies of Bruno's immersion in the childhood lifeworlds of city (Berlin) and camp (the house, grounds and adjacent camp of 'Out-With'). Particularly effective is how Boyne depicts Bruno (and Gretel) seeking to comprehend a range of geographies: from the geopolitical entities of Germany, Poland and Denmark,<sup>8</sup> through to the stark spatial boundary that sets Bruno apart from Shmuel (which he interprets as designed to stop him getting into the camp rather than its occupants getting out). By hearing the 'naivety' of Bruno and Gretel discussing the camp, with its sad, dishevelled occupants, children included, as spied through a slit window in Bruno's new room, adult readers are challenged to think again about the enormities of the crimes being perpetrated at Auschwitz, barely a half-century ago. Gretel, aged 12 years old, speculates that '[t]his must be the countryside' because:

'... we learned in geography class that in the countryside, where all the farmers are and the animals, and they grow all the food, there are huge areas like this where people live and send all the food to feed us'. She looked out of the window again at the huge area spread out before her and the distances that existed between each of the huts. 'This must be it. It's the countryside. Perhaps this is our holiday home,' she added hopefully. (Boyne 2006, 33-34)

Bruno is unconvinced, retorting that, 'if this is the countryside like you say it is, then where are all the animals you're talking about?' (*ibid.* 34), and noticing the lack of cows, pigs, sheep, horses, chickens and ducks, as well as the poor state of the ground: 'I don't think you could grow anything in that dirt' (*ibid.*). Gretel agrees and changes tack:

'In Berlin, on our nice quiet street, we only had six houses. And now there are so many. Why would Father take a new job here in such a nasty place and with so many neighbours? It doesn't make any sense'. (*ibid.* 37)

Passages with a similar affective quality pepper the book, a good few clearly alluding to matters of space, place, landscape and environment, and another theme is that Bruno loves exploring – he wants to be an explorer when he grows up – which is how he ended up scouring the camp perimeter and meeting Shmuel. On one occasion, he asks Shmuel about exploration in the camp: 'What's the exploration like over there anyway? Any good?' (*ibid.* 131).

On one reading, the novel can readily be cast as a work of children's geographies, teasing out the spatial contours of a given child's lifeworld balanced precariously between city and countryside, safe house and dangerous camp, 'us' (an uncertain sense of being German) and 'them' (Bruno eventually learns that the people in their camp uniforms, the striped pyjamas, should be lumped together and named as Jews). That said, while the novel focuses on these childhood lifeworlds, mapping them through the words of Bruno and, to a lesser extent, Gretel,<sup>9</sup> the effect is undoubtedly to widen out

from these small-scale immediacies: it is to deploy the child dimension to prompt questions that scale up/out to ask of an adult audience – how did this happen? how could the stigmatising hatreds of Nazi ideology infect the views and practices of so many ‘ordinary’ Germans? how could it lead to this hidden geography of human incarceration and slaughter, fully mobilising the technological and organisational resources of allegedly Enlightened modernity? Endorsements on the cover of a 2007 edition of Boyne’s novel are instructive in this connection: ‘A small wonder of a book ... A particular historical moment, one that cannot be told too often’ (from *The Guardian*); ‘The Holocaust as a subject insists on respect, precludes criticism, prefers silence. One thing is clear: this book will not go gently into any good night’ (from *The Observer*); and ‘Simply written and highly memorable. There are no monstrosities on the page, but the true horror is all the more potent for being implicit’ (from *Ireland on Sunday*). The latter observation is keenly made, in that, yes, the childhood words here do not, indeed cannot, know or relate *as such* the ‘monstrosities’ of Auschwitz; and yet the ‘true horror’, for the sake of all humanity, is here lurking, insinuated, insistent. This small piece of children’s geographies is thus the portal to the darkest deeds, the biggest questions, the core conundrums of a global human geography.

