A STUDY OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN SELECT WORKS BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

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DECLARATION

Mizoram University

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I, C.Lalrinfeli, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of the thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that "A Study of Memory and Identity in Select Works by Kazuo Ishiguro" written by C.Lalrinfeli has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. The thesis is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University for any research degree.

(DR. MARGARET L.PACHUAU)

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(C.LALRINFELI)

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CHAPTER I

SITUATING KAZUO ISHIGURO WITHIN THE REALMS OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY

Kazuo Ishiguro has been considered to be one of the leading literary figures amongst writers of the 1980s. He took his first steps toward a literary career in 1979 when he entered the Creative Writing Programme at the University of East Anglia. His teachers at East Anglia included the novelist and critic, Malcolm Bradbury and the fabulist, Angela Carter. In 1982, he won the Winifred Holtby award for the best expression of a sense of place, for his debut novel *A Pale View of Hills*. In 1983, he was included in the seminal Granta Best of Young British Writers' list alongside Martin Amis, Ian Mc Ewan, Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, Graham Swift, Rose Tremain, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Barker. When Ishiguro was nominated by the Granta Magazine, he was only twenty seven years old and at thirty four, his place in the literary firmament was already secure. In 1986, his second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, received the Whitbread Book of the Year and in 1989, his third novel, *The Remains of the Day* was awarded the Booker Prize for Fiction, and was subsequently made into an award- winning film. His next novel *The Unconsoled* (1995) was awarded the Cheltenham Prize. Kazuo Ishiguro's fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans* (2000) was shortlisted for both the Whitbread Novel Award and the Booker Prize for Fiction. *Never Let Me Go* (2005) was again shortlisted for Man Booker Prize for Fiction. His latest work, a story cycle entitled *Nocturnes: 5 Stories of Music and Nightfall* was published in 2009. In addition to novels he has also written two original screenplays for Channel 4 Television, *A Profile of Arthur J.Mason* (broadcast in 1984), *The Gourmet* (broadcast in 1986), and *The Saddest Music in the World.* In 1981, three of Ishiguro's stories – "A Strange and Sometimes Sadness", "Waiting for J", and "Getting Poisoned" – appeared in *Introduction 7: Stories by New Writers*, a Faber and Faber series which was designed to bring young authors before a wider reading public. Ishiguro was showered with a number of prizes. In 1995 alone he received Italy's Premio Scanno, the Cheltenham Prize, and an O.B.E

(The Order of British Empire) for services to literature and he is a Fellow of Royal Society of Literature. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by the Universities of Kent (1990) and East Anglia (1995) and in 1998 he received the French decoration Chavelier de l'Ordre des Arts Lettres. His work has been translated into twenty seven foreign languages.[1] He presently lives in London with his wife and daughter.

This thesis attempts to examine aspects related to memory and identity, and its thematic centrality in Kazuo Ishiguro's texts with special references to the manner in which memory initiates the construction of identity in five of his texts namely i) *A Pale View Of Hills* (1982), ii) *An Artist Of The Floating World* (1986), iii) *The Remains Of The Day* (1988), iv) *When We Were Orphans* (2000), and v) *Never Let Me Go* (2005). The study also attempts to denote aspect such as 'unreliability' in the narratives of the first-person narrators' protagonists. While attempting to establish their identity, the central characters of Ishiguro's novels had to narrate their past with the help of their fragile memories. They attempt to formulate their own identity in reflecting their past. However, in narrating their past, their memory is often in tension with history. These themes are specific and inherently located within the narratives and theories of memory and identity as denoted in the five texts that are central to the same. Subsequently, this chapter shall focus upon the introductory components of memory and identity and its representation in literature and will attempt to situate Kazuo Ishiguro within the realms of memory and identity.

The term 'memory' has been defined by a number of psychologists, philosophers and thinkers. Amongst them, Tim Woods and Peter Middleton denote:

> Memory is a means of overcoming the limitations of the human condition as it is understood in contemporary culture, by making the past appear

> once again in the present, despite its temporal, and possibly spatial, distance.[2]

Memory can create the illusion of a momentary return to a lost past and its operations also articulate the complex relationship between past, present and future in human consciousness. The important role memory plays in establishing the sense of identity can hardly be exaggerated. According to Dorothee Birke:

> In order to answer the age-old question 'who am I?' we more often than not look to our past and fashion a narrative for our lives. By comparing our present selves with the selves we remember, we experience ourselves as being in time – an experience which is crucial for our sense of self.[3]

Memory not only serve as building blocks for identity, but also play an important role in the interaction with others since details of the past are employed in order to validate images that are conveyed. Recognizing the crucial role of memories for the social relationships, Gergen describes memory as a "form of social skill"[4] and memory according to Assman is a "backbone of identity".[5] In a postmodern era, in which it is perceived as especially hard to attain a satisfactory sense of personal identity, Nunner and Inkler states that autobiographical memory constitutes a stabilizing factor in what has come to be seen as a state of perpetual crisis of identity.[6]

A study of memory is truly an interdisciplinary endeavour which has been conducted in a wide range of disciplines, encouraging collaboration across the boundaries of different subjects. According to Nunning et al.:

> The genealogy of discourse on memory reveals, however, that philosophy, historiography and literature have more in common with neuropsychology than one may be inclined to think.[7]

Over time, thinkers have tried to discriminate among the many meanings of the concept of memory, Warnock distinguishes between 'habit memory' and 'conscious memory'. 'Habit memory' refers to "skills, responses or modes of behaviour that are learned by human beings, non-human animals and even machines," while 'conscious memory' consists of "recalling or recollecting past experience".[8] Therefore conscious memory becomes one of the defining factors which distinguish human from non-human. The characteristic quality of human nature and the seeming undefinability have caused the concept of memory to be a popular topic among philosophers, thinkers and writers of all times. Already in antiquity since the publication of Francis A.Yates' *The Art of Memory*, the concept of memory has never escaped the attention of thinkers and philosophers. However, since the 1990s, there has been a renewed interest in memory, even as it has branched out to other concepts like trauma, Holocaust testimonies, False Memory Syndrome, collective and cultural memory. Nicola King in *Memory, Narrative, Identity* observes:

> The late twentieth century has also seen an increased focus on questions of memory as the generations which experienced the atrocities of the two world wars die out, and as new or revived national movements base their demands on memories of oppression or trauma … the recent insistence on the role of memory also mark a renewed desire to secure a sense of self in the wake of postmodern theories of the decentered human subject.[9]

Subsequently, in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro, 'the desire to secure a sense of identity' with memory has been explored. In order to grasp the significance of the kind of memory that this study is concerned with, namely, autobiographical memory, it is important to specify its components and properties that make it so significant in the formation of the sense of identity. According to Susan Engel:

> Autobiographical memory is on the one hand a deeply personal, subjective, and vivid construction of the past, a construction that reveals, creates, and communicates a personal identity. But we constantly use these memories in public transaction. To that extent we expect reliability, accuracy and objectivity. What and how we remember has consequences for our own lives and the lives of those included in our memories.[10]

In the novels selected for study, Ishiguro utilizes autobiographical/individual memory where his characters construct the past and it is denoted as a basis for identity and in relation to this, Dorothee Birke states that nothing could be more personal and more unique than one's own memories.[11] On the other hand, the important part played by memory in social transaction which not only draws attention to the one-sidedness of autobiographical memory as purely individual matter is also reflected by Ishiguro. However, this also poses the question of reliability and accuracy in the narration of the character. The cognitive psychologist, Endel Tulving introduces a very influential, albeit controversial, model for differentiating between various kinds of autobiographical memory – 'semantic', 'procedural' and 'episodic memory'.[12] 'Procedural memory' refers to "the learning of motor and cognitive skills",[13] 'semantic memory' is a kind of "mental thesaurus" which comprises "a person's general knowledge about the world and

encompasses a wide range of information, including facts, concepts, and vocabulary".[14] The memory system which is most relevant in terms of this study and also in literature is that of 'episodic memory' which is about "specific events that occurred at a particular time and place".[15] In contrast to procedural or semantic memory, episodic memory includes the phenomenon of "autonoetic awareness", which Wheeler reflects:

> Its contents are infused with the idiosyncratic perspectives, emotions and thoughts of the person doing the remembering. It necessarily involves the feeling that the present recollection is a reexperience of something that has happened before.[16]

In this way, autobiographical memory provides a different ways of processing and making sense of past experiences. Ferrara states:

> From being the main actor of a more or less coherent life story the individual derives a sense of continuity in time which … is part of any conception of the authenticity or fulfillment of an identity.[17]

This is where autobiographical memory and personal identity meet: by assembling memories to form a narrative, an individual can relate about himself/herself as well as to others in terms of who s/he really is. In this connection, Mark Freeman also opines:

> The very act of making sense of ourselves and others is only possible in and through the fabric of narrative itself.[18]

Similarly in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro, narrative and memory allows forging meaningful links between past events and present life, to define the present selves in relation to the past selves and to assert development. In this way, narrative helps to structure memory and becomes an integral aspect of autobiographical memory, as Bruner notes:

> We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing and so on.[19]

Literature has manifold ways of taking up and transforming ideas and problems that are part of contemporary culture. In particular, literary works offer genuine contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms of memory's role in identity formation. They grant insights into the processes that are hard to observe that is, the workings of the human mind. As Finke has denoted, literature provide a laboratory for the imagination in which concepts and assumptions about memory and identity can be staged, tested or taken to extreme.[20] Thus, the interconnection between memory and identity plays a significant role in literature. For instance, novels such as Pat Barker's *Regeneratio*n, Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and most notably Toni Morrison's *Beloved* amongst others, organize their narratives in terms of the demand of memory which is compelled to unravel the psychological effects of traumatic past that lies beyond the temporal horizon of the narrative itself, in a place and time that resist representation.[21] These novels and many other current works of historical literature show a concern with the relation of the past to the present, regarding where the past is and how it persists in the lives of human beings, and how it can be experienced or resisted. In an essay entitled "The Literary Representation of Memory", Birgit Neumann opines:

> Memory and the processes of remembering have always been an important, indeed a dominant, topic in literature. Numerous texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past and how they construct identities on the basis of the recollected memories. They are concerned with the mnemonic presence of the past in the present, and they illuminate the manifold functions that memories fulfill for the constitution of identity. Such texts highlight that our memories are highly selective, and that the rendering of memories potentially tells us more about the rememberer's present – his or her desire and denial, than about the actual past events.[22]

Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the many novelists that amply utilize memory as the focal point in his novels. One of the reasons that Ishiguro employs memory in his novels is to recreate Japan which had become a land of speculation for him. He states:

> I wished to recreate this Japan – put together all these memories, and all these imaginary ideas I had about this landscape called Japan. I wanted to make it safe, preserve it in book, before it faded away from my memory altogether.[23]

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, on November 8, 1954. In 1960, the five-year-old Ishiguro moved with his family to Britain, where his father, an oceanographer, began a one-year research project funded by the British government. What was originally intended to be a temporary visit gradually became a permanent one. While maintaining ownership of the family

home in Nagasaki, the Ishiguros have remained in Britain. Ishiguro has disclosed in an interview that leaving his home in Japan was a wrench for him as a child. He narrates:

> As a small child, I was taken away from people I knew, like my grandparents and my friends. And I was led to expect that I would return to Japan. But the family kept extending the stay. All the way through my childhood, I couldn't forget Japan, because I had to prepare myself for returning to it.[24]

However, the family never returned, and for many years, Ishiguro delayed visiting his grandparents' house in Nagasaki, in case it disturbed his inward vision of home. He expressed in 1987:

> The house as I remember it is a rather grand and beautiful thing, and if I went back the reality would be rather shabby and horrible, and in a way that is how I feel about the whole area of my life. It's very powerful to me while it remains a land of speculation, imagination and memory.[25]

Through memory, Ishiguro searches deep in his mind for the flavours and colours that he was surrounded by, in an attempt to draw those facets into his writings. Significantly, his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* are set in Japan. However, despite this distinctive background, Ishiguro chooses not to write directly about himself. He finds it more productive to deal with characters who are unlike him.[26] Distancing forces him to look at his subjects from the outside. It helps him to avoid the temptation to deal with material that is personally interesting, but artistically irrelevant. Nevertheless, this careful excision of himself

from his fictions has not prevented critics like Barry Lewis amongst others from reading them almost exclusively in terms of his Japanese origins.[27] When Ishiguro first became a public figure he suffered greatly from stereotyping by critics and reviewers, who could not resist 'compulsory analogies to Sumo wrestling, geisha girls and Toyotas' and nicknamed him the 'Shogun of Sydenham'.[28] This worked to Ishiguro's advantage to some extent, as it gives him a distinct marketable image, especially in a literary climate of the 1980s where there was an active search for non-native English writers. But the limitations soon become apparent:

> These stereotypes are all right as part of a publicity game. Where it starts to get irritating is when people read your work in a certain sort of way: it seems my Japanese novels are so exotic and remote that I could have written bizarre Marquezian or Kafkaesque stuff and people would still have taken it as straight realism. I've always struggled with this literal-minded tendency in British audiences.[29]

The struggle and concern with identity has been inherent so much that in the mid-1980s, when Ishiguro's writing career was ascending, the British Council's short leaflets introducing British authors had under a photograph of Ishiguro a quote from him:

> I consider myself an international writer.[30]

Over the years, this self-declaration has been reiterated by reviewers and academic critics of his novels, and while nobody has fully defined what it means exactly to be an 'international writer', the term is a convenient one that addresses both Ishiguro's obvious Japanese ancestry and the kind of broad themes with universal appeal that is found in his fiction. Salman Rushdie celebrates the latter aspect of Ishiguro's identity when he notes that Ishiguro employs a 'brilliant

subversion of the fictional modes' in his discussion of large themes such as 'death, change, pain and evil'.[31]

While defining the umbrella term 'international writer' a connection between Rushdie and Ishiguro has not been an arbitrary one. In 1981 Rushdie was awarded the Booker Prize for *Midnight's Children*, an inventive and sprawling novel about India's independence from Great Britain. Ishiguro observes that there are very significant differences between his and Rushdie's career as crucial for his own developing one:

> Rushdie had previously been a completely unknown writer. That was a really symbolic moment and then everyone was suddenly looking for other Rushdies. It so happened that around this time I brought out *A Pale View of Hills*. Usually first novels disappear, as you know, without a trace. Yet I received a lot of attention, got lots of coverage, and did a lot of interviews. I know why this was. It was because I had this Japanese face and this Japanese name and it was what being covered at that time.[32]

Eight years later, in 1989,when Ishiguro won the Booker for his third novel *The Remains of the Day*, he observed that, while the kind of early attention bestowed on him followed from readers' perception of him as an 'exotic' writer along the lines of their perceptions of writers like Rushdie as well, he believed that he subsequently fought against the very labels that earned him such positive publicity. If early reviewers admired Japanese attributes of the young writer, they also pegged Ishiguro as a 'foreign' writer who 'just happened' to write in the English language. Having lived in Britain since the age of five and having spoken and written in the English language since then, such perceptions were obviously annoying to Ishiguro. Mike Petry opines:

> In fact, despite his un-English sounding name, Ishiguro is no doubt a truly "English writer" – someone who is deeply rooted in the English language and culture.[33]

At times, he appeared exasperated especially when in terms of the situation and place of his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*. These incidents coincided with his Japanese ancestry, but he also concluded that he is writing works of fiction and not historical texts, and at the same time, he is not attempting to capitalize on his 'exotic' status:

> In many ways I felt I was using [Japanese and world] history as a piece of orchestration to bring out my themes. I'm not sure that I ever distorted anything major, but my first priority was not to portray history accurately. Japan and militarism, now these are big, important questions, and it always made me uneasy that my books were being used as a sort of historical text.[34]

Ishiguro has consistently felt the need to explain his fictional inventions especially in order to respond to academic perspectives that are advanced by scholars like Bruce King amongst others, who attempt to solidify the concept of what constitutes an 'international writer'. Ishiguro wants the term to denote his literary goals and not his ethnicity alone and this would be prevalent to the perspective of identity. King focuses on ethnicity when he identifies Shiva Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo, and Ishiguro as the key figures of 'the new internationalism', and distinguishes such writers from commonwealth, third world, and other ethnic categories. According to King, they 'write about their native lands or the immigrant experience from within the mainstream of British literature'.[35] In Ishiguro's case, however,

writing about his native land (Japan) is an act of invention, and he is not speaking from the perspective of an immigrant in either of the first two novels.[36] For his part, Ishiguro, the writer with Japanese origins, is not writing about his own immigrant experiences in Great Britain, rather he focus upon the emotional turmoil of his protagonist's personal situation against the orchestrated background of nuclear devastation, so that he can appeal to a wide audience. Ishiguro does not regard his novels as academic exercises; neither does he wish to write without "communicating a vision".[37] The main focus of his writing is to rework or to undermine certain ideals or mythologies structuring individuals, communities, or their nations, mainly in an effort to regard the impact of such visions on people's actual lives. Ishiguro is not out to baffle, intellectualize, trivialize, or otherwise appropriate real human pain and happiness for its own sake, but he seeks to find new ways of expressing these in a discourse of fiction.

In noticing that Ishiguro is of Japanese ancestry, it may be relevant to approach his fiction in terms of cultural paradigms, and at the same time, it cannot be escaped from the attention that he is a writer who writes sensibly and insightfully about grand human concerns. Ishiguro believes that within the realm of memory and identity, he will be able to denote aspects related to human concerns and the subtle indication of hope and human endurance appear in all of his novels. Having worked as a social worker in Glasglow and London in the 1980s, Ishiguro probably shaped his understanding of human awareness and suffering, and these are elements that are present in all of his novels. In dealing with these issues, Ishiguro deploys memory as a dynamic phenomenon which is characterized by its adaptability to present needs and circumstances. Ishiguro tends to centre his novels on characters that have relevant bearing upon the psychological and emotional relationship with the past. The issue of memory arises as the protagonists try to find a sense of closure with their past. This concurs with Maurice Blanchot's

theory according to which "narrators recall and relate past experiences to divest themselves of memories and their past".[38] Ishiguro's narrators have made choices in their past and so they have to face the consequences in the present. Barry Lewis marked:

> The novels are all engaged with memory and memory, by its very nature, is uncertain, quivering, subject to erasures and displacement.[39]

Kazuo Ishiguro concerns himself with memories and their problematic function in the process of forming one's identity. His narratives centre upon memories and their potential to digress and distort, to forget and to silence the past and above all to haunt the present. The protagonists of his fiction seek to overcome loss by making sense of the past through acts of remembrances. Paul Connerton notes that experience shapes the present. According to him, an individual's identity is constructed through past events and the remembering of those past events.[40] Subsequently, Kazuo Ishiguro's treatment of memory is in tune with this.