Ever since Anne Frank’s wartime *Diary of a Young Girl*, charting the German occupation of Amsterdam in the 1940s, the profundity of childhood recollections have been recognised in the ‘rawness’ of what they ask, nay demand, from adults who should ‘know better’. Unlike Anne, Bruno was not supposed to be a victim – at least not in the manner of Shmuel – but childhood reminiscences from the side of the perpetrators can be equally as charged as those from the side of the victims. A powerful work along these lines is Ursula Mahlendorf’s 2009 text *The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood*, in which Mahlendorf recreates her childhood move from near Berlin to Strehlen, eastern Germany, an industrial centre dominated by the local granite quarries. It is worth quoting at length the prime components of how she worked on/with her own childhood memories:

As memories of my early childhood came crowding in – first events and the more and more details, particularly details about the places of my childhood – I found that I could reconstruct the floor plan of the house I lived in until age four, down to the staircases and hallways that I dreaded. I could visualise the streets of the town where I walked on my way to nursery school. I could draw out maps of sections of the town we lived in till I was sixteen, including the houses, churches and public buildings, both before and after their destruction during the last days of the war. My mind held *an entire geography of childhood* ... I have included my sketches and outlines of that geography of my neighbourhood and my town ... (Mahlendorf 2009, 8-9: my emphasis).

The emphasis here on ‘an entire geography of childhood’ is compelling for present purposes, but it is no conceit. As the book unfolds, Mahlendorf takes readers on numerous journeys through pre-war and war-time Strehlen, around the streets, alleyways, courts and local meadows, notably fostering a contrast between her own

typical time-space routines/experiences and those of the 'quarry children', living with their families 'in barracks at the edges of town. Family lore depicted them as rowdies, as children of communists and criminals' (*ibid.* 43) – the former being the internal enemies aligned with 'Russia', the prime external enemy to the East.

Mahlendorf retells becoming, aged 10 years, a member of the Hitler Youth (the *Hitler Jugend* or HJ), an organisation which 'preached Veneration of the German community, forged from a common history and a mystical union through race and blood. It glorified the German landscape, German soil, German forests and mountains ...' (*ibid.* 96). 'Basements, attics and even public spaces served as the *Heim*, the home base that each HJ unit needed' (*ibid.* 93); and Mahlendorf reflects upon school yards, filled with endless drilling practice, classroom instruction (in Nazi ideology), 'going from house to house to collect recyclables and to help during the harvest' (*ibid.* 103), sports activity (including on a sandpit that she adapted to allow her to run and jump, to improve her sporting prowess for HJ purposes) and train trips to neighbouring towns or even 'national' HJ sports events. Unsurprisingly, the 'quarry children' 'participated minimally and with obvious dislike in the activities of [HJ], doing just enough to keep from being reported to the authorities' (*ibid.* 80). A divided social geography emerged in Strehlen, marked by different neighbourhoods and different patterns of movement/engagement, and the young Ursula found herself increasingly losing touch with friends from the quarry families (notably 'the magnificent Agatha': *ibid.* 45).<sup>10</sup> In large measure, Malendorf's book – at least the two-thirds or so before the narrative reaches the abandonment of Strehlen to the Russians and her own work as a Red Cross-trained nurse – circles around how these micro-geographical fractures increasingly pitted her, as accessory to (if not actively being) the perpetrators rather than being a victim.

Here, then, is the provocative heart of this work: the unflinching exposition of 'an entire geography of childhood' as the progressive stripping away of 'layers' of memory, always tangled with places, to show how what might initially be recalled as 'harmless idyll' necessarily became 'suggestive nightmare' (*ibid.* 6). Shamed now about having appropriated the term 'survivor' to describe her *own* survival of the Nazi regime, Mahlendorf strives to face the implications of 'the potential perpetrator making herself into a victim' (*ibid.* 8). 'Shame': she wants to keep this painful emotional state foregrounded, not excused, and to accept that the 'privilege' of having stayed alive during the period – the privilege of the perpetrator – 'carries an obligation to tell how a perpetrator is made, how she is re-educated, and how, like all workings through, the process remains open-ended' (*ibid.*). The book's treatment of children's geographies therefore widens into exposing the geographies of perpetrators – of perpetratorhood or, more mildly, bystanderhood – to prompt critical reflections on how all of 'us' could easily become perpetrators, complicit with collective socio-spatial eradications of unwanted others, depending on the space, time and circumstance. Once again, it is a book where the children's geographies is a platform for so much more than *just* the

children's geographies: or, rather, it is a book where the children's geographies become *more*, acquiring a charge – interpretational, conceptual, ethical, political – that allows, in fact compels, them to daub on more expansive, more contested canvases.

### **The dialectic of enlightenment, and what the figure of the child allows**

The query might remain as to why the Betjeman quote was deployed to frame the film of *The Boy*. One answer, as in *Summoned by Bells*, is probably that sense of losing childhood innocence when the complexities and 'idiocies' of an adult world, one where people partition populations on either side of a barbed-wire fence, press in on all sides; but another answer might consider that perilous double-edgedness arguably constitutive of the whole (European) Enlightenment/Reason project. Such a double-edgedness is captured in the famous phrase 'the dialectic of enlightenment', deriving from the book of the same name, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* authored by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, members of the so-called Frankfurt School of Critical Theory when in exile from Nazi Germany (both Adorno and Horkheimer had Jewish parents and Jewish 'thought' inflected their own work). It was written in the horizon of the WWII atrocities already visited in this lecture, initially being published as a limited edition in German in 1944 and then as a more widely-available edition still in German in 1947 (and only being translated into English in 1972 [1979]<sup>11</sup>). It is an odd book, a fragmentary mix of materials – some versions carry the subtitle *Philosophical Fragments* – that concludes with a ragbag of 'Notes and drafts' (some with wholly unexpected titles such as 'The psychology of animals'). Two of its longer component essays, 'The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception' and 'Elements of anti-Semitism: limits of enlightenment', are structurally bound to the book's central claims, which lie chiefly in both its opening essay, 'The concept of enlightenment', and a brief 'Introduction'.

The focus of the book is partially the (European) Enlightenment as a decisive epoch in Western thought-and-action, especially in conjunction with the rise of capitalism, but it is also concerned with 'enlightenment'<sup>12</sup> as an ongoing process – spreading throughout the domains of philosophy, science, arts and politics – that is inherently unstable, unaccomplished and unaccomplishable. The crucial assertion is that Enlightenment is always doomed to descend into 'myth', as one part of the dialectic, and that whatever promise it holds – through its initial opposition to myth; in its sweeping away the cobwebs of ignorance, superstition and brutality – is always destined to fade, to become perverted, hollowed out in an often macabre parody of itself. In this vision, reason as something new, shiny and hopeful, the gift of enlightenment, contains within it the seeds of its own decay into the *unreason* that it allegedly arose to replace, meaning that the rational imperative which it heralded is similarly ordained to become irrational (contaminated by myth). As Adorno and Horkheimer (1979 xiii-xvi) write:

We believe that these fragments [ie. the contents of the book] will contribute to the health of ... theoretical understanding, insofar as we show that the

prime cause of the retreat from enlightenment into mythology is not to be sought so much in the nationalist, pagan and other modern mythologies manufactured precisely in order to contrive such a reversal,<sup>13</sup> but in the Enlightenment when paralysed by fear of truth.