Tim Woods and Peter Middleton, who concern themselves with the workings of textuality and memory in literary texts denote that:

> The past is now widely believed to depend upon memory, personal and social, traumatic and repressed, involuntary and planned.[41]

Memory, both individual and social plays a large part in a cultural context and thus the framing axioms of literary historicism are commonly represented by the texts themselves as forms of memory.[42] Memory thus becomes the mediator between the present and the past. It is now widely believed that memory is the foundation of personal identity, and that anything that damages it will threaten the self.[43] Daniel L.Schacter observes:

> Extensively rehearsed and elaborated memories come to form the core of our life stories - narratives of self that help us define and understand our identity and our place in the world.[44]

The above elements have been predominant markers that remain central to the primary texts by Kazuo Ishiguro. For instance, in *A Pale View of Hills*, the chief protagonist, Etsuko uses her memory to overcome loss and to define her identity. She narrates her past in order to come to terms with her own identity. The reason for this is that her elder daughter, Keiko had committed suicide by hanging herself in her rented room in Manchester. Etsuko finds herself alone and neglected, and her account in the novel can be viewed as the result of her desperate struggle to establish (for herself) an impression of structure and agency in her past and hence to identify for herself meaningful reasons and causes for her current position and to reassure herself that she "was not responsible for Keiko's death".[45] As she recalls her past, she strives to structure and to organize it, in order to identify patterns and consistencies by which to grant her history a sense of agency and design. Therefore, Etsuko has to explore the painful past, in order to decipher the making and remaking sense of who and what she is. Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* feared that his involvement in the Nationalist movement might hamper the marriage negotiation of his daughter. In order to justify to the readers that his actions were done with the heart of innocence, Ono reflects upon his past with the aid of his fragile memory. He knows that he had lived without purpose or lasting impact, and finds himself stripped of all agency and control. In the emptiness of his waning life, he desperately sought relief from the desolation that he faced, and therefore he returns to his past (working to extract from it proof of his own significance) and hence to deny the unendurable emptiness and powerlessness of his life. *The Remains of the Day* similarly portrays the suppressed emotion of Stevens who denied human warmth and 'bantering'

in pursuing dignity. But his concept of 'dignity' makes him a loner and he felt the need to reconsider the same. In *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro depicted memory in terms of nostalgia where the protagonists, Banks and Kathy hold on to their childhood memories in order to continue living. They both returned to their childhood memories in order to understand the basis of their adult isolation. They struggle to hold onto a peace that is evoked by a necessary nostalgia, but they simultaneously realize the horror of their discoveries. In an interview, Ishiguro explains his permanent interest for memory in its various approaches:

> I like memory, at various levels. At a purely technical level, I like it as a method of telling a story – it gives me plenty of freedom … And I just like the texture of memory as well. I like that the scenes are necessarily foggy around the edges, because they're open to manipulation and they're open to self deception and embroidery. And they're often tinged with nostalgia, some kind of strong emotion. I like all these layers that come with a scene. Thematically, I have been interested in memory itself.[46]

In his novels, Kazuo Ishiguro depicted memory as a means of establishing identity. At the same time, the aspect of memory with all its foggy texture in terms of suppression, distortion, and unreliability is also explored. Memory is a very useful and interesting device when writing a story. It is difficult to even imagine a story without any memories, but making full use of the characteristics of memory can certainly enhance the quality of a story. In all of Ishiguro's novels, memory plays a very important role. In various interviews, Ishiguro has named three reasons for why he likes to work with memory: the technical advantages, the texture and the thematically interesting nature. Memory is not only useful as a way of keeping the attention of the reader and

varying the storyline, but also as a means of controlling the mood of the novel. If the story is told completely chronologically, it is likely that the different parts of the story are marked by the predominant mood of that period. Memory offers more control than chronology. In an interview Ishiguro remarked:

> I don't have to follow the plotline. And so I can work much more like I guess a visual artist would do, if they place one image next to another. Just because the artistic order tells them to rather than it's the way a still life should be set out. I can control the novel and the moods very, very clearly that way.[47]

In all of his novels, Ishiguro foregrounds the role and processes of memory. Shaffer characterize memory's role as:

> Ishiguro's novels are psychological mystery-voyages into the protagonist's problematic or compromised past.[48]

But in portraying these voyages, Ishiguro also demonstrates memory's:

> Strategems, its selectivity, its obsessional quality, its refinements, its expedience and use.[49]

Ishiguro in his novels foregrounds memory through the method of narration and the narrators' admission of uncertainty in the veracity of their recall. By using first person narratives, the events of the novels are told in retrospect – sometimes from the distance of only hours, sometimes from a great many years. Additionally, the structuring of the narrators' account in

notebook /diary format, established in part by the detailed dates and places provided at the beginning of every chapter, is continuously overrun by their memories. Reich opines:

> Despite the superficial fixing of time in his work, the narrative frequently spins wildly through different eras. The date Ishiguro likes to fix are merely the dates of recall.[50]

Ishiguro's focus in fact appears to be the struggle that memory imposes upon the individual and the insistence of the past in a character's present. As Sutcliffe notes:

> His[Ishiguro] narrators, all of whom have suffered a deep psychological rupture in their lives, are often fighting a long-standing battle to relate their past to a present with which it does not seem to fit.[51]

The protagonists in the novels all strive to overcome some type of loss. This loss is in myriad hues; whether this is the loss of a child, family members and loved ones in *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans*, the loss of dignity in *The Remains of the Day* and the loss of something ineffable in *Never Let Me Go*. Ishiguro intermingles one's personal past in terms especially on how people try to cope with their past, as well as society's collective memory. In *The Contemporary British Novel*, Frederic M.Holmes observes that Ishiguro's first three novels (*A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*) have been:

> [C]elebrated for their historically grounded realism, achieved through the limpid, masterfully controlled prose styles of their first-person narrators, all of whom depend upon memory as they look back over their troubled lives and times.[52]

The same could have been said for *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. Speaking in the period after turbulent historical times, the first person narrators set private experiences into a public realm. The characters seek to induct the reader, in terms of a witness into their stories. They make an admission that their seemingly ordinary tales will be insufficient, given the limitations of memory but, in establishing the fact of forgetfulness and the gaps in retelling, they also critique world events from their uniquely estranged perspectives. In his novels, Ishiguro's narrators join two realms – personal experience and historical event – to produce an unusual narrative tension. In recounting private experiences, the narrators establish the context of those individual moments against history; the narrators' consciousness of historical circumstances prompts their reassessment of the private past, but their determination to maintain the primacy of self is tied to producing a false disclosure. Significantly, they each express doubts about the veracity and clarity of memory. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko is able to forget the premonition of death which she connects with that period. Remembering the pain of the past, she is able to forget, momentarily, the horror of her daughter's demise. However, as Etsuko reconstructs the past, she also reveals her reluctance to either fully remember or reveal the incident of her past. Like Etsuko, Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* also critically assesses the function of his memory with the idea that "when with the benefit of hindsight one begins to search one's past for … 'turning points', one is apt to start seeing them everywhere,"[53] and he implies that such an articulation of consciousness may reveal truth's elusiveness. Similarly, the narrator Masuji Ono of *An Artist of the Floating World* punctuates his story with remarks that any reconstructed narrative may be flawed representation: "This may not have been the precise words I used that afternoon".[54] His narrative, in this continued fabrication, becomes a self-acknowledged tale comprised as much from forgetfulness as remembrance. And Etsuko herself observed how

memory "can be an unreliable thing"[55] as she struggles for correspondence in recalling what she might have felt or experienced in the tumultuous period with what actual memory produces. In *When We Were Orphans* also, Banks dwells on his memories and things that were thought to be forgotten, and which were carefully dredged up. The novel depicted that Banks is cautiously recounting his life-story in terms of his fragile memory in order to identify who he really is and in *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy begins to identify small but peculiar turning points that might have instigated awareness of their conditions as her memories are reworked in the present circumstances. For each protagonist, remembering offers a catharsis through which they can solve their past and subsequently find peace in the present. James Procter pointed out that:

> All of Ishiguro's novels to date, narration is, at least partly, a therapeutic process. The novels are not attempts to render the past convincingly, but rather to pursue how individuals interpret and construct that past.[56]

In the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro, memory is used as an important tool for forming a sense of identity. The way memories work is geared towards producing coherence between past and present experience in the novels. While the past experiences have shaped the self-concepts of the present, present self – concepts have an influence on the reconstruction of the past in the process of remembering. The structuring of the past as a narrative thus allows the characters to incorporate various fragments and aspects of their lives into one continuous pattern. The characters attempt to locate their own identity with the aid of their memory and they also want to develop a common thread among the disconnected contingent events of their lives in order to provide a lasting sense of purpose and significance, which subsequently mark what Homi K.Bhabha calls a putting together of the dismembered past:

> Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.[57]

Subsequently, the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro inherently portray the working of memory. Ishiguro depicted memory in terms of a simple narrative strategy to develop the remembrances of protagonists reflecting upon and finding a meaning for their personal lives. In the novels of Ishiguro as well as in real life, memory is an act of reflection and recall. The characters in the novels of Ishiguro finds that memory often functions as a filter through which individuals are able to recall episodes in a manner which they find more in tune with how they would have like it to be. Subsequently, the novels are written in the first person narrative style and the narrators often exhibit human failings. Ishiguro's technique is to allow these characters to reveal their flaws implicitly during the narratives. The characters of Ishiguro's novels find themselves in a world of failing structures. They are floating and powerless creations, who are unable to rely upon the sliding ground of social custom or the crumbling material world to provide for them a sense of foundation and stability. *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* are set in the period following World War – II when nations struggled for supremacy and the world's power structures were significantly readjusted. The narrators of the first two novels – Etsuko of *A Pale View of Hills* and Ono of *An Artist of the Floating World* are Japanese and have experienced the sudden and violent stripping of their country's self-conception as powerful. The war has severely damaged the nation's landscape, both literally and metaphorically. Bombs had demolished cities and families had been torn apart just as societal customs and traditions were undermined, and replaced by Western values and ideologies.

In his first two novels (*A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*), characters attempt to rebuild their lives following one of the century's worst calamities upon their society, the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Ishiguro uses the historical situations in order to explore the emotions of his characters. In manifesting self-dignity and to situate their own identities, Ishiguro's characters turn inward for courage to speak about their lives, even decades later when they are facing an important turning point in their own lives. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' position as butler compels an economy of speaking as well. To voice one's emotions at all times would appear out of character for these narrators, for silence is as much an aspect of their stories as the words that they eventually utter. People 'manage reality by their constructions' writes postmodern critic Ihab Hassan, and silence as one form of such a construction which 'fills the extreme states of mind – void, madness, outrage, ecstasy, mystic trance – when ordinary discourse ceases to carry the burden of meaning'.[58] Such gaps, such silences filling the void in the narrators' stories, signal an important strategy that is crucial to Ishiguro's development of characters. Ishiguro employ gaps to unveil his characters' pain of suffering. His concern with how his characters read into and then interpret their life stories reflect those aspects that are shared by philosophers in terms of the theory on memory, and thus establish the interconnection between memory and identity:

> The past is a memory of time and space conditioned by the mechanisms of identity formation and the expression of trauma to whose vicissitudes memory is subject.[59]

Memory plays a vital role in human beings and there is scarcely a human activity that is not affected by memory. For Ishiguro, memory seems to be the source of knowledge which helps in making sense of the continuity of the self, of the relation between mind and body, and of the

experience of time. In his novels, conscious memory in the individual is inherently tied to the present; it is a construction that is formulated in the present which then looks back upon the past. It is an impetus within an individual's present position that draws them back, that provokes memory. Through either a purposeful, willful recollection of the past based on a need to know, or through an unconscious yearning for stimulus, memory is evoked in the mind of an individual that is firmly rooted in the present. For instance in *An Artist of the Floating World,* Ono reflects his past with his memory, and his past can be compared to his teacher Mori-san's villa:

> So cluttered with every sort of object [it] is impossible to cross it without hopping from space to space.[60]

It is packed with: "stacks of old canvasses tied together with rope, broken of old easels, all manner of pots and jars with brushes or sticks protruding" – the debris of his aborted career – and in the light of his conscience, the objects' "exaggerated shadows [create] an eerie effect, as though they constitute some grotesque miniature cemetery".[61] Therefore as Heather Homes in "Meditations on Memory" opines:

> The essence of memory is twofold; there is the present idea, and the relation of this idea to the past.[62]

Ono seeks to reorder these jumbled details of his past to restructure them in the form of a satisfying pattern constituting significance and achievements. Just as Sugimura, in building his garden, wandered around the city identifying and transplanting the shrubs and trees he liked, Ono, in structuring his identity, chooses from among his store of memories those that appeal to him, reframing and repositioning them, and he hopes "with admirable skill" to create a

"splendidly harmonious" result, a composition with a "cultural, rambling feeling … with barely a hint of artificial design". [63]

In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton states:

> There is difficulty extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence – some might want to say distort – our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present.[64]

In his novels, Ishiguro reflected that the present, as well as being responsible for the remembrance of an occurrence, affects the manner and practice in which the past is regarded. An episode in the characters' memory is related to events that came before it and the one which have occurred since. In relation to this Heather Homes expresses:

> The effect of the present on memory is qualified by what is known about the functionality of the brain; memories come to the individual encoded by neural networks in the brain whose connections have already been shaped by previous experiences in the world. Therefore the past can never be looked back upon in any passive manner; it is modified and filtered through the present consciousness and functionality of the mind.[65]

Similarly, W. Walter Menninger denotes that memory "can rarely be depended upon to faithfully recall past events, especially those in which the subject directly participated".[66] Subsequently, in the novels of Ishiguro, distortion in the case of individual memory is usually linked to the manner in which subjects currently view themselves. Individuals have other emotional qualifiers

which often alter their ability to look back at past events without the intrusion of their present consciousness. Just as Heather Home opines that emotive characteristics such as pride, vanity, shame and fear may all come into play when memory is evoked, in response to these characteristics the characters of Ishiguro's novels have the ability to alter past situations before they reach the forefront of their consciousness. This ability to alter memory is usually performed unconsciously and is therefore not equivalent to lying or purposely obscuring the truth. However, in an effort directed towards self-preservation and self-perception, consciousness often mediate what they recall. Subsequently, after the publication of his second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ishiguro said that he was exploring how his first-person narrators used "the language of self-deception and self-protection"[67] to convey their life stories. On the surface, Ishiguro's protagonists appear as "self-conscious narrators" who are distinctly aware of themselves as writers of their own stories, as they are observing or remembering their lives, they also comment selectively on how they are "writing, thinking, speaking, or reflecting" that life.[68] The narrator's dual roles of reading significance into and then documenting the details of that life are linked to a particular kind of self-deception that interested Ishiguro. He sympathizes with how the deception signifies a character who is being guarded against emotional injury or harm; accordingly, the ethical dilemmas forcing the characters into forms of simultaneous deception and protection could be identified.

How Ishiguro's characters come to a realization of the forces of their lives and how they rewrite their life stories to suit their narrative are as important to Ishiguro as the manner in which his readers apprehend their own interpretative process while reading his novels.[69] Ishiguro's characters emerge in relatively simplistic situations but are revealed to be carrying with them complicated states of being. Through Ishiguro's evocative narrative style, the richness of their

crisis can be examined and have, as a result, an important didactic function for understanding human emotions. Theories of memory may prove helpful in such instances of interpretation, since its paradigm fits with Ishiguro's portrayals of the psyches of his characters responding to historical and personal forces of their lives. According to Nicola King:

> All narrative accounts of life stories, whether they be the ongoing stories which we tell ourselves and each other as part of the construction of identity, or the more shaped and literary narratives of autobiography or first-person fictions, are made possible by memory. They also reconstruct memory according to uncertain assumptions about the way it functions and the kind of access it gives to the past.[70]

Subsequently, there are moments when the characters' memories in the novels returns to the past, ostensibly unchanged by the passing of time, such memories tend to be suffused with a sense of loss, the nostalgia out of which they may be at least in part created. For instance in *A Pale View of Hills* Etsuko longed for a time when she did not know what was going to happen next – or conversely, to relive the past with the foreknowledge she then lacked. But memory can only be reconstructed in time, and time as Carolyn Steedman puts it, "catches together what we know and what we do not yet know".[71]

The concept that memory plays a significant role in personal identity has been examined rewardingly by contemporary philosophers. Such debates often refer back to John Locke's attempt in defining 'memory' in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In this book, he famously identified the self with memory. He denotes that one's identity is completely determined by his or her memory and someone who does not remember anything of his or her

past had in fact no identity and no sense of self. Locke was an empiricist who derived knowledge and made conclusions based on experiences and sensations. To him, somebody without the ability to record memories could have no sense of self.[72] Subsequently, in the novels of Ishiguro, characters' memories play a pivotal role in determining their identity. Through memory, they attempt to find the 'truth' about their life and eventually come to realize who they really are. Ishiguro develops his broad concerns for the way people seek truth in their lives, but who then find multiple ways of dismantling access to it, because of the painfulness of truth itself. In relation to this Wong deduces:

> What is most familiar to them is also most alien; perhaps a language of fiction can capture the two senses of finding ways to express an ambivalent emotional state.[73]

Provocatively, through a concealment of pain, the narrators of Ishiguro's novels also reveal their fear of revelation and knowledge of their lives. David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* argues that the ideas of memory are more stronger and more lively than those of imagination, but that the relationship between the two is dubious since memories can lose their vividness and can be thus mistaken for fictions of the mind, or imaginations can grow so strong and convincing that it can be seen as true memories.[74] Ishiguro's novels also reflects the rifts between the unspoken assumptions about memories and the manner in which the characters reflect the 'past' on the one hand, and the more complex ways in which memory in fact works on the other.