More than this, the authors write about the 'the indefatigable self-destructiveness of enlightenment' (*ibid.* xi, also xiii). In this 'bleak' vision, E/enlightenment begets destruction; reason begets unreason; rationality begets irrationality. There are many aspects of *DoE*: the attention to the 'disenchantment' of the world, echoing Weber, and its objection to how Enlightenment flattens out a pre-existing landscape of 'enchanted' things into a quantifiable surface of interchangeable objects 'grasped' solely as time-space coordinates; the attention to how Enlightenment ushers in a domination of nature, both the external nature of worldly 'resources' and the internal nature of human 'passions'; and the attention to how Enlightenment creates pre-conditions for weakened psychological states in which different groups of people too readily follow the diktat of (mass-mediated) totalitarian authority while stigmatising others unlike themselves who they are led to fear (the Jews being the paradigm case). The effect is no simple diatribe, but rather a sustained analysis – with Marxian, psychoanalytic, proto-feminist and proto-environmentalist credentials – of *why*, indeed, Reason has its 'dark hour', in Betjeman's vocabulary:<sup>14</sup> of why *enlightenment* could also provoke a catastrophic *darkening*.

In practice, *DoE* is more subtle than this caricature implies: indeed, the second part of the dialectic sees Adorno and Horkheimer striving to reinstate a positivity to E/enlightenment, to the exercise of Reason, stating that '[t]he ... critique of enlightenment is intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from entanglement in blind domination' (*ibid.* xvi). Similarly, they declare that 'social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought' (*ibid.* xiii). A recurrent difficulty for these authors, though, is how to reconvene a more positively enlightened thought: to locate conjoint intellectual and ethico-political resources which are not already contaminated by the regressive tendencies of E/enlightenment, something that seems unavoidable as soon as 'thought' solidifies, takes definite shape, starts to totalise, to set limits and to reify categories, and the like. To put matters thus is to hail perhaps the thorniest philosophical problematics of Western thought – and for now they cannot but be ducked – but a few final speculations can be made, germane for this essay, about how the figure of 'the child' allows the Frankfurt theorists a sort of get-out, a 'place' to go in imagining domains of thought-and-action that might evade the snares of E/enlightenment 'gone bad'.

In one of the 'Notes and drafts' at the close of *DoE*, headed a 'Personal observation', the authors reflect upon the common signs of 'degeneration' within men of 40 or 50, typified by their ceasing to work properly (causing a business to fail), breaking marriages (for no good reason) or embezzling money (*ibid.* 240). The authors continue by noting 'the conflict between young people and adults' (*ibid.*) wherein the former:

... always used to be convinced that there was something wrong with a teacher, his [*sic.*] uncles and aunts, friends of his parents, and, later, his university professors or the training supervisor in a business concern. They either showed a laughable side to their character, or else he felt their presence to be particularly burdensome, disappointing and meaningless. ... At the time he gave the matter no more thought and simply accepted the inferiority of adults as a fact of nature. Now the facts are confirmed to him: ... It is as though people who betray the hopes of their youth and come to terms with the world, suffer the penalty of premature decay. (*ibid.* 241-241)

With these curious pronouncements, Adorno and Horkheimer project the negative dialectic of enlightenment – the ‘general rule’ (*ibid.* 241) of how enlightenment ‘decays’ – on to the ageing of some (if not all) individuals from childhood into later adulthood. By the same token, the hopes for a more positive dialectic of enlightenment, for visions of how to proceed that can escape this decay, are seen to lie with the young, as if they are likely to retain the sensibilities of ‘true’ enlightenment (perhaps in the same modality as Bruno’s innocent ‘speaking truth to power’ at the ‘Out-With’ camp). Quite how such sensibilities could ever be co-opted into a workable programme of thinking-and-making ‘positive enlightenment’ as ‘social freedom’ is, regrettably, a wholly other matter. As too is the seeming contradiction in suddenly presenting children as bearers of enlightened reason when, by other lights, they are seen as wholly *lacking* such a capacity; which is also the ambivalence in picturing children as possessed with a capacity for deploying a particular style of reasoning, perhaps best cast as relentless step-by-step small ‘questioning’, in such a way as actually to undermine the very ‘dark of reason’ itself.

One further gloss on these odd reflections – one with a neat geographical twist – can be gleaned from Adorno’s own sole-authored masterwork from 1966, translated into English in 1973, *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno, 1966 [1973]). Evidently still wrestling with the dilemmas anatomised in *DoE*, this work is resolutely critical, always seeking to expose deficiencies, the ‘negativities’, in intellectual systems (Adorno [1973, 4] describes the work as ‘an anti-system’) and – almost in a poststructural guise – consistently attending to the worldly ‘remainder’ (*ibid.* 5), the ‘non-identity’ or the ‘non-conceptual’, that cannot but elide all attempts at intellectual systematisation. I cannot elaborate here the bewildering machinery of Adorno’s thinking in this work – albeit I believe that it holds many crucial messages – but what I can underline is how, even in the dry wastes of this ostensibly most serious of philosophical tracts, Adorno supposes that the intellectual must entertain ‘a playful element which the traditional view of it [philosophy] as a science would like to exorcise’ (*ibid.* 14). This ‘playful element’ – Adorno (*ibid.*) also calls it the philosopher’s ‘clownish traits’ – arguably links to an occasional motif in *Negative Dialectics*: namely, the figure of ‘the child’ in its *pre-conceptual* (or, rather, *pre-systematised*) intuitions of what the ‘objects’ of the world are, do and mean. Elsewhere, intimating a *positive* sense of what the child experiences, unblemished by the tugs and snares of theory or authority,<sup>15</sup> Adorno (2013, 165)

speaks of '[t]he collusion of children with clowns [as] a collusion with art, which adults drive out of them as they drive out their collusion with animals.' Reflecting on the particular qualities of 'the essay' as a form of critical intervention, Adorno (1984, 152) also writes that, 'instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort [of essay-writing] reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done' (also see Bard-Rosenberg 2013).<sup>16</sup>

When asking in *Negative Dialectics* '[w]hat is a metaphysical experience?' (*ibid.* 373) – what I term an intimation of the universal, the transcendent, the beyond – Adorno intriguingly ponders 'the landscapes and regions that determine the imagery of a childhood' (*ibid.*). To cut a touch obliquely into his reasoning here, the claim is that a sense of the universal – for the child tinged with 'happiness', not being *too* 'disappointed' – lies precisely in being immersed in this place (*this* place, here and now): it is hence precisely 'to be entranced in one place without squinting at the universal' (*ibid.*). Adorno (*ibid.* 373-374) elaborates:

To the child it is self-evident that what delights him [*sic.*] in his favourite village is found only there, there alone and nowhere else. He is mistaken; but his mistake creates the model of experience, of a concept that will end up as a concept of the thing itself, not as a poor projection from things ... But the concept clings to the promised happiness, while the world that denies us our happiness is the world of the reigning universal ...

The child's naivety 'gives us the inside of objects as something removed from objects' (*ibid.* 374), something totally *in* the object – here, in *the place* – but which intimates something more, a feeling of 'happiness' or contentment with the world as it *is* in its immediate contingency. Yet, as Adorno cannot help but lament, carrying his baggage of years critiquing E/enlightenment's negative dialectics, the curse of universals – of human systems, intellectualised and then thrown into the crucible of (geo)politics (as in Nazi [and all other] fundamentalisms) – is ultimately to deny 'happiness'. The will to universals, to impose systems, usually (always?) leads in exactly the other direction: towards misery as the specific, the different, the local, the contingent, the non-conforming is swept away.

Picture the child's village 'under the jackboot'; and also hear how Malhendorf's exercises in geographical memory (2009, 343) also allowed her to reconnect with her childhood lifeworlds in Strehlen: 'To my surprise, I celebrated its streets, its churches, its schools, its businesses, its parks and trees. As a child living there, I did not know that I had loved these things. In realising that I loved them, I was able to mourn their loss'.<sup>17</sup> There is hence a profound synergy between Adorno's reflections on what the figure of 'the child' instructs about philosophy and what Malhendorf comes to realise from returning to the streets of her childhood in Strehlen. For the purposes of the present essay, however, what I want to propose is that, irrespective of whether we can follow – let alone agree with – the contortions in Adorno's own theorising, the point is that the figure of 'the child' is here mobilised (in fact a small exercise in children's