The German philosopher Georg William Friedrich Hegel introduced some new terms into the discussion of memory. Hegel makes the distinction between memory and recollections as did Aristotle, and the one between memory and imagination, as did Hume.[75] According to Friedrich

Nietzche, the past and present, or memory and forgetting, are closely related and both are needed in equal measure to secure the health of an individual. He observes:

> Either the classical past could be used to justify and reinforce the present culture by suggesting an identity and continuity between past and present, or the past could be used to criticize the present by stressing the difference and distance between them.[76]

Bergson makes a distinction between two different kinds of memory – habit and conscious memory where his pure/conscious memory refers "to the survival of personal memories in the unconscious."[77] Bergson influenced Marcel Proust, who in turn has been extremely influential on Kazuo Ishiguro's work, as he expresses in an interview:

> I realized that as a novelist, you did not necessarily have to tell a story by going from one solid, well-built scene to the next. You could actually mimic the way memory runs through someone's mind. You can have a fragment of a scene dovetailed into a scene that takes place thirty years later …
>
> The whole atmosphere and mood searching through that foggy world of memory to find out who you are, what your history is – fascinates me. That's an example of something I read at a time when I was searching as a writer, and I found it. I'm not a big Proust fan … I have to say, though, that he's had a profound influence on me.[78]

Subsequently, in his novels, Ishiguro employs the strategy of using memory and hindsight. In *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, both protagonists –

Etsuko and Masuji Ono seemed careful about not overburdening their listeners with superfluous details; as their pasts emerge more vividly, despite their own achronological approach, it is clearer that careful reflection on the narrators' parts is a guise for purposeful deflection of injurious details. Seen first as offering simple stories on the surface, the narrators also reveal how deeply their self-estrangement runs. Reed Way Dasenbrock notes that readers "actually interpret, encounter anomalies, sentences that don't seem to agree with what is hold true because of the narrator's clever uses of language".[79] A reader's realization of such an aesthetic effect arises directly from Ishiguro's literary method: in order to create an emotional atmosphere where honesty and dishonesty of self-revelation might be discerned, Ishiguro combines narrative technique with a concern for human psychology, both for his characters who read and write their tales and for his actual readers. In narrating their past, the protagonists reveal a kind of self-interpretation in terms of limit case of the more general process of interpretation which was already spoken and may thus serve as a testing ground of sorts to determine its value and validity. As such, Mark Freeman observes:

> They are our pasts, our histories, and are in that sense inseparable from who is doing the interpreting, namely ourselves: subject and object are one. We are thus interpreting precisely that which, in some sense we ourselves have fashioned through our own reflective imagination.[80]

After publication of *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro again emphasized the necessity of his narrator's "suppression of emotion" and how the language of the novel depicts that the main character Stevens is "actually hiding from what is perhaps the scariest arena in life, which is the emotional arena".[81] By privileging this elusive arena of human experience as a theme and motive for the novel, Ishiguro highlights the techniques that people use either to uncover or

further to suppress their emotions, particularly in the manner which such emotions are prompted by memory. Importantly, the novels all have relatively clear time frames of past and present, but as the narrators delve into their memories, these two frames becomes complicated, and at times, distorted by emotions. As such, Heather Home denotes:

> The past cannot be changed for it has indeed occurred: the individuals view of the past, however, can be manipulated; it is flexible within a certain framework…When a memory is evoked it is not merely being replayed in our mind's eye, it is in fact being reinterpreted and reconstructed.[82]

Subsequently, the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro are narrated by protagonists who have something to hide, from themselves (no less than from their readers), yet who reconstruct their past failures and misplaced loyalties nostalgically, even elegiacally. Unsurprisingly, these first-person protagonists make for "unreliable" narrators – narrators, (in Wayne Booth's influential term) who fail to speak for or act in accordance with the norms of the work, and who therefore are to be construed ironically in one way or another.[83] In this connection, what Ishiguro says of his first novel is germane to all of them:

> The whole narrative strategy of the book was about how someone ends up talking about things they cannot face directly through other people's stories. I was trying to explore… how people use the language of self-deception and self-protection.[84]

In another interview, Ishiguro puts this even more boldly:

> The language I use [in my novels] tends to be the sort that actually suppresses meaning and tries to hide away meaning […] .[85]

In a study of first-person narrators in fiction, David Goldknopf writes that first person narrator tend either to "hand us immediately into the narrative situation" through a "direct appeal for our attention" or "to intervene between us and the narrative situation, forcing us always to evaluate the latter through them, making the operation of their minds the true subject matter of the story".[86] Ishiguro's protagonist – narrators selected for study namely, Etsuko, Ono, Stevens, Banks, and Kathy engage in both strategies simultaneously, insisting that their readers second-guess their perceptions, and thus read between the lines of their narratives. Put another way, all of Ishiguro's narrators claim to be offering their readers accurate reconstructions of their past when in fact they "attempt to conceal the overbearing shame associated with this past".[87] In this sense, "the truth is revealed to us through the words of narrators who themselves largely fail to see it".[88]

The selective narration presented in the novels each reveal significant aspects of the particular character's crisis; each narrator is in effect writing his or her own story along an emotional course to be tracked by a reader or listener who will bear witness to the tales. In order to make sense of who they are, they explore their own histories. Mark Freeman notes:

> We survey and explore our own histories, toward the end of making and remaking sense of who and what we are.[89]

Subsequently, to identify who they really are, Ishiguro's narrators examined their past lives, and returned to their past. However, Ishiguro notes that he likes to follow his protagonists "thoughts

around as they try to trip themselves up or hide from themselves".[90] In narrating their past, the protagonists thus suppress their feelings in order to protect themselves from painful experiences and to maintain their dignity as well. Similarly, they are individuals who repress wishes because they cannot face or even admit – wishes that, in Freud's phrase, prove to be "incompatible" with their "ethical and aesthetic standards".[91] Ishiguro comments of his protagonists - as characters who:

> Know what they have to avoid and that determines the route they take through memory, and through the past. There's no coincidence that they're worrying because they sense there isn't something quite right there. But of course memory is this terribly treacherous terrain, the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception.[92]

Each of the novel's narrators find themselves alone, distanced from mentors, friends and family members. For example, in *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, a mother of two daughters lives alone in England. One daughter is dead, and the other has moved away and by maintaining a strict privacy and distance, Etsuko is forbidden to play the role of mother in her life. Like Etsuko, Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* requires a sense of identity in order to achieve something in his life. As Mr Farraday notes, the butler has spent his life "locked up in this big house helping out" without the opportunity even "to see around this beautiful country".[93] His life is also marked by insularity and isolation, and he remains in the pantry, in which he shuts himself up, seeking "privacy and solitude"[94] in a dark, damp, windowless cell. Subsequently, the characters in the novels desperately seek relief from the desolation that they face, each therefore return to their past, working to extract from it a sense of proof of their own significance in order to deny the unendurable emptiness and powerlessness of their life. Cynthia F.Wong observes:

> The return to the past is prompted by an intense and personal emotion in the present moment of narration; each foretells in the opening of the respective texts of a futile, but necessary effort to reconfigure the events owing to subsequent emotion which the reader will identify as their shame about the past. Each return to a past which might atone for the present. Even a failed memory might allow each to re-examine significance in the new context and to account for the solitude of that past.[95]

In Ishiguro's novels, the characters do not undertake a revision of the past in the usual sense of simply re-seeing the events again. Rather, the narrators reposition themselves in the new contexts and assess their roles in contributing to both private and historical events. Thus, in narrating the past, the protagonists of Ishiguro's novels attempt to identify their existence with the aid of their memory. In doing so, they attempt to validate their life and try to give themselves a respectable identity either in their family or society. They are also displaced people and their displacement simultaneously results in a crisis of identity. In narrating their past, they suppress their feelings and instead of narrating about their lives directly, they indulge in the stories of their friends or family members. This notion is eventually revealed as the narrative progresses. Nevertheless, the painful past cannot be remade and thus in creating their narrative and constructing their account, they hope to relocate their identity. Lewis Burke Frumkes cites:

> The maze of human memory – the ways in which we accommodate and alter it, deceive and deliver ourselves with it – is the territory that Kazuo Ishiguro has made his own.[96]

Therefore in Ishiguro's novels, memory functions as a means of constructing narratives and identity, while also depicting the nature of memory which is characterized by its unreliability. Ishiguro expresses:

> I'm interested in memory because it's a filter through which we see our lives, and because it's foggy and obscure, the opportunities for self-deception are there. In the end, as a writer, I'm more interested in what people tell themselves happened rather than what actually happened.[97]

His works exude an increasing interest in the narrative structuring of memory as a way of making sense of the past. Memory is of paramount importance in building up the identity of his characters, and at the same time, it is also highly ambivalent: at times, it can be used to control the narratives, but often it proves to be beyond the control of the present self.

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CHAPTER II

MEMORY AND UNRELIABLE NARRATION

This chapter shall concentrate upon the dynamics of memory in Ishiguro's discourse especially in terms of distortion and its selectivity, which is related to partial forgetting or biased elaboration of past experiences. In his novels Kazuo Ishiguro makes use of the literary device of the unreliable first person narration. Wayne Booth was the first scholar to explicitly define the concept of the unreliable narrator in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, explaining that:

> I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he is not.[1]

Similarly in Ishiguro's fiction, the tension between the narrators' conscious version, the past they narrate, and the manner in which they convey their narration without intending or even realizing it makes them appear as unreliable narrators. Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse* states:

> In 'unreliable narration' the narrator's account is at odds with the implied reader's surmises about the story's real intentions. The story undermines the discourse. We conclude, by 'reading out' between the lines, that the events and existents could not have been 'like that' and so we hold the narrator suspect. Unreliable narration is thus an ironic form … The implied reader senses a discrepancy between a reasonable reconstruction of the story and the account given by the narrator. Two sets of norms conflict, and the covert set, once recognized, must win. The implied author has established a secret communication with the implied reader.[2]

The narrative strategy that Ishiguro applies in his discourse creates a sense of communication between the author and the reader. The narration of Ishiguro's novels examine

the motivations for unreliability and the way these motives affect the ways in which the implied author speaks to the reader (silently) over and alongside of the voice of his unreliable narrators. Indications of unreliability are, as will be indicated in the chapter, located both in the structural elements controlled by the implied author and in the arena in which Ishiguro expects the reader to interact with the text. The most obvious indication of the preoccupations that colour the narratives is found in the narrative discourse. In addition, Ishiguro makes use of structural elements: the conflicts between scenic presentation and his narrators' commentary indicate their unreliable or problematic judgements, and the order of the narration suggests something of the psychological preoccupations that influence the interpretations of their life. Ishiguro's novels, by both facilitating and frustrating the process of figuring out "what really happened" not only refocuses the reader's attention on the narrators' mental processes, but deconstructs the notion of truth, and consequently questions both "reliable" and "unreliable" narration and the distinctions that are made between them.[3] Applying this method has resulted in what David Lodge refers to as "appearance and reality"[4] between what the narrators narrates and what actually happens. In an interview with Gregory Mason, Kazuo Ishiguro explained his interest in his first-person narrators:

> Things like memory, how one uses memory for one's own purposes, one's own ends, those things interest me ... deeply. And so, for the time being, I'm going to stick with the first person, and develop the whole business about following somebody's thoughts around, as they try to trip themselves up or to hide from themselves.[5]

Therefore in Ishiguro's fiction, the subjectivity and selectivity of memory is explored through the device of unreliable narration. The complex time structure of his novels contributes to the staging of memory as a non-linear and highly subjective phenomenon rather than a process involving conscious and orderly chronological reminiscence. Ishiguro projects memory in terms of a journey into the past, which is a self reflexive project. The first person narrative situation may surely not be the one most "truthful" with regards to "facts", but in terms of transmitting a story, it may well be the most natural as it gives the most credit to an individual voice. Of all possible narrative perspectives, it certainly resembles face-to-face verbal exchange most closely. Furthermore, the effect of familiarization between implied author and implied reader can be reached most easily by choosing a first-person narrator – and an unreliable first person narrator only strengthens the ties between author and reader, for a kind of "behind-the-narrator's back-communication"[6] between the two is often the outcome. Riggan writes about the "natural functions of the eye-witness point of view":

> The very fact that we have before us, either literally or figuratively, an identifiable narrator telling us the story directly, possibly even metaphorically grabbing us on the arm, gesturing to us, or addressing us individually or collectively from time to time, imparts a tangible reality to the narrative situation and a substantial veracity to the account we are reading or 'hearing'. And … unless obvious errors of fact, outlandishly absurd occurrences, or physical impossibilities enter unexplained into the narrative, our natural tendency is to grant our speaker the full credibility possible within the limitations of human memory and capability.[7]

In his novels, Ishiguro has developed characters who rewrite their past with the help of their memory in order to heal the wounds, and to replace what has been lost and to subsequently recreate a sense of identity. Narrating the past has a freeing and healing effect on the narrators, but it simultaneously underscores the unspeakability, as well as the absolute unrepresentability of the real event. Ishiguro notes:

> I'm trying to capture the texture of memory. I need to keep reminding people that the flashbacks aren't just a clinical, technical means of conveying things that happened in the past. This is somebody turning over certain memories, in the light of his current emotional condition. I like blurred edges around these events, so you're not quite certain if they really happened and you're not quite certain to what extent the narrator is deliberately colouring them.[8]

Ishiguro examines how memory can be distorted so as to conceal the fact that one has lived a failed life. Memory distortion is focused by Freud and he has argued that the visual image that is brought to mind when recollecting past experiences are not pictures of reality; rather, they are distortions or screens in order to avoid facing what really happened.[9] Freud's central idea which depicts that conscious recollections are inevitably distorted by a person's wishes, desires, and unconscious conflicts have become one of the predominant theme within Ishiguro's fiction. Subsequently, in his novels, Ishiguro created characters who are so adept at disguising themselves. In this kind of narrative, the narrators' version of the story gets into conflict with another version, which is not narrated directly but the reader however discovers it with the help of "implicit additional information".[10] In other words, the narrators' version becomes suspicious because of "the narrator's unintentional self-incrimination",[11] which according to Bruno

Zerweck constitutes a necessary part of unreliable narrator. The tension between the narrators' conscious version, the story they want to tell, and the one s/he conveys without intending or even realizing it gives the device of the unreliable narrator its meaning and value because it allows the reader to discover the plot in an interesting way. The reader, however, does not always find out what "really" happens in the fictive world, in many cases, no single correct version exists.[12]

Unreliable narrators are mostly autodiegetic, which holds true for Ishiguro's narrators in his novels. Ishiguro's narrators constitutes a good example of a narrator who engages in long monologues about themselves, becomes as if obsessed by themselves and their stories and whose narration amounts to a highly ego-centric account of events. Ansgar Nunning considers such preoccupation with the topic of oneself one of the possible symptoms of the narrator's unreliability.[13] This self-centered kind of narrators actually provides a picture of themselves. For instance, in *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ono admits that it is difficult to remain objective when one's own features are concerned:

> I cannot recall any colleague who could paint a self – portrait with absolute honesty; however accurately one may fill in the surface details of one's mirror reflection, the personality represented rarely comes near the truth as others would see it.[14]

The reason for the inaccuracy of self-portrait is the personal involvement in such a report that the subject wants to hide the disgraceful facts and emphasize the positive traits. However, the biased depiction of oneself and by one's narrative often happens without the awareness of the narrator. As Etsuko in *A Pale View Of Hills* makes a comment about the limits of human capacity to

reproduce events, Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* warns about the deceptiveness of memory too:

> It is possible this is a case of hindsight colouring my memory.[15]

These and many other similar metanarrative remarks illustrate the psychologically interesting fact that Ishiguro's unreliable narrators do not intend to lie; they deceive themselves as well as the reader. In Amit Marcus' words, these narrators are:

> Self-deceivers who are unaware of the strategies they employ to convince themselves of the veracity of lie, and therefore their state of mind is not a consequence of an intentional act of deception, as opposed to the mind of the other - deceivers.[16]

Thus, in exploring the dynamics of memory Ishiguro created narrators who become unreliable as they remember selectively, which sorts out memories and erases those that do not fit into the desirable pictures of themselves. Suppressing certain memories thus helps his narrators evade such parts of the narrative that would give rise to unpleasant feelings, such as regret, shame and guilt. In this way, the unreliable memory deforms the narrators' sense of reality and it is this twisted version which they present in the narration. Zuzana states:

> Most of us have experienced the same play of one's memory: we tell a story, convinced that it is true, and then becomes unsure of its veracity when confronted with different version of it or when we realize that it contradicts our other memories. The majority of people have therefore

> been 'unreliable narrators' in their lives. The quality of unreliability thus makes the narrator a realistic image of a human being.[17]

Ishiguro's notion that memories are the reconstructions of past events merged with Sir Frederic Bartlett's theory which argued that the experience of remembering is shaped as much by the rememberer's "attitude" – expectations and general knowledge regarding what should have happened and what could have happened – as by the content of specific past events.[18] Similarly in *An Artist of the Floating World,* Masuji Ono connects the unconnected events of his life through the fabric of his narrative. As Mikhail Bakhtin state that whenever there is any "serious and probing" attempt at self understanding – whenever, that is, one seeks to rewrite the self. [19] Ono states:

> It is perhaps a sign of my advances years that I have taken to wandering into rooms for no purpose…Retirement places more time on your hands … you are able to drift through the day at your own pace … I must be absent-minded to be wandering aimlessly into – of all places – the reception room.[20]

This roaming through the house wandering aimlessly has parallel in Ono's manner of narration. He is drifting through various stories without obvious intent, digressing from one topic to another in no apparent order. Ono's account of the events, present or recent, at the time of narration is often interrupted by his return to the past. Digressions in narrative as expressed by Fludernik, labels "exegetical deflection", which involves the narrator's providing:

> excessive information about marginal issues and insufficient treatment of what the reader constructs as crucial topics.[21]

Similarly, in the novel, Ono withholds some facts and feelings concerning the negative aspects of his past, while he often digresses to stories which present his past in a favourable light.

Ono's narration undermines authority as he "struggles both to reveal and to veil meaning,"[22] manifested particularly by his perpetual deviation and drifting from not yet concluded topics. This signals to the reader that the narrator's account of the narrated events and of their implications is probably distorted. Gaby Allrath argues that digressions in unreliable narration also draw attention to the narrators' passion for themselves: the narration centers upon them and their own experience and views. Thus even when they speak about the other characters, they really give information about themselves, often in the form of projecting their own characteristics or states of mind.[23] Self-projection is an important feature of Ono's narrative: his frequent asides about other people, seemingly unrelated to the main topic, gain their meaning as demonstrations of Ono's own actions, feelings, opinions and self-assessment. Ono's projection of his life thus appears as his attempt to create a positive picture of himself.

In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ishiguro concedes that the structure of every memory is assembled on demand. T. Collins Logan in *Memory:Self* states:

> Memories are like dreams – manufactured things, a fabrication from incomplete perceptions, illusory impressions of the past filtered through, an evolving understanding in the present.[24]

Ono's account also deals with his own self where his narration revolves around his own person and his narrative as a whole amounts to a kind of self-portrait. His frequent digressions and omitting part of the story facilitate distortion and his avoidance in narrating certain pieces of

information. For example, he recounts the incident where he reports his former pupil Kuroda with regard to his "unpatriotic activities" to the authorities, knowing the harsh consequences of his action, he defends himself:

> 'I had no idea', I said, 'something like this would happen'.[25]

Yet, as Cynthia F. Wong notices, Ono shows no remorse for what happened to Kuroda which is further demonstrated by his lack of compassion when narrating Kuroda's shabbiness on a different occasion.[26] Moreover, Ono's act of betrayal is only portrayed indirectly – through his direct speech to one of the officers where he refuses to remain in the dangerous area of these memories for a long time:

> But this is all of limited relevance here.[27]

Ono's attitude to Kuroda can be seen as a good example of the narrator's treatment of his mistakes. He talks more around them than about them and by carefully selecting the memories to be recalled, he manages to escape his sense of guilt and remorse, and simultaneously fails to really acknowledge his mistakes to himself. Moreover, he actually praises his ability to make decisions, to go against the stream, notwithstanding the consequences that these decisions brought about. Ono speaks highly of the likes of him who had big plans and attempted to do something exceptional, even though their efforts turn out wrong. As such, Ono tries to justify his behavior in the pre war period and in order to be able to accomplish this self justification, his memory constructs a version of his past that present him as a man doing the best under the given circumstances. The consistency of this version would be jeopardized if Ono really acknowledged his mistakes to himself.[28] Yet, the same wish for self-justification forces him to recall some

events that hint at his wrongdoings. Both the need to tell and the necessity to avoid some parts of the truth lead to the digressions and indirectness in the account. Thus, he runs to and from certain recollections in an attempt to render an acceptable identity of himself and his past. Moreover, Ono wants to find some compensation for his present insignificance while succeeding the loss of his former position. He does so by looking back to his past and reminiscing about his achievements such as receiving the Shigeta Foundation Award that had resulted in "a moment or two of real satisfaction".[29] Again, he has to repress the knowledge of the consequences of such achievements so that regrets do not mar the pleasure that these memories yield. In this way, he feeds his 'conceits' about whose distorting effect on the self-portrait.