geographies is enacted) in order to advance one thread of his own post-enlightenment thinking. Indeed, his own formulation of a negative dialectics of enlightenment is so relentlessly bleak, leaving itself so little wiggle-room in its sustained adultist negativity, that Adorno perhaps has little choice but to look for chinks of optimistic thinking-intuiting-otherwise by reference to children, play and clowning. In the terms specified at the outset of the essay, the issue becomes 'the work' that is done by the figure of 'the child' in the debating of such unavoidably big issues as Enlightenment and Reason, as themselves irretrievably latched into the roll-call of often terrible world events (and here WWII and the Holocaust have unapologetically intruded). Whether or not that 'work' is plausible, or indeed all that helpful, is nonetheless for another day's more sustained consideration.

### **By way of conclusion**

In final summary, let me restate what this essay has attempted. I used Betjeman's quote that supplies my main title as an *entrée* to a series of reflections about the possibilities for supplementing present inquiries in the field of children's geographies with a somewhat *less* child-centric orientation: one that lifts from the immediate 'sounds and smells and sights' of childhood to the challenges of 'the opening world'. At the same time, I took Betjeman's provocative remarks about the 'dark of reason' as a platform for exploring what Adorno and Horkheimer cast as 'the dialectics of enlightenment' – as the tendency for E/enlightenment to degenerate into abusive domination; for reason to descend into unreason. Such pessimistic thinking was unavoidably shaped by the excesses of the Nazi period in Europe, from which Adorno and Horkheimer escaped but which they subsequently strove to ensure would never return (also Adorno 2005b).<sup>18</sup> I was able to use the coincidence of the Betjeman quote framing a film about the Holocaust, *The Boy*, as a segue into commentating on childhood experiences of WWII, emphasising childhood experiences from behind German lines as sabotaged by the 'dark of reason': by 'degenerate' adult modes of thought-and-action; by the negative dialectics of how the Nazis perverted E/enlightenment, modernity, technology and bureaucracy. Here the children's geographies related – Bruno's doomed exploration of the camp; Mahlendorf's revisiting of her childhood spaces and places in pre-war and war-time Strehlen – were identified as significant both in themselves and for what they tell about wider pictures, processes and problematics of a supposedly enlightened world at war.

Thereafter, I outlined the logics of Adorno and Horkheimer's critical thought, with reference to the status that they accord to the figure of 'the child': opening a window on the 'decay' of adulthood as a model of E/enlightenment's tragic destiny. Finally, I considered Adorno's musings about how the figure of 'the child', notably the child in its geographical places, maybe holds lessons for a post-enlightenment metaphysics alert to the principle of 'happiness' fleetingly available through immersion in the smallnesses of an immediately, irreducibly *placed* life and play. A mite ironically, then,



my meandering essay returned at the last precisely to the situated 'sounds and smells and sights' of childhood, to the tiny phenomenologies of childhood-in-place, from which the broader logic of the essay had apparently to that moment been escaping. The point reached, however, was that such tiny phenomenologies of children's life-worlds *do* matter for themselves, but that they also matter for so many other reasons too; they matter for a child-centric children's geographies, to be sure, but they also matter big-time for *all* human geography.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rather nicely, a very recent document prepared by the publishers, Routledge, refers to *Children's Geographies* as now 'an adolescent journal' (Routledge 2015, 1). When delivering the Keynote, the journal was 12 years old; now, in 2016, it is of course a year older again.

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<sup>2</sup> There are a few pointers in papers by geographers on how the figure of ‘the child’ has been deployed in discourses of ‘development’ (‘progress’ and ‘empire’), in the ‘infantilising’ of non-Europeans in colonial discourse/practice, and in the regulation of alternative sexualities (Finn and McEwan 2015; Gagen 2007; West 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Jones has partially used this same title before: see Jones (2001; also Jones 2008), a careful reflection on what it means to research ‘the otherness of children’, as effectively lying outwith the ‘dark reason’ of the adult academic. He does not reference or discuss the source of the phrase in Betjeman’s work.

<sup>4</sup> There are two major biographies of Betjeman, both appearing in 2006 to mark the Centenary of the poet’s birth (see Hillier 2006 [itself a single-volume abridgement of a three-volume biography]; Wilson 2006). There are two substantial volumes of surviving letters from Betjeman, edited by his daughter, Candida Lycett Green (see Lycett Green 1994, 1995). The extracts from letters below are taken from these volumes. Betjeman was evidently closer to, and more fondly remembered by, his daughter, Candida, in comparison to his son, Paul (Barber 2006; Leith 2006). Curiously, Paul was always referenced by his parents as ‘It’.

<sup>5</sup> The only substantial reference – and maybe indeed the only reference *per se* – by an academic geographer to Betjeman’s poetics of place is in a book by the sports geographer, Bale, which, somewhat curiously, deals with *anti*-sports sentiments expressed in literary works (Bale 2008). Chapter 5 of this book deals with Betjeman, and includes a careful excavation of Betjeman’s treatment of place and also a debate about Betjeman explicitly anticipating Tuan’s (1974) construct of ‘topophilia’.

<sup>6</sup> Lycett Green refers to him as ‘Edward Gilbert’, but the reference is surely Edmund W. Gilbert, a doyen and chronicler of Oxford Geography (note his Oxford-centric account of *British Pioneers in Geography* [Gilbert 1972]). Gilbert had an interest in literary geographies, and wrote a significant piece about novelists as able to ‘paint a picture of real earth’ (Gilbert 1960, 164). Intriguingly, ‘[t]he geographer, Edward [*sic.*] Gilbert, wrote about the new Western Bypass skirting Wytham Woods and Godstow. JB replied (16 October 1957), “My heaven! I was driving to Northampton from Wantage the other day and went around by Wytham and Godstow in the lovely autumn sunshine. It seemed to me amazing at the time that so unspoilt a stretch of country should be allowed to remain ...”’ (Lycett Green 1995, 100). The Betjemans’ son, Paul, studied Geography at Oxford, 1956-1959, ‘much to the delight of JB’s friend the geographer Edward [*sic.*] Gilbert’ (*ibid.* 102). Graduating with a ‘Fourth’ (basically a fail) – I am sure that Wilson (2006, 246) is mistaken in saying that he took *postgraduate* Geography – Paul turned to music, emigrated to the USA and converted to Mormonism. A painful sense of how the Betjemans sometimes discussed Paul is found in a letter from Penelope in 1959: ‘I think it [ie. Paul] needs a sharp pulling up ... It cannot and DOES NOT EVER work all day at its geography ...’ (in Wilson 2006, 246: emphases in original).

<sup>7</sup> Some examples from the current journal, *Children’s Geographies*, would include, in chronological order except where authors have contributed more than one relevant paper: Philo (2003), Jones (2003, 2008), Kjørholt (2003), Tranter and Malone (2004), Harker (2005), Catling (2005), Horton and Kratfl (2006a, 2006b), Hancock and Gillen (2007), Ross (2007), Forsberg and Strandell (2007), Svensson *et al* (2009), Tipper (2011), Rautio (2013), Pyyry (2015), Änggård (2016).

<sup>8</sup> Bruno and Gretel have private tuition from a Herr Lister, and most of their lessons are about ‘history and geography’, it evidently being the case that were indoctrinated in an understanding of how Germany – its identity, territory and pride – had historically been undermined, not least by the Jews, and how it should rise again by defeating its enemies both internal and external. Gretel is more persuaded than Bruno, and in her bedroom at ‘Out-With’ the dolls are removed to be replaced by maps with little flags on which she traced German fortunes in the theatre of war.