Thus, Ono surveyed the scene of his life, the path that he had travelled and finds that it is marked by a series of unconnected accidental events, determined by whim, convenience, chance and social pressure. Faced with the prospect of his own transience and growing insignificance, Ono finds that the identity he holds for himself is no longer valid and therefore looks back over his life and seeks to transcend this sense of contingency in order to locate a source of permanence. Ono admits that his account is not historically accurate, but that particular scenes have (with repeated telling) taken on a life of their own, that they have been amended to represent what he wishes to depict as his attitude in order to resolve each point in his life. He states that his memory may falter, like one engaged in a pleasant conversation, Ono moves from anecdotes to anecdote as present events inspire his memory. However, in the middle of recounting an anecdote, he would break off saying:

> But I am digressing. I was trying to recall here [instead] details of Setsuko's stay with us last month.[30]

At other times, after recounting of a particularly revealing episode, Ono stops short and admits:

> Of course, this is all a matter of many years ago now and I cannot vouch that those were my exact words that morning.[31]

However much Ono struggles to present as many sides to a story as possible, it should be remembered that Ishiguro's motive in the language of his novels:

> Tends to be the sort that actually suppresses meaning and tries to hide away meaning rather than chase after something just beyond the reach of words.[32]

Ishiguro explains that Ono's consciousness stemmed from his interest in creating a character who is mapping his own "mental landscape" and who in that process, is able to show that he "lacked a perspective to see beyond his own environment and to stand outside the actual values of his time".[33] The condition of Ono suits the philosophical observation made by Blanchot:

> No one likes to recognize himself as a stranger in the mirror where what he sees is not his own double but someone whom he would have liked to have been.[34]

Ono represents his past with the aim of proving that he always possessed the unquestionably admirable ability to think and judge for himself, even it meant going against the sway of those around him. This quality has injected into his account a number of reworked speeches to serve as foreshadowers, as manifestations of that quality, which, he seeks to establish.

Consequently, Ono's manner of narration, his digressions to different topics, and his indirect way of conveying a message hints at his narratorial unreliability. At the same time, this quality of Ono as a narrator originates in his wish for self-justification as well as establishing a well defined identity, provoked by his present situation, especially his being considered a traitor. More specifically, his desire to plunge into his past and to vindicate his own life is led by his fear of the repercussions of his past on his daughter's happiness and by his nostalgia for the pre-war years in which he was held in high esteem.[35] Thus, Ono reconstructs his past with the aid of his memory in order to create a positive picture of himself and to render himself an 'acceptable' identity.

Throughout his oeuvre, Ishiguro deploys that memory, or that which is remembered, is never static, or somehow capable of being thought of apart from the subject who is remembering. This act places or defines the identity of a subject's position in the present. Identities that draw upon memories are never any more fixed than the fluidity of the subject that is in the process of remembering. In *A Pale View of Hills*, there are a number of times Etsuko narrates that her account of the past may not be vivid and accurate, like:

> It is possible that my memory of these events will have grown hazy with time, that things did not happen in quite the way they come back to me today.[36]

She at first narrates that her memory of the events must have grown hazy with time but she later indicates that the distortion may be more active, and even deliberate. She notes:

> Memory I realize, can be an unreliable thing; heavily coloured by circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered.[37]

In these instances, Etsuko observes the limitations of her memory, and she recalls distinctly an "eerie spell"[38] or "a premonition"[39] that surrounds the remembrances of those events. At other times, she hints at supernatural possibilities or refers to events or people in both past and present whose significance she leaves unexplained. The calm tone that she has used throughout the novel shows that Etsuko may be suppressing or hiding from the painful facts of the period that she is recollecting. Her narrative only appears lucidly constructed, despite her own misgivings about flawed memory, but it is riddled with evasions of more painful truths about her life and her daughter's death. Apparitions haunt her memories and suggest an unsettled atmosphere. The gaps in her narration indicate that her memory is distorted in order to mend her understanding of how events have evolved in order to construct her identity.

The novel opens with Etsuko, a middle aged Japanese woman and the first person narrator, receiving a visit by her second daughter Niki at her country house in Southern England. Etsuko does not want to be reminded of the past. She notes, "I – perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past…".[40] The reason for this is that her elder daughter has committed suicide by hanging herself in her rented room in Manchester. The death of Keiko is at the same time the cause for Niki's (her younger daughter) five days spring visit. This visit functions as the frame story for Etsuko's memories and is set in the early 1980s. Even though she did not want to discuss about the death of Keiko and admits that: "Such things are long in the past now and [she] have no wish to ponder them yet again", [41] but at the same time the death of Keiko "was never far away, hovering over [them] whenever [they] talked".[42] Even though

Etsuko denies the fact that her story is about her suppressed feelings on the death of her daughter as well as a sense of personal failure, however, it is obvious that she narrates her story in order to overcome her painful past. Brian W. Shaffer notes that:

> Etsuko's "real" story is told exclusively by indirection…these circumstances are precisely what her narrative, at least indirectly, is all about.[43]

The most interesting thing about the narrative situation of *A Pale View of Hills* is the fact that Etsuko is by no means always conscious of what she is saying or implying, and about what words she uses to communicate her stories. In fact, many of the connotations and implications of her narrative are more often than not invisible to her. The reader is meant to recognize this gap, and the major of it is that Etsuko's own narrative reveals her unreliability. Tiny lapses in her wordings, slips of the tongue, periphrases and litotes – with these figures of speech, Ishiguro portrays his protagonist and her fundamental psychological and emotional problems through her own narrative. Riggan explains the nature of first person narration as:

> First-person narration is, then, always at least potentially unreliable, in that the narrator, with these human limitations of perception and memory and assessment, may easily have missed, forgotten, or misconstrued certain incidents, words, or motives. … Much of what s/he [the I-narrator] tells us also gives us an idea of what he himself is like and has 'a certain characterizing significance over and above its data value, by virtue of the fact that he is telling it to us.' His narrative cannot be accepted purely in

> absolute terms of true or false, probable or improbable, reliable or unreliable, convincing or unconvincing.[44]

The climax of the novel also comes in the form of slips of the tongue. It happens when what was until then nothing more than a good guess on the side of the reader is seconded by the narrator herself. Etsuko has indeed talked about herself when she declared she was talking about Sachiko. At the end of the Inasa-episode, when the frightened Mariko does not want to leave for America, Etsuko says: "If you don't like it over there, we [not "your mother and you" or something similar] can always come back".[45] And only a few pages later she again reveals her true subject, when she says, "Keiko [when it should be Mariko] was happy that day".[46]

Reflecting her life, Etsuko realizes that her role as a mother has not granted her a permanent identity or importance. She had abandoned her first husband and her second husband is now dead. For most of the novel (the sections that takes place in Nagasaki), Etsuko is pregnant, and is thus, neither childless, nor a mother. In the portion of the text set in England, although she has had two daughters, Etsuko lives alone and thus is, effectively childless. One daughter is dead and the other has moved away and by maintaining a strict discipline, has forbidden Etsuko to play the role of mother in her life. Keiko's death has presented for Etsuko a complex and painful challenge. She maintains that the death of Keiko and the question of her responsibility are long in the past now and thus she has no reason to dwell on such matter, [47] but at the same time, she is simultaneously overwhelmed by the need to wrestle with the matter. She asserts:

> My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable and I know I always kept Keiko's interest very much at heart. There is nothing to be gained in going over such matters again.[48]

In spite of her reluctance to face reality, Etsuko feels that she needs to wrestle with the painful past in order to come to term with her own identity, which is only possible in and through the fabric of narrative itself. Subsequently, Etsuko in her narrative filters her memory through the characters of Sachiko and Mariko, with whom she blurs her own identity and that of Keiko respectively. She distances herself from her historical past and rewrites an account of her life. Cynthia F. Wong notes that, as the narrative evolves and as the details become paradoxically more clear and murky, the reader discovers that Etsuko remembers the "friendship of no more than a matter of some several weeks one summer many years ago" in order to explain to herself what happened to Keiko.[49] The details of Sachiko's life seem to mirror and to foreshadow aspects of Etsuko's own life and her return to this period initially seems to help her mourn for Keiko. Although it is not sure of the extent to which Sachiko and Etsuko overlap (the extent to which Sachiko's story is in fact Etsuko's own), it is however clear that the character of Sachiko serves as a vehicle through which Etsuko can examine her own history and guilt while maintaining a certain distance. Thus Etsuko can carefully filter her memory of her past, examining, altering and ultimately approving them before acknowledging them as her own. In an interview, Ishiguro observes:

> Whatever the facts were about what happened to Sachiko and her daughter, they are of interest to Etsuko now because she can use them to talk about herself.[50]

This conflation allows Etsuko to put Sachiko on trial in place of herself; it allows her to examine her own role in her daughter's suicide, to probe the question of her own guilt and the extent of her own responsibility from a safe distance, and to test various interpretations and readings of the past before insisting upon one into her newly constructed account of her own history, Etsuko

seems at first determined to acquit herself and to confirm that she made good choices with regard to her daughter and because she acted always with Keiko's interest in mind, Niki's assurance that her mother is "the last person anyone could blame"[51] has become for Etsuko a possibility that, in some ways she wishes to avoid. Brian W. Shaffer denotes:

> This is precisely what Etsuko herself would like to believe but cannot, her guilt from removing Keiko from Japan being anything but absolved.[52]

As such, memory plays a vital role in the life of Etsuko through which she seeks her identity. Unable to face the painful reality, Etsuko reflects her identity through the character of Sachiko which puts together the dismembered past in order to make sense of the trauma of the present. As Cynthia Wong states:

> Etsuko remember in order to forget and reconstruct the past in an effort to obliterate it.[53]

Thus, the real story of Etsuko is told indirectly. In an interview, Ishiguro notes the way Etsuko uses her own narrative. She "talks around" what is really bothering her, employing a "language of self – deception and self – protection… she tells another story altogether, going back years and talking about somebody she once knew. So the entire strategy of the book is about how 'someone' ends up talking about things they cannot face directly through other people's stories".[54] Thus projecting her guilt onto Sachiko, Etsuko attempts to "avoid punishment and self blame by inventing plausible excuses and alibis"[55] for her misdeeds. Etsuko thus recollects her past in terms of establishing a permanent existence and to accept her own identity so that new interpretations can emerge for an enlarged understanding. Mark Freeman states:

> A condition of self – understanding is possible only when the past is re – written, such that new interpretations are made to emerge and there exist the possibility for an enlarged understanding.[56]

Etsuko, through her memory, does not attempt to render the past unconvincingly, but rather to construct the past. Memory thus becomes, at least partly, a therapeutic process. Again Mark Freeman notes:

> Only when memories are appropriated into the fabric of the self – which is to say – only when one commences to rewrite the self by incorporating one's memories within the context of plausible narrative order – can they be coincident with a measure of psychic healing.[57]

At the end of the novel, Etsuko has established an identity by returning to the past with her memory which enables her to examine her action from a safe distance. Cynthia F. Wong rightly notes that in an effort to understand how death overtook Keiko, Etsuko returns to her own past, which is filled with signs and premonitions of potential pain and loss. Thus, she seeks self – integrity and forgiveness at a historical moment when such qualities of human strength were in short supply.[58] Narration and memory are the only sources for Etsuko to identify who she really is and by recollecting the past with her memory, Etsuko has erected a structure to give form to her orderless life.

In Ishiguro's novels, his narrators attempt to make sense of their present by rewriting their past. This interplay and interaction between past and present is underscored by Ishiguro's skillful and effective deployment of the narrative form. Just as Frank Kermode notes that the text of the past are indeed regions of secrecy, whose meanings are never wholly to be discovered,[59] it is there, in the interweaving of episodes both past and present, in the free movement of the

narrative voice between these two points in time, and in the shifting locations(between postwar Japan and the more recent England) of perhaps the late nineteen – seventies or early eighties, that Ishiguro deftly melds now and then, here and there, into one narrative tapestry.

In *The Remains of the Day,* Ishiguro delineates a character who is as unreliable a narrator as Etsuko and Ono. The novel provides a great number of signals of the narrator's unreliability both in content and in form. The inconsistencies of content are related to Stevens' view about his profession, by which he tries to suppress certain feelings concerning his past. They often appear in the text as a "conflict between the scenes the narrator and the interpretations that he gives to those scenes".[60] The novel's title probably symbolizes the "evening of life", the phase Stevens has entered and in which he looks back at his past. However, Renata Salecl points out an interesting analogy between *The Remains of the Day* and the Freudian day's residues.[61] According to Freud, the unconscious processes of "dream work" combine experience from the individual's working life – the "residues of the day", that is the memories of the previous day – and the unconscious impulses to form the "manifest" version of the dream. In the dream, in which the unconscious content of the subject's mind becomes accessible, the memories of the day and the dreamer's wishes and thoughts therefore appear distorted, disguised as something else.[62] Thus, Salecl's interpretation of the title implies the narrator's unreliability: if Stevens' recollection of the past correspond to the "day's residues"(in considering 'day' as his life), then the reader has to expect to see them transformed by the narrator's unconscious into the distorted 'manifest' version – the story that he presented to the reader. In addition, Freud says that dreams underlie an additional "secondary revision" when the dreamer in his/her presentation of the dream strives to provide it with an acceptable meaning and so alter the dream by the interpretation s/he puts on it. These modifications to the dream resemble Stevens' adjustments to

the story and his additional explanations of various situations in an attempt to present a coherent story, whose individual parts do not contradict each other. For example, Stevens presents his life as dedicated purely to his profession, therefore he has to correct his comment: "I was not actually engaged in professional matters" regarding his reading romance.[63] Viewing the event in retrospect, he assigns a professional motive to this activity – he claims to work on improving his "command of the English language", [64] which he holds for a duty.

Stevens, as he grows old, feels that he needs to examine his past. Purely a faithful servant, Stevens is threatened by the prospect that, like Ishiguro's earlier narrators, he has lived without agency or effect that his existence has been without significant or lasting impact. Just as Ono strives to portray his very failures as successes, Stevens, in his lack of individual glory retraces the path of his history where he tries to locate the precious jewel of greatness. Cynthia F. Wong observes:

> Hoping to find 'some precious jewel' he may have dropped is an effective metaphor for describing lost opportunity and the futility of its recovery.[65]

In Stevens, Ishiguro depicted a character whose real journey has a metaphorical parallel in the trip which his mind makes to the past. Stevens' recollection aims to refigure his life and attempts to create a new version of his past, one more acceptable to himself than his real life story. He tries to narrate his life in a way that conceals the "terrible mistake" of his life and that imparts his existence a greater importance.[66] In order to achieve this goal, he distorts some details of what had happened and what he had done in his life. Lilian R.Furst had pointed out that one may misremember in various ways: by distortion through over – or understatement, by partial forgetting, by biased elaboration of past experiences.[67] Daniel L. Schacter also astutely remarks:

> When distortions and illusions of remembering do occur, these mistakes provide revealing clues about the nature of memory's fragile power, and also illustrate dramatically that our day-to-day lives can be turned upside down by what we believe about the past.[68]

In exploring the workings of memory, Ishiguro has also depicted that the process of remembering involves a complex reconstruction which depends on many factors like the present needs, values and convictions, which have a strong impact on the recollection. This constructive character of memory is an advantage in many respects, rather than supplying the characters with ready-made images, memory adapts to their present level of knowledge and focuses on those aspects that are most pertinent to the present situation. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens distorts his memory so as to reveal his identity as a 'great butler' but this however comes into conflict with his present identity which reduced him to a man who takes the wrong side in his life. Therefore, in recollecting his past, Stevens is simultaneously as unreliable and as sympathetic a narrator as either Etsuko or Ono. Cynthia F.Wong opines:

> Their stories promised a mode of detection at work: they both set out to understand the forces of the past as they sought to assemble some puzzle for this self-comprehension. But they also end their stories with keen but unspoken acceptance that the understanding is now futile knowledge.[69]

Towards the end of the novel, Stevens comes close to disavowing any culpability with his master's politics and defends his own decisions in what he believes are his own terms:

> I carried out my duties to the best of my abilities, ended to a standard which may consider 'first rate'. It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life

> and work have turned out today to look, at best a sad waste – and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account.[70]

This passage clearly shows Stevens' unreliability as narrator where he denotes that he has no reason for shame or regret in working honestly under Lord Darlington who, after his death has become public disgrace. Throughout his encounter with people in 1956, three years after Lord Darlington's lonely death, Stevens finds that he can no longer account for the devastating demise of Darlington's good name and estate. He may claim not to feel "any regret or shame", but those are the precise feelings that have now overcome Stevens as he narrates his life with Darlington between the wars as he is unable to account for his equivocation without revealing the nature of his own wasted existence.

Most of the time, Stevens speaks with authority and confidence about being a butler. According to Stevens, what distinguishes truly great butlers from those who are merely extremely competent is most closely captured by the word 'dignity' which he defines as:

> A butler's ability not to abandon the professional being as he inhabits.[71]

Stevens modestly protests that it is hard for him to make judgements with regard to whether he himself ever necessarily became a great butler. Ironically, although he declares that truly great butlers "will not be shaken out by events",[72] Stevens constantly finds the construct of his narrative endangered by outside events, and he must repeatedly readjust his narratives, while presenting new evidence and new claims to parry this threat and to reassert his value and coherence.

Like Etsuko and Ono who admits to a failing memory, Stevens also asserts that he is remembering only as well as he can, given the confusion of the historical times and his

emotional regard for people and events. Like Etsuko and Ono, the gaps and the inconsistencies in Stevens' memory sometimes appears genuine. However, as in *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World,* the emphasis on uncertainty also serves to distort and confuse versions that the narrator desired to remain unexposed. In other words, though Stevens insists that he acted with the best of knowledge, given the circumstances and times, his story also reveals that these limitations conceal important details which are too shameful to bring out into the open. Newton characterizes Stevens duplicity by the manner in which he is able to glide through his memories, alternately looking and looking away.[73] Moreover, Stevens seems both to know and not to know how past experiences have shaped his present life.

Closer examination of Stevens' memory and his way of narrating further reveals the tremendous trepidation he has in confronting the past, so much so that he creates a foil for the journey that he will undertake:

> It seems increasingly likely that I really will undertake the expedition that has been pre-occupying my imagination for some days.[74]

Brian W.Shaffer observes:

> Stevens' journey is figured as an attempt to break out of the house, out of himself, and out of his physical and psychical routine – to overcome his amatory and political disengagement – in the guise of a "pleasure" trip with business implications, the "professional motive" of restaffing Darlington Hall.[75]

Accordingly, Stevens' motoring trip reveals his reluctance to face the prospect of an expedition that appears as a simple motoring holiday, but that is also demanding in physical and emotional

ways. Regarding himself to be a great butler by serving Lord Darlington loyally, his dream was shattered when he learnt the fact that Lord Darlington was a Nazi collaborator who was disgraced after the Second World War. Wong deduces that Stevens knows what interpretation history has placed on Lord Darlington's life but he cannot bring himself to admit the truth. To dissociate himself from his triumphant service to his good master, Stevens would lose all protective illusions of the usefulness of his life.[76]

Stevens maintains his naivety in both professional and personal instances of his life to great ironic effect. His small laughs in moments of awkwardness reveal his inability to deal directly with embarrassment or confrontation. When he presses himself to make particularly intense scrutiny of memory, he lapses from referring to himself as 'I' to 'one' as a way to dissociate his present identity from his past identity. For instance, Stevens notes not 'I' but that "one would be meeting Miss Kenton again before the day's end".[77] Thus, 'one' gives Stevens the authority to question and examine his life in the manner that the term 'I' cannot. In this connection, Brian W. Shaffer explains that Stevens is a great manipulator of language that he uses words and his narrative to convey information which he is unaware.[78] Most significantly, Stevens can talks about himself only when he talks about others, when he talks about himself directly, he is compelled to lie. As with the route of his meandering car trip, his story itself might seem "unnecessarily circuitous"[79] but that is precisely the point his narrative intentionally impedes his voyage of self – discovery. Thus when Stevens concludes that Lord Darlington's "life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste"[80] or that Kenton's life has become to be "dominated by a sense of waste",[81] he in fact describes his own "life and work", when he addresses Kenton's "guilt" at helping to precipitate his father's decline in professional status at Darlington Hall,[82] he addresses his own, when he speaks of Kenton's "nostalgia" for

Darlington Hall of the old days,[83] he accurately reveals his own nostalgia, and when he refers to Kenton's "sadness and weariness",[84] he instead registers his own. It is clear of whom Stevens really speaks when he remarks that Kenton undoubtedly "is pondering with regret decisions made in the far – off past that have now left her, deep in middle age, so alone and desolate" and that "the thought of returning to Darlington Hall" must therefore be a great comfort to her.[85] And in those few moments when Stevens actually addresses his own feelings, he fabricates a substitute adjective for a more precise one in order to avoid revealing himself.

Thus, Stevens is unreliable in narrating his story in order to escape a failed past as well as a failed present. He distorts his past in order to conceal the reality that he had lived a wasted life. In the *Remains of the Day*, as in the other novels also, Ishiguro has shown a grasp of human emotions and the way each might manipulate memory in order to placate their pain of loss and reveals how people simultaneously deceive and protect themselves in the language which they have used.

When We Were Orphans covers the time span from Christopher Banks' childhood, which he spent in Shanghai in the 1910s, to the late 1950s, when he leads a quiet life in London. However, the late 1950s are not presented as the 'narrative present' throughout the novel. Instead, the novel is divided into seven parts, each of which is headed by a precise date indicating the level of the narrative present. Far from establishing an easily comprehensible chronology, they only provide points of departure for a complex web of memories and reflections. The first part, for example, set '24th July 1930', starts with:

> It was the summer of 1923, the summer I came down from Cambridge, when … I decided my future lay in the capital.[86]

This passage thus immediately leaps back in time before a 'present self' of 1930 has come to the fore. More specifically, the layering of 'past' and 'present' emphasizes two aspects of temporal experience: firstly, the 'present' is shifted from part to part throughout the narrative, so that the 'present self' can only claim to have an overview of the whole narrative (almost simultaneously with the reader). The present does not appear as a stable observation point from which to survey the past, but as a fleeting phenomenon that is just as elusive as the past. Temporal levels are connected in ever shifting ways, memory being an integral part of the action in the present. This shifting of the present thus contributes to the impression that the narrating self does not give an objective account of his memories but a version influenced by present concerns and needs, and that as these present concerns evolve, so does the rendering of the memory narrative.

The second aspect of temporal experience which is emphasized is the notion that the 'past' is shown to be accessible only through the prism of a later consciousness – in many scenes not just once, but twice removed, when the 'present level', from which a scene is remembered, is itself also remembered from a slightly later point in time. The past is thus represented as both elusive and pervasive: it can never be grasped directly, but each present moment potentially spawns a host of memories. On the one hand, the novel shows the tenacity of past experience, the power of memory to infiltrate and shape the present. On the other hand, the 'past' is as much a product of the present as the other way round, which is shaped by slowly accumulating experience.

In the first three parts, the narrative present is set in London in the early and late 1930s, at a time when the present self Christopher Banks is a young adult. The main development on the time level of the 'present' concerns Banks' career: in 1930, he is beginning to establish himself in society as a detective, while in 1937, he is already well settled. In these first three parts,

Banks' memory of his childhood in Shanghai is depicted. What is striking, however, is the proliferation of certain contradictions in the present self's account – contradictions which raise doubts about his reliability. Early in the novel, Banks' own image of his past self does not match with other characters' recollections. For example, when an old school friend, James Osbourne remarks:

> My goodness, you were such an odd bird at school.[87]

Banks is both surprised and annoyed:

> In fact, it has always been a puzzle to me that Osbourne should have said such a thing of me that morning, since my own memory is that I blended perfectly into English school life.[88]

Contradictions such as this one point to Banks' blind spots and it is soon realized that he has built up an image of his younger self that comprises stereotypical notions of 'Englishness', like a 'stiff upper lip' mentality and a public school education marked by comradeship and wholesome activities. However, the first cracks in this image already show almost immediately after it is introduced as one of Banks' cherished notions about himself. His self image is juxtaposed with a differing version of the impression that Banks makes on other people, but even in passages where there is no second character who could provide a different perspective, there are blatant contradictions. One of the most notable examples is the remark with which he introduces the catastrophe that ended his childhood in Shanghai and brought him to the English public school system:

> Actually, odds as it may sound, my lack of parents – indeed, of any close kin in England except my aunt in Shropshire – had long ceased to be of any great inconvenience to me.[89]

This stilted attempt at being casual, the inappropriate wording, especially the choice of the word 'inconvenience' could suggest supreme callousness and indifference in order to conceal a vulnerable point, as part of the 'language of self-protection' because in the course of the novel it is revealed that for Banks, his 'lack of parents' is the single most important factor in his life. As it turns out, his parents both disappeared when he was ten years old – first his father, then, a while later, his mother. He was then taken back to England for his education and, up to the narrative 'present', never found out what happened to them. In Ishiguro's novels, the emotions of both remembered and remembering self are suppressed. Although Banks must be deeply shocked by the recent loss of his parents, the past self is represented as completely preoccupied with the image which he conveys to other people – an impulse clearly also shared by the present self. The suppression of emotion and the control of image which he wishes to project have become a deeply engrained part of self protective strategy. So that in looking back, the present self sees only the image which he wanted other people to see.

Banks' present self that strongly wishes to deny self-protecting memories of his past emotional state may be inaccurate or at least incomplete becomes clear in another instance of an explicit contradiction with another character's memory, in this case the Colonel's account of the journey back to England:

> Gradually, from behind his cheerful anecdotes, there was emerging a picture of myself on that voyage to which I took exception. His repeated insinuation was that I had gone about the ship withdrawn and moody, likely to burst into tears at the slightest thing. According to my own, quite clear memory, I adapted very ably to the changed realities of my circumstances. I remember very well that, far from being miserable on that

> voyage, I was positively excited about life aboard the ship … Of course, I did miss my parents at times, but I can remember telling myself there would be other adults I would come to love and trust.[90]

Contrary to his explicit comments about his 'lack of parents' and his attempt to belittle its emotional impact on his life, Banks memories that are presented in the second part of the novel show that the present self is strongly preoccupied with the troubled memories of his parents' disappearance and the termination of his happy childhood in Shanghai. These memories lead back into the past that is now idealized as a lost paradise. Clearly, his present identity again plays an important part in the reconstruction of his past via memory. This has been reflected in a seemingly insignificant passage which describes how Banks' mother argued with one of the health inspectors that were regularly sent by his father's employer, the trading company Morganbrook and Byatt, to check the family's household. In this scene, Banks' mother remarks on the trading company's profits from the opium trade:

> Are you not ashamed, sir? … Tell me, how is your conscience able to rest while you owe your existence to such ungodly wealth? [91]

Although Banks professes to remember this scene very vividly, the accuracy of his memory is called into question a few pages later:

> I am no longer sure she actually put to the inspector the actual words … It now seems to me that even in her impassioned state, she would have been aware of the awkwardness of these words, of the fact that they left her quite open to ridicule. I do not believe my mother would ever have lost control of the situation to such a degree. On the other hand, it is possible I

> attribute those words to her precisely because such a question was one she must have put to herself constantly during our life in Shanghai …
>
> In fact, it is even possible that I have remembered incorrectly the context in which she uttered those words; that it was not to the health inspector she put this question, but to my father, on another morning altogether, during that argument in the dining room.[92]

This passage is significant in three respects: firstly, it illustrates how closely memories of the past are enmeshed with present preoccupations, viewpoints and desires. It makes clear that the present self can never be a 'neutral observer' of his past, but has an active part in its reconstruction. Secondly, it shows the extent to which Banks – far from being content with asserting an individual 'memory truth' – is preoccupied with the desire to ascertain the accuracy of his memory narrative, while also realizing the limitations of its endeavour. And thirdly, the fact that the memory lapse is connected with Banks' images of his parents is very telling – it shows that he has a tendency towards hypernarrativia with regard to the story of his parents' disappearance. As it turns out later in the novel, Banks knows and understands very little about his parents' characters and motivations, but constantly tries to find clues that could tell him what happened. The theory he seems to favour is that his parents' disappearance was connected with their opposition to the opium trade – a narrative that features his parents as heroes. He declares early in the novel that:

> I began to understand, perhaps, something of what had made it possible for my parents to take the stand they did. [93]

If the sentence that sticks out in his memory was directed at his father, this could bolster the 'opium theory' – maybe the mother's remonstrations finally convinced the father to give up his

position at the company, and maybe they were both kidnapped because they took a stance and got in the way of some powerful people. At the same time, however, there are hints that Banks' parents' marriage was unhappy. For instance, there are passages that suggest that his mother scoffed at his father because he worked for a company that was involved in the opium trade.[94] While Banks himself does not choose to pursue this point, it however hinted at the dysfunctional marriage of his parents which would go against the grain of Banks' conjectures. Therefore, a close examination of contradictions within Banks' narrative shows how the present self attempts to keep the past under control by suppressing unwanted images of himself and his family. This operation is a factor that connects his identity on the different levels of the narrative 'present', which are otherwise ever shifting through time. In describing his novels, Ishiguro observes:

> We are really witnessing someone playing a kind of hide and seek with himself, his memories and his conscience. That's what the book is about.
>
> …
>
> I'm really interested in unreliable narrators in so far as they have very interesting reasons for being unreliable, the deep reasons why we all have to be unreliable narrators. Because most of us when we look at ourselves, we have to be rather unreliable in order to face ourselves. So it's these serious reasons for being unreliable that interest me. How to hold on to your dignity when you think your life has been a failure. How you wrestle with things that you regret having done. The unreliability that comes up to those things interests me.[95]

Therefore, in his fiction, Ishiguro invented a creative form of unreliability. Indeed the narrators are unreliable in a way that emphasizes their need for self protection and self deception

in order to create a sense of identity. The transparency of the narrators' self deception signals as well their vulnerable state of mind. In describing Christopher Banks' own peculiar kind of unreliability, Ishiguro expresses sympathy for his character:

> The traditional unreliable narrator is that sort of narrator through whom you can almost measure the distance between craziness and the proper world out there. Christopher Banks is perhaps not quite that sort of conventional unreliable narrator in the sense that it's not very clear what's going on out there…I wanted to actually have the world of the book distorted, adopting the logic of the narrator. In paintings, you often see that Expressionist art…is sometimes distorted to reflect the emotion of the artist who is looking at the world…I'm then able to explore people's inner world much more thoroughly and with much more subtlety.[96]

In contrast to the other novels, *Never Let Me Go* is narrated by a clone, set in a society that allows breeding cloned individuals for "spare parts," it nevertheless projects a world comparable with the reader's own. The narrator Kathy can be anthropomorphized; although her situation is unique (she watches her old friends die in consequence of their donations of organs and calmly expects the same destiny), her emotions and sensations are not incompatible with the way human beings feel and experience. As with the other novels selected for study, in *Never Let Me Go*, the narrator's situation can be read metaphorically: for example, the tensions she and her fellow clones suffer from as a result of their awareness of an alternative life and a simultaneous inaccessibility of this alternative come up frequently among "real-world" people. Kathy is not completely reliable as a narrator, but the issue of unreliability is not as conspicuous here as in *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were*

Orphans nor does the element of science fiction have a big influence on the narrative techniques employed.

Kathy disclaims towards the beginning of the narrative that the story she narrates was all a long time ago that she might have some of it wrong[97] but proceed to tell the story of her childhood friendship with Tommy and Ruth. Kathy's three part narrative chronicles from the perspective of her present work as a 'carer' the seemingly nostalgic childhood of her and her friend's beloved school, Hailsham. As her memories are reworked in the present circumstances, she begins to identify small but peculiar turning points that might have instigated awareness of their condition. This limit set upon memory is noted early in the novel:

> Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves – about how we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside – but hadn't yet understood what any of it meant.[98]

As she selects events to turn over in her mind, she makes a link between the seeming innocence of childhood play against the subtle, unspoken, and not – yet – known actualities of the world beyond Hailsham.

In recollecting the past, Kathy once again used the term like 'baffling', 'wasn't clear', and 'couldn't fathom' which casts a haze over events. Uncertainty terms like 'maybe', 'somehow' and 'perhaps' worked overtime. Like the other narrators, Kathy peers through 'misted – up' windows and at foggy vistas. The terrain of her recollection is similarly not clear. Her attempt to establish facts is also unreliable like: 'I'll never know for sure', 'I don't really understand it' and the closest she gets to the definite are formulations such as 'pretty certain',

and ‘almost certainly’. However, like the other narrators, Kathy continues to narrate her story in order to come to term with her life. As memory (however fragile), is the only source of her foundation. In this connection, Daniel L. Schacter notes:

> Even though memory can be highly elusive in some situations and dead wrong in others, it still forms the foundation for most strongly held beliefs about ourselves … memory’s many limitations on the one hand and its pervasive influence on the other … is central to understanding how the past shapes the present.[99]

As Kathy’s memories unfold, more and more is revealed about the reality of their lives. Her narrative is about a journey to discover who she really is. From her narration, it is revealed that Hailsham ‘students’ are clones who appear and act in recognizable human ways. ‘Possibles’ are the idealized parents or human models that the students seek in order to understand their make – up; ‘a dream future’ is a heightened fantasy about occupations or careers that the student might seek if they were not already so fated; a ‘deferral’ is a hoped – for delay of their calculated responsibility to supply their organs; and a ‘completion’ is death, or the final event of their abbreviated lives. Even in literal terms, such words – ‘carer’ and human ‘donors’ carry a barrage of horrible implications, prior to becoming donors themselves, each student becomes the caregiver of those who will die. Each stage is a perverse rehearsal and reminder of each and another person’s imminent end. As the students move out of Hailsham at the age of sixteen they are temporarily situated in the ‘cottages,’ an idyllic respite where they can explore emerging adolescent angst and satisfy sexual urges. There, students are sexually active and are even

encouraged to experiment with their creative energies, for this is a last stop before they go 'outside'.

In the novel, the characters accept their fate and do not rebel against it. They have accepted that their life is predetermined and in the end comes each turn to 'complete'. The only consolation left is their memory. Kathy feels happy when recollecting her childhood days, her life in Hailsham and her relationship with Tommy and Ruth – right through to her carer years, it gives her substance and a sense of permanence. Even though the story that Kathy narrates may be inaccurate, unreliable and fragile, it anyway helps to strengthen her life and helps in facing whatever the future holds for her. She is very careful about her memories:

> I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them.[100]

After losing her lover, Tommy and her friend, Ruth, she is alone and it is only her memory that turns out to be the root of the strength and stoicism that enables her to 'complete' and control her fantasy. At the close of the novel, she asserts:

> And if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never gets beyond that…I didn't let it…and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out

> of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be.[101]

Conclusively, all the narrators of Ishiguro's novels describe important aspects of experiences in order to understand their effect as they see the end of their lives looming. They are engaged in the difficulty of understanding life in order to comfort themselves, even if they must lie in order to discover such 'truth' of satisfaction. Paul Connerton observes:

> Our past history is an important source of our conception of ourselves; our self-knowledge, our conception of our own character and potentialities, is to a large extent determined by the way in which we view our own past actions. There is, then, an important connection between the concept of personal identity and various backward-looking mental states; thus, the appropriate object of remorse or guilt are past actions or omissions done by a person who feels remorse or guilty. Through memories of this kind, persons have a special access to facts about their own past histories and their own identities, a kind of access that in principle they cannot have to the histories and identities of other persons and things.[102]

Wong states that unlike autobiographical works, which strives to show discernible beginnings, middles, and ends through retrospection, Ishiguro's novels instead reveal how such linear or chronological unfolding proves detrimental to expressing the emotional substance of the narrator's account. Often memories are not ordered in logical fashion, and ambiguous territory such as desires or involuntary memory may be more indicative of how people are inspired to

convey their stories. [103] Thus, Ishiguro seems aware of these gaps and the limitations of linearity and truthful representation of memory when he notes:

> I was interested in how people lie to themselves just to make things palatable, to make a sense of yourself bearable. We all dignify our failures a little bit, and make the best of our successes. I was interested in how someone settles on a picture of himself and his life.[104]

The odd self satisfying moment at the end of each novel of Ishiguro may reveal some of the dissonance between what actually occurred in the narrator's life with what he or she comes to regard as an acceptable version. Speaking about the events thus allows each narrator to deceive and to protect themselves respectively. Linking this human strategy of survival to a narrative technique, Ishiguro says:

> To combat complacency, I suppose I'm always trying to remind myself in my writing that while we may be very pleased with ourselves, we may look back with a different perspectives, and see we may have acted out of cowardice and failure of vision. What I'm interested in is not the actual fact that my characters have done things they later regret. I'm interested in how they come to terms with it.[105]

Speaking about their lives when they are old or when they can no longer eradicate old patterns for living, Ishiguro's narrators essentially fictionalize their lives by rereading and rewriting their own significance. In depicting the dynamics of memory, Ishiguro's narrators rewrite their past so that they can have access to facts about their own past histories and

subsequently their own identities. However, memory is so fallible that each character in the novels of Ishiguro (which are selected for study) distorts their past in order to glorify their present status as well as to hide their failed lives. In his discourse, Ishiguro explores the profound effect of memory in the manner in which it shapes one's life. He also explores how human subjectivity is not entirely coherent; that it is indeed a sight of conflict; that, like unreliable narrators, individual frequently "lie" to oneself, and with just a shadow of awareness- avoid facts that might undermine the coherence or the purpose of narratives while constructing aspects that are related to their lives.