<sup>9</sup> Or, at least, the words imagined by/projected on to Bruno and Gretel by Boyne, the adult author.

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<sup>10</sup> There had long been only a limited Jewish presence in Strehlen, but there were removals during the so-called *Kristallnacht* of 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1938, and Mahlendorf honestly admits that ‘Jews disappeared from my experience as living people and became an abstraction’ (*ibid.* 68).

<sup>11</sup> I am using a 1979 edition.

<sup>12</sup> Note the distinction here between Enlightenment (with upper-case first letter) and enlightenment (with lower-case first letter): the switching between the two in what follows is deliberate.

<sup>13</sup> Such ‘modern mythologies’ of course also included Nazi ideology, which, on some readings, ‘rejected rationalism, intellectualism and the European Enlightenment’ (Mahlendorf 2009, 96). For Adorno and Horkheimer, however, Enlightenment was almost pre-destined to descend into such barbarisms; and such an argument runs throughout the writings of not just the Frankfurt School, but also the likes of Michel Foucault in his critiques of Enlightenment/Reason in its treatment of Madness/Unreason (see Philo 2013).

<sup>14</sup> There is no evidence that Betjeman knew anything of the Frankfurt School.

<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere in Adorno’s *oeuvre*, when discussing ‘authoritarian personalities’ and the ‘infantile’ responses of mass populations, notions of ‘childishness’ and being ‘childlike’ acquire a more *negative* and troubling dimension; a contradiction noted by Bard-Rosenberg (2013) among others.

<sup>16</sup> There are the outlines here of a broader thesis about where ‘happiness’ peeps through Adorno’s otherwise ‘melancholy science’ (Rose 2014), possibly influenced by how his one-time mentor, Walter Benjamin, delighted in fairy tales and the ‘promises’ of children’s stories (Duffy and Boscagli 2011, 8; also Feuer 2015). These glimpses at other, unfettered ways of encountering and knowing the world, ones that willingly invent and suspend *disbelief*, are also related to strands of utopian thinking in Adorno’s *oeuvre*, notably by Floyd (2010, 8-9) when quoting passages from Adorno’s aphoristic *Minima Moralia* (Adorno 2005a) about children, ‘nooks and crannies’ and ‘little trucks’ to disclose ‘[t]he sensory quality’ of objects – meaning the ‘use values’ in what inventively can be done with them – as ‘precisely what children, unlike adults, can see’. In line with an overall arc in this essay, the small intimacies of children’s geographies, including playing with toys, here take on a profound meaning.

<sup>17</sup> A not dissimilar line of reasoning is to be found in Philo and Swanson (2008), where we seek to explain why the apparently/utterly ‘trivial’ aspects of childhood – those aspects called to the fore for the study of children’s geographies by Horton and Kraftl (2005) – should not be dismissed as indeed *too* trivial in comparison with the wider political-economic and socio-cultural structuring of ‘young lives’. Such aspects matter precisely because they are the texture of (hopefully) happy ‘young lives’: thus, *why* they matter only really becomes obvious when they are lost, when the children, like Shmuel’s young friends in ‘Out-With’, stop playing (‘And the children weren’t playing games in groups’: Boyne 2006, 206). The adult political charge to ensure that such smallnesses are *not* lost from children’s lifeworlds is emphasised in Philo and Smith (2013).

<sup>18</sup> This was Adorno’s ‘new categorical imperative’, that Auschwitz should never happen again. As Short (2009, 195) writes, ‘[t]here is an element of childhood mimesis located in the midst of Adorno’s most negative of pronouncements [in *Negative Dialectics*], his formulation of the new categorical imperative’.

<sup>19</sup> A specific claim that might also be advanced would be about how this essay can perhaps speak to debates about the historical geography of Enlightenment as itself a variegated resource for thinking through diverse matters at the heart of re-envisaging – possibly ‘re-enlightening’ – critical scholarship in and beyond contemporary human geography (eg. Livingstone and Withers 1999).