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CHAPTER III

MEMORY, NARRATIVE, IDENTITY

This chapter shall attempt to concentrate upon the interconnection of memory, narrative and identity and how these concepts enable Ishiguro's protagonists to reorder their past. In his discourse Ishiguro vividly portrays how memory and narrative are the windows through which individuals are able to understand and are understood by others. He also explicitly denotes that the narrative is absolutely dependent on the memory of the narrator. It is made of memories, it discloses memories, it creates memories, and it brings back memories. His works shows that without the ability to remember past experiences, there is no life story to be created. His narrators use memories to relate the present to their past, to understand the world around them, and to create an interpretation of both themselves and others that utilizes their experience and knowledge. Herbert Hirsch in *Genocide and the Politics of Memory* writes:

> As an individual reconstructs his or her biography through memory, that biography becomes the basis for identity.[1]

Indeed, he asserts:

> The connection between memory and identity is dialectical because memory both shapes the content of what is communicated by the socialization process and is formed by that process. Ultimately, the self does not develop in a vacuum.[2]

Similarly, Ishiguro's works exude that consistency of consciousness and a sense of continuity between the actions and events of the past, and the experience of the present are integral to a sense of personal identity. It is commonly accepted that identity, or a sense of self, is constructed by and through narrative: the stories that one tells about oneself and relates it to other about one's lives. However, it is not only the content of memories, experiences and stories which

construct a sense of identity. The concept of identity which is constructed in narratives is also dependent upon assumptions about the function and process of memory and the kind of access it gives to the past.[3] In essence, memory is the fundamental force behind identity formation and self-understanding. Without memories, Ishiguro's character would not know how they came to be, what they like or dislike, or why they think and feel a certain way in response to a certain situation. It is with the help of their memories of specific life events that they have cohesive understanding of their life course. Their identity is essentially created out of personal memories as well as their narratives. Memory is at the core of constructivism, the active construction of reality by individual through the use of mental activity and the central protagonists in Ishiguro's novels actively construct their identity from memories and narratives. However, identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as it is often thought. Stuart Hall explains:

> Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, … we should think instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.[4]

Jerome Bruner's work is concerned with how individuals narrate or tell their 'self-stories'. A self-confessed constructivist, Bruner believes that 'world making' is the principle function of the mind and that the self is a construction, a result of action and symbolization. He writes:

> Think of Self as a text about how one is situated with respect to others and towards the world – a canonical text about powers and skills and dispositions that change as one's situation changes from young to old,

> from one kind of setting to another. The interpretation of this text *in situ* by an individual *is* his sense of self in that situation.[5]

The idea that the "self is perpetually rewritten story"[6] is shared by Kazuo Ishiguro. The characters in his novels find themselves in a position where they seek to overcome their loss and try to establish a coherent identity by exploring the self. They desperately seek a stem by which to anchor themselves. For instance, Etsuko's account in *A Pale View of Hills* can be viewed as the result of her desperate struggle to establish for herself meaningful reasons and causes for her current position. She is driven by a need "to bring a certain distinctness"[7] to her existence, to order the events of her life and to infuse them with significance. As she recalls her past, she strives to structure and to organize it through her memory and narrative, in order to identify patterns and consistencies by which to grant her life a sense of identity. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ono's memory and narration are motivated by the need to establish for himself a sense of continuing significance, a coherent identity. As he embarks upon his narrative and memory, Ono finds himself standing upon:

> The little wooden bridge still referred to … as 'the Bridge of Hesitation'.[8]

Stevens, in *The Remains of the Day*, purely a faithful butler is threatened by the prospect that, like Ishiguro's earlier narrators, he has lived without significance or lasting impact. As he embarks on his journey across England, Stevens feel as though he is "speeding off … into wilderness" and he finds himself precariously "perched on the side of a hill", peering through the "thick foliage" that impedes his vision hoping to obtain clearer view.[9] For Stevens, as for Etsuko and Ono, this clarity of vision comes as he stand on a high mountain ledge, looking out over miles of the surrounding countryside. In undertaking this journey, Stevens retraces the path of his

past with his memory and attempt to reorder his past with the identity he strived to achieve – the identity of a 'great butler'. In *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*, Christopher Banks and Kathy H. narrate their childhood memories in order to understand their sense of alienation in their present condition which further leads them to identity crisis. In narrating their memories, they are attempting to establish their own identity and to come to terms with their present life.

In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Lowenthal emphasizes that remembering the past is crucial for the sense of identity that:

> to know what we were confirms that we are. Self-continuity depends wholly on memory; recalling past experiences links us with our earlier selves, however different we may since have become.[10]

In this way, the ability to recall and identify with the past gives existence meaning, purpose and value. Ishiguro's narrators construct their identities from the knowledge that they acquire about their past and this allows them to understand their present existence because as Lowenthal opines:

> Those who bring more of their past into their present thereby both confirm their own identity and enrich the present with the past's amplified residues.[11]

For Ishiguro's narrators, their narration, the stories that they tell about themselves contribute to their construction of the reality of the world they inhabit. This is because, as Stephen Marcus in "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case-History" states that human life is ideally:

> A connected and coherent story, with all the details in explanatory order and with everything … accounted for, in its proper causal or other sequence.[12]

Ishiguro's discourses raises key issues about the function of memory and the ways in which it is reconstructed in narrative and implicated in notions of self-identity – an identity which is rehearsed again and again in a narrative which attempts to recover the self who existed 'before'. The experience of Ishiguro's narrator gives an acute example of the fact that much human experience or action takes place under the mark of 'what wasn't known then'[13]: what is remembered are events that took place in a kind of innocence. This model is suggested by Freud's reference to the 'retranscription' of memories and the structural principle of *Nachtraglichkeit*. *Nachtraglichkeit* is a word repeatedly used by Freud but never developed by him into a consistent theory. It has been translated by Jean Laplanche as 'afterwardness'. This concept makes it clear that because memory operates as it does in the present, it must unavoidably include the awareness of 'what wasn't known then'. As Lowenthal states:

> We interpret the ongoing present while having to live through it, whereas we stand outside the past and view its finished operation, including its now known consequences for whatever was then the future.[14]

Nachtraglichkeit has subsequently been developed by Andrew Benjamin and Peter Nicholls into a tool for the analysis of narrative and its relation to the past. Nicholls suggests that:

> To remember is … not simply to restore a forgotten link or moment of experience, nor is it unproblematically to 'reposses' or re-enact what has been lost.[15]

Therefore the concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* questions the belief that the past can be recovered as it was and unproblematically reunites the past and the present selves. Freud was, of course for the most part interested in memories of trauma (real or fantasies) which interrupt the 'normal' functioning of memory and generate hysterical or other pathological indicators, and the models of archaeological excavation and of *Nachtraglichkeit* were both developed to deal with the occurrence of repressed or traumatic memory. Much work on memory has also focused on trauma as "producing a history of the modern subject as a history of implication. This subject is recognized by its inexplicable ties to what cannot be experienced or subjectivised fully".[16] Freud also investigated the ordinary or non-pathological processes of screen-memory, fantasy, forgetting and remembering in ways which recognize the complex unconscious processes by which an individual remember or forget, and which problematise the idea of any uncomplicated chronological relation connecting the past and present in human experience. Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess:

> I am working on the assumption that our psychic mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances – to a retranscription. Thus what is essentially new about my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is laid down to various kinds of indications.[17]

Laplanche and Pontalis suggest that this description can be integrated into the process of *Nachtraglichkeit*. If the 'fresh circumstances' according to which memories are 'retranscribed' are taken to be the actual new circumstances of the life of the subject, as well as those

circumstances in which the proceedings of the past are remembered (as in Ishiguro's fiction), this develops into a useful model for memory, and one which is close to the configuration and effect of narrative itself. It also implies that the creation of the self is a conditional and unremitting process, rather than the 'recovery' of an 'original' identity. Laplanche and Pontalis explain it thus:

> Experiences, impressions and memory-traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with fresh circumstances or to fit in with a new stage of development. They may in that event be endowed not only with the new meaning but also with psychical effectiveness … It is not lived experience in general which undergoes a deferred revision but, specifically, whatever it has been impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context. The traumatic event is the epitome of all such unassimilated experience.[18]

Nicola King also asserts:

> The paradoxical 'knowing' and 'not knowing' is the position of any autobiographical narrator, who, in the present moment of narration, possesses the knowledge that she did not have 'then' in the moment of experience.[19]

Similarly, Ishiguro also acknowledged that individuals often lacked a perspective to see beyond their environment and to stand outside the actual values of their time. In discussing his second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ishiguro opines:

> The book is largely about the inability of normal human beings to see beyond their immediate surroundings, and because of this, one is at the mercy of what this world immediately around one proclaims itself to be.[20]

Due to the lack of perspective to see beyond his environment, Ono, a painter who rose to fame during Japan's heights of military nationalism in the 1930s, has to reorder his past in order to come to terms with that period, or as he puts it: "with the mistakes one has made in the course of one's life".[21] Ishiguro explains that he wanted to construct a character who was really no longer a part of the present world in which he found himself. Ono has made a decision to support national imperialism when it was already gaining ground and reveals that he is blind to the perspective in which the younger generation now regards him. As he represents the events of his past, however, Ono is forced to embellish the details of his actions and utterances in order to prove that one rests on an unwavering adherence to honorable principles. Overlooking the inaccuracies and hypocrisies that result from his doing so, Ono, in the first section of the narrative works to confirm that an examination of his past will reveal only that which is admirable. But as the narrative progresses, it is revealed that his actions severely challenges the notion that Ono's career deserves vindication and instead indicates that it was purely "a negative influence, an influence now best erased and forgotten".[22] Subsequently, Ono replaces the absolute worthiness of his past deeds depicted in his narration with an absolute acceptance of their deplorability. He suddenly announces that he is prepared freely to admit he made mistakes that much of what he did was ultimately harmful to the Japanese nation and that his was part of an influence that resulted in untold suffering for Japanese people.[23] Unable to ignore that the world now condemned his past deeds, Ono suddenly finds it to his advantage to admit to having committed great wrongs. Ono, now therefore centered on an active acceptance of responsibility

of his past deeds, an acknowledgement that his decisions were ill-founded, but with the insistence that, although he had since been proven wrong, at the time, he acted in good faith and believed in all sincerity that he was achieving good for his countrymen.[24] The narrator strives to structure and present this new reading of his past as noble, while asserting that there is certainly a satisfaction and dignity to be gained in coming to terms with the mistakes that one had made in the course of one's life particularly when such mistakes were made in the best of faith.[25] He denotes:

> I am not too proud to see that I was a man of some influence who used that influence towards a disastrous end.[26]

If the events of his life and particularly his participation in the imperialist movement have been merely contingent rather than deliberate and determined, Ono might have unthinkingly participated in a disastrous, destructive campaign. Through his narrative, Ono has striven to establish that he in fact possesses a distinguished, lasting and well defined identity. In reordering and newly composing his past, Ono has hoped to extract from the dark corridors, from the blurred sensations, the merging lantern – lit images and echoing sounds, a sense of identity and clarity, concrete evidence that he has achieved something of real value and distinction in his life.[27]

However, the scattered unconnected events of Ono's past never were linked together in a coherent web of significance, or bound within a dark outline. The identity that Ono constructs for himself within his narrative, the identity in which his past has made a significant mark that will not fade, are like his paintings, insular divorced from that very outside world on which he hopes to have had an impact, and which he claims to portray. Ishiguro observes that Ono's story is

about 'the need to follow leaders and the need to exercise power over subordinates, as a sort of motor by which society operates", and that the novel "might be look at it not as a Japanese phenomenon but as a human phenomenon".[28] Denial of a painful version of one's past amounts to the kind of effacement that philosopher Walter Benjamin describes as an inherently dangerous one for evolving societies: for one "to articulate the past historically" does not mean to recognize it the "way it really was" and that "for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns the past threatens to disappear irretrievably".[29] Ono's erasure of the stains of his past leave indelible traces however, and his narrative portrays that the reconstruction of his inglorious past has helped in understanding the events of his life. As Maurice Blanchot states:

> In order either to confess or to engage in self analysis, or in order to expose oneself…to the gaze of all, is perhaps to seek to survive, but through a perpetual suicide.[30]

At the end of his narrative, Ono is able to express a "genuine gladness" with regard to the disappearance of his world and the rebuilding of his city.[31] His memory and narratives enable him to reorder the events of his life into a meaningful one and helps him in accepting his life and his identity with all its flaws and failures.

Uniformity of consciousness and an awareness of connection between the actions and events of the past, and the experience of the present, are fundamental to a sense of individuality. Self continuity or a sense of identity is composed by and through narrative and memory, the stories that an individual tell about himself to others about his lives. As Daniel Dennett states:

> We are almost constantly engaged in presenting ourselves to others, and to ourselves, and hence *representing* ourselves – in language and gesture, external and internal … Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee, and conspecifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spider webs into self protective strings of narrative. Indeed … when we let in these words, these meme-vehicles, they tend to take over, creating *us* out of the raw materials they find in our brains.[32]

Ishiguro also develops his broad concerns for the way in which people seek truth in their lives, but who then find multiple ways of dismantling access to it, because of the painfulness of truth itself. Provocatively through the concealment of pain, the narrators also reveal their fear of revelation and knowledge of their lives; memory is both expiation and condemnation for those who begin a narrative act of leading to self-awareness. *The Remains of the Day* projects the memory of Stevens who tries to reorder the narrative of his past. His memory becomes an elegy for a gracious way of life that is no more, and the narrative of a human life which is unweaving under one's eye. Deborah Gurth states that a memory is a complete dynamic; it resurrects the past imaginatively in order to construct its meaning.[33] This is how the novel presents itself at first, as a testimony to a stately way of life on the wave and an attempt on Stevens' part to present his achievements as butler to Lord Darlington. As Mark Freeman astutely opines that human beings continuously need to be able to re-evaluate past experiences in the context of the present, so that they then can figure and refigure themselves and their world anew in reverse, [34]

Stevens, in exploring his own past, is trying to justify and progressively undermines the basis as well as the purpose of his life.

When the prologue opens in July 1956, Darlington Hall has recently been sold out of the hands of the Darlington family after two centuries, and after 35 years of service to Lord Darlington, Stevens finds himself in the employ of the American Mr Farraday, who told Stevens to undertake an expedition across England. Stevens nonetheless asserts that, although he has never ventured beyond the walls that enclose his life, he has in fact encountered the best of England and even the best of the world, which, he argues, has infiltrated the structure that divorces him from the world, rendering his own transcendence of his confines unnecessary. He is thus gravely apprehensive with regard to his journey. On the morning of his setting out, he delays his departure so long, wandering around the house many times over, checking one last time that all is in order. He is aware that, once he leaves, Darlington Hall will stand empty for perhaps the first time this century "an odd feeling" that he uses to explain his reluctance to leave.[35] As he drives away from the house, however, and the "surroundings grow unrecognizable", Stevens' hesitancy swells to a sense of "alarm" stemming from the knowledge that he has "gone beyond all previous boundaries".[36] In leaving Darlington Hall behind, Stevens has, in effect, step outside the bounds of his own identity. The identity that Stevens has painstakingly constructed for himself stand empty for the first time in his career, ready to be examined from a frighteningly unfamiliar, outside perspective; his journey across England will be a journey as well into his own identity and examination of his past. In returning to his memory and in creating his narrative, Stevens attempt to understand his life, as:

> Narrative, like interpretation itself, is an unsurpassable feature of what we now think of as human understanding.[37]

At one level, Stevens' present journey to the West Country may be read as an attempt to rectify failure to connect meaningfully with Miss Kenton, who seems now to tell him something about himself as she is describing her own life: "I have no idea how I shall usefully fill the remainder of my life …" and that the "rest of my life stretches out as an emptiness before me", [38] he could well be identifying a condition of his own existence. This prospect seems to bear itself out at the end of the novel when he realizes or perhaps has felt all along that he had misinterpreted her desires to return to Darlington Hall and that, indeed, she has found ways both to understand and to accept the somewhat unsatisfying terms of her own life. Jonathan Culler observes that such self-rectifying occurs:

> By subjecting language to a dislocation which fragments the ordinary signs of our world…and challenges the limits we set to the self as a device or order and allows us, painfully or joyfully, to accept to an expansion of self.[39]

If Stevens is both above and within the narration he describes, he is also limited to a particular set of experiences from which he can draw; by "dislocating" the meaning of selected past events, he is able to discover – with great pain or joy – further possibilities of their meaning.[40] How Stevens "expands" himself – either by enlarging his awareness or by reasserting the validity of his narrow vision – becomes an interesting focus of his narration because the vision is also very contradictory. Ishiguro comments on his deliberate attempt to reveal Stevens' false expansion of self, and the author frames it in terms of Stevens' unknowing relationship to the metaphor he creates:

> When Stevens says that [the greatness of Britain paradoxically comes from 'the lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart'] he is also saying something about himself. He thinks beauty and greatness lie in being able to this kind of cold, frozen, butler who isn't demonstrative and who hides emotion in much the way he's saying that the Britain landscape does with its surface clam: the ability to actually keep down turmoil and emotion. He thinks this is what gives both butlers and the British landscape beauty and dignity. And, of course, that viewpoint is the one that actually crumbles during the course of Stevens' journey.[41]

At another level of the narrative, then, Stevens' physical journey represents actual departure from the estate that has kept him focused and confined not only to his sense of duty, but also to a possible mental and emotional "expansion of self". Most people conduct daily business with an attention to past, present, and future events, for these temporal dimensions connect one's sense of identity through times of changes and development. However, Stevens' mental journey to the past and his anticipation of the immediate, more physical future show that Stevens may be suppressing the past with greater awareness than he lets on. If he had hoped to dissociate himself from past affairs, those suppressed events now return with a vengeance to his consciousness. Even allowing for a failed memory, Stevens cannot quite conceal the fact that he continues to be torn by choices he made in the past. Yet, as Stevens moves closer to and appears surprised by revelation, he devalues such benefit of hindsight, dismissing the fact that when "one begins to search one's past for such 'turning points', one is apt to start seeing them everywhere".[42] Part confession, part discovery, and part disavowal about himself in the various

contexts, Stevens' story manifests his ardent desire to explain matters from his uniquely estranged perspective in order to establish a coherent identity. A majority of Stevens' narrative, therefore, emerges as explanation or interpretation. As the novel progresses, a more discernible tone emerges, and it becomes possible to read his story as a defense against ideals which even he now considers outmoded and in error. He is attempting to rework the lies that founded his life, but his efforts grow more transparent and his failure to produce an acceptable version of matters catches up with him. Miss Kenton assures Stevens that her life with a husband, a daughter, and a prospect of a grandchild "does not stretch out emptily before her".[43] For Stevens, on the other hand, the future holds nothing to which he can look forward; he can hope only for "work, work and more work"[44] to fill the emptiness. When the artifice is thus torn from Stevens' account by Miss Kenton, revealing the emptiness of both his life and his narrative, the butler does not "respond immediately, for it takes a moment or two to fully digest"[45] the truth. The narrator, similarly, takes a moment to compose himself, to structure a reply that will restore his dignity.

Stevens finally admits that he "has tried, but it's no use". He has "given what he had to give",[46] and yet his life proves to have been lasting significance or meaning; the efforts he has made throughout his life, and the efforts he has made throughout his narrative, to construct a satisfying identity have failed. Ultimately, however, Stevens refuses to surrender his illusions and works to reinforce the fortress of his narrative and the structure it provides his reexamined past, to recover by the end of his excursion the jewel he has been seeking. During the pause in his narration, Stevens manages once again to suppress his personal being. The narrator now flatly relates that, at the moment of his conversation with Miss Kenton, "his heart was breaking".[47] Caught between the emptiness of his past and the emptiness of his future, Stevens is compelled to grasp after a new structure that will finally allow him to settle upon a sense of validation for

the one and a sense of hope for the other. Finally Stevens asserts that there is no "point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took".[48] With the help of his memory and narrative, Stevens "cease looking back so much" at the end and concentrate instead on "what remains of [his] day".[49]

The narrative reconstruction (which is done through memory) of life history provides the opportunity for a rereading of those events which, as described by John Forrester "would have been recognized as a purpose and would have determined the action, had it been anticipated. Analysis [including self analysis] seeks those intentions which would have been determinate of the good fortune, or misfortune, of the subject had they been recognized as such".[50] For example, the autobiographical narratives of Ishiguro's fiction recreate the events of a life under the mark of 'what wasn't known then' accentuating events which are now, with retrospection, seen to be important. Paul Ricoeur argues that the reconstruction of narrative – in itself the 'retroactive realignment of the past' – in the act of reading disrupts the common sense notion of time:

> As soon as a story is well known, to follow the story is not so much to enclose its surprises or discoveries within our recognition of the meaning attached to the story, as to apprehend the episodes which are themselves well known as leading to this end. Finally, the repetition of the story, governed as a whole by its way of ending, constitutes an alternative to the representation of time as flowing from the past towards the future, following the well-known metaphor of the 'arrow of time'. It is as though recollection inverted the so-called 'natural' order of time. In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to

> read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences.[51]

Ishiguro's novels also make this process of retroaction explicit. For example, in *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko construct her personal story using two distinct temporal orders, what Genette terms prolepsis (anticipation) and analepsis (flash-back).[52] Against the backdrop of Nagasaki's reconstruction in the late forties, Etsuko in England in the early eighties returns to two past – her own during the reconstruction and an earlier past remembered by others in this same period – in order to clarify the meaning of two futures: the "present" when she undertakes the narrative task and time beyond. When Etsuko narrate the tragic tale of her daughter's suicide, the 'madness' of Keiko's act is subtly linked to the memory of her own self. In one brief scene with her father-in-law, Etsuko refers to herself as once being 'a mad girl' and asks Ogata-San, "What was I like in those days, Father? Was I like a mad person?" [53] Ogata's response, "We were all shocked, all of us who were left",[54] alludes to the historical moment which would have produced Etsuko's 'madness' in a way that not only validates Etsuko's memory of herself but which also attributes a similar pain to others who remain. Ogata-San's words are both consoling and disrupting and his assessment establishes a relationship between Etsuko's past and present. Etsuko's own admission of madness also attests to an understanding of self that requires another person to either validate or challenge; she seeks a lucid witness and Ogata-Sans assessment propels Etsuko toward this understanding. His perspective, like those of other principal character in her past, serves to either mirror or deflect what she herself attempts to recollect. Etsuko reconstruct her identity from the mirrors of the past and from her interactions with other people, although what is reflected back to her may or may not coincide with her eventual understanding of the past. This marks what Maurice Blanchot calls a principle of incompleteness in telling:

> A human being, insufficient as it is, does not attempt to associate itself with another being to make up a substance of integrity. The awareness of the insufficiency arises from the fact that it puts itself in question, which question needs the other or another to be enacted. Left on its own, a being closes itself, falls asleep and calms down. A being is either alone or knows itself to be alone only when it is not.[55]

Etsuko's self-absorbed memory alone is insufficient to convey the fullness of any event and she seems to understand intuitively this incompleteness when she searches for remembrance of the relationship she has had with others. The memory of other people in this period allows her to locate and place into perspective, the different pieces of the past. While the personal story serves as the platform for the telling of other stories, it also reconsiders the past from new vantage points, thus reestablishing Etsuko's interpretation of events each time a new piece is added to memory. In *A Pale View of Hills* the various gaps and unavoidable silences produced by Etsuko's memories are noted by Ishiguro, who declares that, more than a coherent account of one woman's past, the novel is the "emotional story of how Etsuko came to leave Japan, although she doesn't tell you the actual facts".[56] The author adds:

> But I'm not interested in the solid facts. The focus of the book is elsewhere, in the emotional upheaval.[57]

While Ishiguro admits that Etsuko's memories are at times too clear and too authoritative to pass off as those of someone suffering from delusions, he nevertheless wanted to cast his narrator as one who still had not resolved some important tensions about her life. In an interesting inversion of an observation that novels "have beginnings, ends, and potentiality, even if the world has

not",[58] Ishiguro shows how Etsuko's story must necessarily remain open – ended in order to produce its haunting effect. Ishiguro explains that Sachiko's character serves as Etsuko's double self in order to show how people move through loss and death. Importantly, Ishiguro does not suggest that the relationship between Etsuko and Sachiko is an imaginary or supernatural one; rather, he expects the text to be more confusing though not daunted by the apparent similarities.[59] Remembering Sachiko is one way that Etsuko tries to console herself about Keiko's death and on the other to establish her identity.

Throughout his oeuvre, Ishiguro argue that identity is created from "incessantly readjusted memories".[60] In forging links of continuity, between who the characters are and who they think they are, memory operates most frequently by means of threads of narrative. His works shows that life itself is a creative construction, as there is a point at which an individuals' life and the stories that s/he tells about it begin to merge. It is therefore in this arena that Ishiguro's view is in compliance with Brunner and Dennett who views identity as something which is constructed. To Brunner:

> The self is not an entity that one can simply remember, but is, rather, a complex mental edifice that one constructs by the use of a variety of mental processes, one of which must surely be remembering.[61]

Dennett's works contain a similar construction metaphor; however, he turns to nature to explain the construction of the stories which then constitute aspects of identity:

> The strangest and most wonderful constructions in the whole animal world are the amazing, intricate constructions made by the primate, *Homo Sapiens*. Each normal individual of this species makes a *self*. Out of its

> brain it spins a web of words and deeds, and like the other creatures, it doesn't have to know what it's doing, it just does it. This web protects it, just like the snail's shell, and provides it a livelihood, just like the spider's web and advances its prospects for sex, just like the bowerbird's bower. Unlike a spider, an individual human doesn't just *exude* its web; more like a beaver, it works hard to gather the materials out of which it builds its protective fortress … This 'web of discourses' … is as much a biological product as any of the other constructions to be found in the animal world. Stripped of it, an individual human being is as incomplete as a bird without its feathers, a turtle without its shell.[62]

These passages highlight the fact that human beings have an instinctive impulse to convey their feelings and experiences through remembering and storytelling. Narrative emphasizes:

> The active, self-shaping quality of human thought, the power of stories to create and refashion personal identity.[63]

Similarly, Ishiguro's narrators also narrate their life in order to make sense of their identity and in order to express their beliefs, desires and hope in an attempt to explain themselves and to understand others. As Antze and Lambek observes:

> There is a dialectical relationship between experience and narrative, between the narrating self and the narrated self. As humans, we draw our experience to shape narratives about our lives, but equally, our identity and character are shaped by our narratives. People emerge from and as the

> products of their stories about themselves as much as their stories emerge from their lives.[64]

Through acts of memory, Ishiguro's narrators strive to render their lives in meaningful terms and in this way, narrative and memory help create a sense of their identity. However, these narratives must have a sense of order. Foucault suggests that: "continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject"[65] and the capacity to tell a coherent narrative of life based on the memories of it, seems synonymous with the concept of identity. It is in this way that the self becomes a perpetually rewritten story. According to Bruner, what is remembered from the past is necessary to keep the story suitably coherent. What new circumstances make the continuation of coherency difficult, an individual undergoes turning points that clarify or 'debug' the narrative in an effort to achieve clearer meaning.[66] The protagonists of Ishiguro's novels (especially Christopher Banks of *When We Were Orphans*) do not have the continuous histories that are required to create consistent identities, so he must rely on the memories or histories of others to then piece together coherent stories of his own lives. As Lowenthal notes:

> 'Memory' includes second-hand accounts of the past – that is, history; 'history' relies on eyewitness and other recollections – that is memory. We treat other people's memories like history, as empirically testable, as we sometimes do our own autobiographical accounts.[67]

Ishiguro delineated a character in *When We Were Orphans* whose life is disrupted due to the disappearance of his parents. The novel opens when Banks is already a detective and he return to his past with his memory in order to understand the basis of his adult isolation. In

returning to his past he also has to depend on other people's memory to find out what really happened to his parents. Banks recollection also illustrate that his father disappears because he leaves the house in the morning and never comes back. He is told that his father was kidnapped and that the detectives are looking for him, but of the four people (his father, mother, Uncle Philip and Akira) who figure as main characters in his life, his father has been represented as the least important, and on the whole the loss seems manageable:

> I remember contemplating the notion that I need not mind so much since Uncle Philip could always take my father's place. Admittedly, this was an idea I found in the end curiously unconvincing, but my point is that Uncle Philip was a special person for me.[68]

However, in the present narration, Uncle Philip plays a highly ambivalent role – while the past self adores him, the present self finds the memory of Uncle Philip extremely painful and seeks to avoid it. The reason for this is revealed at the end of part two: Uncle Philip is implicated in the disappearance of Banks' mother. He invites Banks to join on an outing to the Chinese part of town, and suddenly their relationship changes:

> He gave an odd laugh. 'You know your way around here very well'.
>
> I nodded and waited, the feeling rising from the pit of my stomach that something of great horror was about to unfold … I believe he saw in my face that the game was up. A terrible confusion passed across his features, then he said, barely audible in the din: 'Good boy' …

> Then he added: 'I didn't want you hurt. You understand that? I didn't want you hurt".
>
> With that he spun around and vanished into the crowd.[69]

Banks runs back to his parents' house as quickly as he can – only to find that his mother has also disappeared. This is the point where his childhood memories break off. The nightmarish quality of this episode, in which Banks is rendered completely helpless, is heightened by the fact that the mystery of his parents' fate and of Uncle Philip's role in it stays unsolved into Banks' adulthood. The catastrophe which changed his life is thus in itself already a blank space which is hard to integrate into a life narrative because its meaning cannot be fixed – or which, conversely, can potentially spark a host of different meanings. What makes the whole situation even worse is that the very person Banks has loved and trusted more than his own father has betrayed him. It is through his Uncle Philip's recollection that the cause of his parent's disappearance is revealed.

In *When We Were Orphans,* memory is again used as a tool to find the identity of Christopher Banks and the profound effect of memory in the way it shapes one's life is explored. Barry Lewis observes:

> Banks begins as a variant of Etsuko, Ono and Stevens, a mariner of memory, traveling for clues in his consciousness to help explain who he is.[70]

Banks returns to his memories of childhood in order to understand the basis of his adult isolation. In doing so, he discovers that his life is far from the normal or conventional aspects. 'Odd' though his respective circumstances turn out to be, it is his reactions to the new knowledge that form his narratives. In telling his stories and in recollecting the past, he confront – as do all of

Ishiguro's protagonists – discomfiting truths about his life. Unlike the early novels in which such confrontations also required that the first-person narrators evade the implications of new knowledge, the epiphanies encountered by Banks shock his recipients into a quiet yet painful and wrenching acceptance of his irrevocable fates.[71] Indeed, the novel's protagonist accumulates the very foundations of his pleasant but fictional memories of childhood. When Uncle Philip reveals the tortuous details of his mother's captivity to the opium warlord, Wangku, Banks realizes that while he had solidified the contiguous disappearance of his parents into one event of their joint kidnapping in his mind all these years, he now gleams the tremendous sacrifice made by his mother and the more mundane and selfish choice made by his father to leave his family for a mistress. In fact, though his parents disappeared in the same period in his memory, he now learns that completely different motives and circumstances caused the absence of each. The ending of *When We Were Orphans* express less the protagonist's "futile spirit" characteristic of Ishiguro's earlier novels than a mature bereavement and a push to move through an insufferable situation. As in all of Ishiguro's novels, the characters' trauma is brought to light steadily, as if the reader were encountering its revelation and implication along with the narrators.[72]

Ishiguro commented on his sense that "one of the sad things about people's lives is that they are rather short".[73] He indicates that a painful realization accompanies maturity when individuals accept that it is difficult, if not impossible, to alter radically the fate shaped for them by multiple people and forces. The individual is dealt cards – for good or ill – which founds an entire existence. Ishiguro adds that some small consolation is possible if insight can be gleaned and artfully manipulated should the cards prove less than favourable:

> It's that kind of poignancy, that sort of balance between feeling defeated but nevertheless trying to find reason to feel some kind of qualified optimism that interest me. That's always the note I like to end on.[74]

Just as Ishiguro casts the characters of his early novels in actual historical situations that largely constituted the course of their lives, he has the protagonists of *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go* confront a life which is indelibly charted for them. In these two novels, it can be considered that Banks and Kathy might have taken the alternative courses to re-shape their fates. If Banks had known that his life had been funded by his mother's sordid sacrifices and not his aunt's inheritance, would he have conducted his life differently? If Kathy had known that she and her friends at Hailsham existed for the exclusive purpose of sustaining a system of providing medical organs for the world outside, might they have sought a different way to live out their brief existences?

While these queries are as provocative as wondering whether Etsuko might have saved her daughter Keiko from suicide years after the two left Japan for England, or whether Stevens might have settled happily into domestic bliss with Miss Kenton had not duty to Lord Darlington beckoned him, they are finally unanswerable. This also clearly shows how Ishiguro portrays characters who reflect their life under the mark of 'what wasn't known then' and because of this he focuses upon how his characters acknowledge key turning points, or moments when a different decision might have been made to secure a better outcome. As he has consistently noted about the focus of his work over the years, Ishiguro is interested in developing the emotional story of his characters. Ishiguro astutely remarks about their hindsight, that generally; humans…

> are not equipped with any vast insight into the world around us. We have a tendency to go with the herd and not be able to see beyond our little patch, and so it is often our fate that we're at the mercy of larger forces that we can't understand. We just do our little thing and hope it works out.[75]

This philosophical remark about owning up to the inevitability of life, made at the end of his book promotion for *When We Were Orphans*, anticipates the themes that structure *Never Let Me Go*. In his works, Ishiguro explores the degree to which people creates identity through memory and narrative, and to what extent accumulated knowledge of the same contents yield them a course for change or revision, whether of physical reality or of emotional adjustment. Importantly, as in his previous works, Ishiguro has his protagonists end their narratives on the brink of a perilous threshold while signifying the end of their lives. It is this 'last note' – an often very sad peal – that reveals Ishiguro's assessments about human psychology and behavior.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy's "letting go" of the past comes at the end of the novel in the form of a fantastic wish. In order to find some semblance of freedom from future hurt, she holds onto ephemeral but devastating truths about life itself. She returns to Norfolk (the place where for her and her friends all lost things are found) only a couple of weeks after the death – or 'completion' – of her beloved Tommy D. and while at the threshold of an open field:

> I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was not standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the

> field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call.[76]

The long list of connectives in Kathy's last passage suggests her need to hold onto her desire to see Tommy one last time, but the sentence ends on the uncertain 'maybe' and concludes the novel with Kathy's understanding of life's eventualities and finalities. In holding on to her memory, Kathy is able to accept and understand her present situation. As Mark Freeman notes:

> Memory, therefore, which often has to do not merely with recounting the past but making sense of it – from 'above' as it were – is an interpretative act the end of which is an enlarged understanding of the self.[77]

Everything that Kathy had learned while as a student at fabled Hailsham comes to pass in this last moment of her book. Her troubled youthful friendships with Ruth and Tommy had opened the gates of memories of their coming of age at the school. These remembrances, tinged with complex and suppressed emotions, constitute the bulk of Kathy's story. But, now that she has lost both of her friends, a painful autonomy emerges as well. Old rivalries are laid to rest, as fuller confrontation with each of their destinies is unraveled by Kathy, including a sickening truth about the ways that all their lives had been scientifically engineered and socially manipulated by their guardians. There is no possible comfortable retreat into the past, for everything about their lives had been bound to a future that ascertains their inevitable demise. Their guardians had shielded them from knowing the horror of their fates. Kathy knows that at the end of another eight months she will face the same end as her friends. After serving as a carer for a period much longer than carers are typically granted, Kathy herself will become a donor

until her own completion. Though Kathy who must move through an imminent end, her memory and narrative enables her to understand her identity and because of this she remains strong.

Ishiguro admits that all his character had the capacity to accept their fate and identity. As he himself observed in an interview with Spiegal:

> The butler in *The Remains of the Day* can't see where he fits into the whole thing -- the history of England and Nazi Germany. He just accepts, and tries to rescue some little pride or dignity. With *Never Let Me Go* I knew from the start that I didn't want to write a story about an enslaved, exploited class that would then rebel. My subject matter wasn't going to be the triumph of the human spirit. I was interested in the human capacity to accept what must seem like a limited and cruel fate.[78]

Ishiguro adeptly portrays the turmoil of his characters' situations in elegantly evocative discourse; their memory and narratives depict the difficulty they have in owning up to a view of their actions and decisions. Jean Paul Sartre remarked in his autobiography:

> A man is always a teller of stories surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him *in terms of* these stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.[79]

To a certain degree, when remembering, Ishiguro's narrators make their past rather than simply retrieve it. In making their past, they are also making their present and future identity. Kim Worthington in *Self as Narrative: Subjectivity and Community in Contemporary Fiction* states:

> through both self conscious and sub-conscious acts of remembering … [which] impact on the present and offer new configuration for the future … through the transformative power that inheres in constructive self-narration.[80]

As a consequence, the public world portrays Etsuko as a lonely widow, Ono as a war criminal, Stevens as a butler of Lord Darlington who is a Nazi collaborator, Banks as an orphan and Kathy as a clone who will soon begins donating her organs until she die. These labels make them to reorder their past through the transformative power of constructive self-narration. Thus, the relationship between memory and identity is the ongoing central dilemma in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels. The butler Stevens in *Remains of the Day* continues to be troubled by the same as he realizes that his self-esteem is based upon his service for a perceived Nazi sympathizer. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, the self-deluding artist Masuji Ono must come to terms with the fact that his youthful support of imperialism has left him alienated amongst the rubble of post-war Japan. In his study for the *Contemporary World Writers* series, Barry Lewis identifies this as a preoccupation with how the "individual sustains a sense of self in the light of changing historical circumstances", and particularly how memory "might be used as a tool to keep your dignity."[81] This last assertion is brought sharply into focus in Ishiguro's sixth novel *Never Let Me Go*, which for all its pathos and understatement remains at its core a celebration of how memory functions to secure and locate the individual's sense of identity. All of Ishiguro's protagonists narrate their stories when they are old. They somehow know that something went wrong in the event of their lives and needs to be re-examined. So, in order to come to terms with who they really are, they indulge in self exploration which reveals the ugly truth about their lives. In the process of self exploration, they tried hard to conceal the truth by suppressing their memories

and by using a language of self deception but which no longer helps them at the end of each novel in order to reveal the facts of life. As Brian W. Shaffer notes, Ishiguro's protagonists employ one or more psychological defense mechanisms – in particular, repression – to keep certain unwelcome memories or intolerable desires at bay.[82] Even though each character finds it hard to accept their flaws and failures, they no longer had the capabilities to escape from their cruel fate. Ishiguro's protagonists reveal that identities are by no means fixed and through memory and narratives, an individual consciously or sub-consciously narrate the past, present and future 'identities' into existence.

NOTES

[1]Hirsch, Herbert. *Genocide and The Politics of Memory*. London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995. Print. 133.

[2]Ibid.

[3]King, Nicola. *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000. Print.3.

[4]Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora".*Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*. Padmini Mongia (ed). New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006. Print. 115.

[5]Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986. Print. 130.

[6]---. "The 'Remembered' Self". *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in Self-Narrative*. Ed. Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994. Print. 53.

[7]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *A Pale View of Hills* (1982). London: Vintage International, 1990. Print.99.

[8]---. *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). London:Vintage International,1989.Print.7.

[9]---. *The Remains of the Day* (1988). New York: Vintage International, 1993.Print.24.

[10]Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985. Print. 197.

[11]Ibid.198.

[12]Marcus, Stephen. "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case-History". *Representations: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Random,1990. Print. 276-77.

[13]As elucidated by King, Nicola. *Memory, Narrative and Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh : Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000. 22. King emphasizes that much human experience or actions takes place under the mark of 'what wasn't known then': what one remember are events which took place in a kind of innocence.

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[16]King, Nicola. *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000. Print.12.

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[19]King, Nicola. *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000. Print.2.

[20]Mason, Gregory "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro"(1989). *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro.* Eds. Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F.Wong. USA: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2008. Print. 9.

[21]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). London:Vintage International, 1989. Print. 125.

[22]Ibid.123.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.123-24.

[25]Ibid. 124-25.

[26]Ibid. 192.

[27]Ibid. 204.

[28]Mason, Gregory. 'An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro'. *Conversation With Kazuo Ishiguro*. Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F.Wong (eds). USA: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2008. Print. 10.

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[31]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). London:Vintage International, 1989. Print. 206.

[32]Dennett, Daniel. *Consciousness Explained*. London: Penguin, 1992.Print. 417.

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[34]Freeman, Mark. *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.52.

[35]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day* (1988). New York: Vintage International, 1993. Print. 23.

[36]Ibid, 23-24.

[37]Freeman, Mark. *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.48.

[38]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*(1988). New York: Vintage International, 1993. Print. 49.

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[41]Vorda, Allan and Kim Herzinger. "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro"(1991). *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro.* Brian W. Shaffer and Cynthia F.Wong (eds). USA: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2008. Print.76.

[42]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day* (1988). New York: Vintage International, 1993.Print. 175.

[43]Ibid. 236.

[44]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day* (1988). New York: Vintage International, 1993.Print. 237.

[45]Ibid. 239.

[46]Ibid. 243.

[47]Ibid.173.

[48]Ibid. 239.

[49]Ibid.244.

[50]Quoted from King, Nicola. *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000. Print. 21-22.

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[57]Ibid.

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[67]Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985. Print.213.

[68]Ishiguro, Kazuo. *When We Were Orphans* (2000). London: Vintage International, 2001. Print.141-42.

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[70]Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary World Writers*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000. Print. 147-48.

[71]Wong, Cynthia F. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005. Print. 83.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Shaikh, Nermeen. "Asia Source Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro", *Asia Source*, 2000. Web.14th July 2009.

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CHAPTER IV

MEMORY, HISTORY AND IDENTITY

The novels of Kazuo Ishiguro raise normative issues and the tension between public history and private memory. This chapter takes especial interest in the interface of memory and history. The chapter will subsequently attempt to analyse in detail the four texts, namely, *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of The Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans* where these texts rendered the tension between history and memory. The novels of Kazuo Ishiguro - *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of The Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans* bear a powerful and sustained interest in the tension between history and memory. Ishiguro seems fascinated with the uneasy coexistence of private and public memories in his characters. One of the struggling conflicts of each of his novels emerges from the main character's struggle, which is usually an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile his private memories with the public history of the nation and his fellow citizens. In his novels, Ishiguro reflects what Pierre Nora opines as:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition… Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.[1]

Nora defines how human society is haunted by memory as well as history. However, history especially as a profession and academic discipline, aims at something wider, more objective and universal than memory. History is always written from some point of view and can be more or less ethnocentric, but as an academic discipline, even within the constraints of nationally based institutions, its aims and especially its rules of evidence, are of a different sort from the memory of an individual.[2] Significantly, Ishiguro depicts the relationship as well as the tension between history and memory and in this regard, his novels show the twentieth-century transformation of memory as an intellectual shift from a purely individual psychology of remembering to a new

exploration of issues such as identity, literary expression, the mechanisms of memory and the relevance of the past. There is no kind of mental activity in which memory does not intervene. I.A Richards refers to memory as an "apparent revival of past experience to which its richness and complexity is due".[3] Richard observes that every received stimulus leaves behind an imprint which is capable of being received later, thus contributing to the various manifestations of consciousness and behavior. The human race has developed by means of the interaction between consciousness and reality, between the interior world of the mind and the exterior world, a narrative which is open to interpretation both at the individual as well as the collective level. Subsequently, the central concern of Ishiguro is the role of autobiographical memories which play an important part in recapturing and reliving the openness and contingency of historical moments in the face of deterministic tendencies of the national collective memory. In his novels, he depicts the effect of historical change on the lives of ordinary individuals. In an interview, Ishiguro testifies to the fact that:

> I've always been interested in what happens to peoples' values when they have invested all their energies and their lives in the prevalent set of social values, only to see them change… and to see what happens to people when, at the end of their lives, they find the world has changes its mind about what is good and what is bad. But for this particular individual, it's too late. They had the best intentions, but history has proved them to be either foolish or perhaps even someone who contributed to evil.[4]

A Pale View of Hills and *An Artist of the Floating World* are set immediately in post-war Japan and *The Remains of the Day* presents the decline of Darlington Hall and the setting of the novel coincides with the Suez Crisis. Even though the war is absent in these novels, it hovers around

the narratives of the protagonists. The private memories of the protagonists reflect the history of the nation and the path they had taken in their attempt to contributing to their country. But after the war, their social identities are defined only negatively by the public and are marginalized. In *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro presents the tension between history and memory through the personal accounts of Christopher Banks where his personal memory never quite match his personal history. Therefore the return to the past is necessary for each protagonist to reconstruct their identity and to understand their present life.

The effects of history on the lives of the individuals is clearly discernible in these novels in which first-person narrators attempt to come to terms with their values and identities by their memories against the background of historical change. Indeed, it is the undercurrent of historical change that provides the motivating force behind the telling of the tale in each of these texts. Far from being a historical novelist in the traditional sense, Ishiguro's attitude to history itself is anything but straight forward. As he has said:

> What I started to do was to use history … I would look for a moment in history that would best serve my purpose, or what I wanted to write about.[5]

However complex Ishiguro's purposes may be, there are distinct feature to his use of history that recur time and again throughout the novels, regardless of their specific historical contexts. These recurring features function in ways that highlight different aspects of the tension between the private and public memory in the changing historical contexts. In other words, even though the historical contexts of Ishiguro's texts may be accurate to a greater or lesser degree, and may call into question specific issues relevant to that particular historical era, this is not the point of the

narrative. Ishiguro's main interest is in the historical processes and their imprint upon individuals, rather than the historical periods. The personal component of history that is an individual's retrospection of his or her life is at the centre of Ishiguro's writings. His main concern is the intermingling of the individual's personal past especially how people try to cope with their past and public history on the other. His main concern thus becomes – how do people cope with their past? How does the past affect people? How do memories shape identities? In his novels, he tries to reply to these fundamental questions. Ishiguro's self analysis finds resonance among literary critics. On the junction of the public realm and the private domain, James Procter remarks that Ishiguro's personal memories:

> do not unravel within a political vacuum, but share complete relationships with wider historical events shaking the world.[6]

Significantly, *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, and *The Remains of the Day* evince the intricate junction of the public realm and the private domain. Ishiguro explores the historical circumstances as a means of disclosing how individuals endure the ordeal of the war, inspect the past which they dread remembering, confront the painful truth that they have been evading, and eventually determine the position that they will take in relation to that particular moment of history. It is circuitously through the quiet revelations of ordinary individuals that historical circumstances reveal themselves in fractions. This pattern of historical reconstruction compromised by narrative self-interest recurs throughout Ishiguro's fiction. In this way, his novels must be situated, though, within the broader context of the more general tension between private memory and public history. As in *A Pale View of Hills*, and in his subsequent novels, Ishiguro depict narrators whose private memories conflict in various ways with those of

the public historical record. In this connection, Barry Lewis characterizes Ishiguro's novels as narratives that are:

> located in transitional moments of history, when one set of values is replaced by another.[7]

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro portrays the replacement of the nation's set of values. Ogata (Etsuko's father-in-law) represents the older generation of Japanese that were prominent up to and during the war, and his presence is an unwelcome reminder for the younger Japanese. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, the aging artist Masuji Ono's constant efforts to reevaluate his youthful, pro-imperialist propaganda paintings never quite match the official reevaluations of that work by his colleagues, students, and the government. In the early sections of the novel, Ono downplays the significance of his work, gently fending off the implicit condemnations of his family and friends. When he reverses his tactic, and attempts to make a public confession of his influential complicity in the imperialist enterprise, he discovers that public memory has bypassed him and in the process he has become a historical footnote. The tension between private and public memories is at its most acute in *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens served with unquestioning loyalty a man who arranged unofficial meetings between British government officials and representatives of the German Nazi government. Much of Stevens' narration in the novel consists of his attempts to justify or explain his blind submission to Lord Darlington, even when Lord Darlington asked him to commit the morally repugnant act of cleansing the household of Jewish servants in order to placate visiting Nazi dignitaries. Throughout the novel, Stevens struggles to reconcile his own private memories of Lord Darlington (and what seemed to Stevens, in historical context, as Darlington's noble and virtuous - though perhaps naive - intentions) with the subsequent public vilification of Darlington after the war. As the narrators

seek to reconstruct, through private memories, a public historical context which they have experienced, they do so at least in part, in order to excuse their own behavior in that public context. Ron Eyerman states:

> Theories of identity – formation or socialization tend to conceptualize memory as part of the development of the self or personality and to locate that process within an individual, with the aim of understanding human actions and their emotional basis. In such accounts, the past becomes present through the embodied reactions of individuals as they carry out their lives. In this way, memory helps to account for human behavior.[8]

Similarly, Ishiguro deploys memory as an essential element in the formation of an identity, whether individual or collective as memory has bridged the gap between the past and the present and this in turn makes it possible to comprehend how an individual or a group come to be what they are in the present time. Nonetheless, memory and identity are 'flexible' in the sense that:

> Identities and memories change over time and they are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena.[9]

Setting his novels in a period of shifting values and customs, Ishiguro's characters find themselves displaced, inhabiting a space between cultures and generations, suspended between residual tradition and uncertain change. Their social identities can be defined only negatively, as they fail to meet their societies' standards of inclusion. Unable to adapt to the changes of their surrounding landscapes, Ishiguro's characters are marginalized and neglected. In order to come

to terms with their own identity, they return to their past with their memories which however is often in tension with public history. Ishiguro denotes:

> I'm interested in people who, in all sincerity, work very hard and perhaps courageously in their lifetimes toward something, fully believing that they're contributing to something good, only to find that the social climate has done a topsy-turvy on them by the time they've reached the end of their lives. The very things they thought they could be proud of have now become the things they have to be ashamed of.[10]

Here, Ishiguro characterizes the tension between private memory and public history as one which emerges from the contrasting attitudes and sentiments of different social climates. For instance, *An Artist of the Floating World* is set in the years immediately after Japan's unconditional surrender at the end of the Second World War, a time when the country was experiencing profound changes. As Ruth Benedict states in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, within the space of just one generation, the values of Japanese citizens underwent a volte-face. Before the war, Japan was encouraged to aggressively take its place in the world, military or any other means. This was partly to revive its economy, which had suffered as a result of the global depression in the 1930s, but also to restore its glorious samurai warrior past. After the war, it surprised many when the country accepted defeat with as much vigour as it had once urged victory. Imperialist sympathizers were quickly condemned as war criminals.[11] It is because of this shift in Japanese society that Ono has to reconstruct his life story and return to the past with his memory in order to render a convincing identity. Through the character of Ono, Ishiguro explores the condition in which the individual finds himself adhering to a set of beliefs that appear self-evidently correct, but with the passage of time are shown to be problematic or even

repugnant. Like individual memories and public records, the collective memories of these social climates can evolve and dissipate and consecutive social climates may explicit contrasting attitudes towards their collective pasts. Through their memory, it is revealed that Ishiguro's narrators acted according to the ideals of social climate in which they lived, but when that climate had shifted, they suddenly find that their actions have been reevaluated in the light of a new set of ideals and public sentiments. James M. Lang analyses:

> Public memory can be notoriously short-lived, and the difficulty which Ishiguro's characters face is that the collective ideals and popular sentiments of one social climate have no tolerance for – or even any recollection of - those past ideals and sentiments to which Ishiguro's characters were once committed.[12]

Hence their narrative task is to reconstruct the social climate in which they acted through their private memories in order to establish their identity in the changing environment. However, this narrative motivation produces the tension between private memory and public history in Ishiguro's fiction. In "Individual Remembering and Collective Memory: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates", Anna Green denotes:

> In practice, individual and collective memories are often in tension, and the recollections of individuals frequently challenge the construction of partial accounts designed primarily to achieve collective unity.[13]

The competing strategies of historicization in Ishiguro's novels - official, public, diplomatic history in contrast with the private memories of the protagonists - find a parallel in the slow movement, on the part of twentieth-century historians, away from the grand narratives

and grand characters of earlier historiography toward the lives and experiences of the ordinary, the mundane, the marginalized, and the dispossessed.[14] This interest in the margins can be traced in part from the practices of the mid-twentieth-century historians - like those associated with the Annales school in France - who, rejecting the nineteenth-century grand narrative tradition of historiography, began to borrow more systematically from the methodologies and quantitative analytic tools of the social sciences. Those historians compiled portraits of everyday life, usually doing so without the help of much traditional narrative.[15] In this respect, much postwar historiography partakes of a common trend in postmodernism, as it has been defined by Linda Hutcheon and others, in freely borrowing methods and strategies from past traditions without necessarily embracing the philosophical convictions which, in the past, had underlain those methods. In her *Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon consistently finds an "ideology of plurality and a recognition of difference", [16] or a recognition that adapt older narrative and historiographic forms without the philosophical baggage which accompanied those forms in earlier manifestations. Perhaps the most dramatic instance of the contemporary historian's commitment to a new kind of history appears in the opening dedication of French historian Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "To the ordinary man ... To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets ...".[17] De Certeau goes on to suggest that his interest in this ordinary man represents an inevitable or progressive stage of historical analysis:

> The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons, turning first toward the chorus of secondary characters, then settling on the mass of the audience. The increasingly sociological and anthropological perspective of inquiry privileges the

> anonymous and the everyday ... Slowly the representatives that formerly symbolized families, groups, and orders disappear from the stage they dominated during the epoch of the name.[18]

Palpable in Ishiguro's representation of the Second World War is that the significance of a historical incident is defined by ordinary people rather than by a political entity. The depiction is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's veneration of everyday life: history has shifted its limelight from "the actors who possess proper names and social blazons" toward "the anonymous and the everyday," seeking in the mundane existence "metonymic details" of a specific epoch.[19] Center-staging little narratives of ordinary people, Ishiguro's novels depicted ordinary individuals who replaces heroic figures and their accounts of the warfare's psychological repercussions supplement, if not succeed, official chronicles of political negotiations, military actions and casualties. *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* delineate, respectively from a housewife and retired artist, how the war has devastated the landscape of Japan and traumatized the collective psyche of its civilians. *The Remains of the Day* captures, from the standpoint of an aging butler, Britain's nostalgia for the prewar splendor. *When We Were Orphans* has delineated from the detective perspective the opium trade in China which he thought had some connection with the disappearance of his parents.

The diversity of these four narrators indicate Ishiguro's consciousness that cultural, gender and ideological positions an individual takes at once inform and restrict his or her historical perspectives. Though experiencing the war firsthand, each of them witnesses merely minute segment of reality and thereby fails to comprehend the war as a whole and its aftermath. Living through world events, they do not always understand these occurrences' significance nor immediately discern any correlation among them. As Cynthia F. Wong remarks:

> All of Ishiguro's narrators structure their tales according to discernable historical events and, in the unfolding of their texts, the narrators appear to arrive closer at uncovering some missing version of truth about that period.[20]

For the truth they gradually uncover is not "veritable historical objectivity" but "the emotional conditions of people undergoing intense experiences related to recognizable world events".[21]

Centering on the witness-narrator's vision and deception, the four novels, *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans* disclose that the position the protagonists take varies with the historical distance that they hold from a reminisced past, the geographical location that they were born into, the gender role(s) that they are expected to play, and the emotional state one has to maintain in relation to earlier incidents. Each of the novels' narrators looks back to an individual past which is entangled with the national history. This unfurls an ordinary existence that is crushed by the imperial folly of their nation, exposes personal anguish that is too often muffled by the official rhetoric of patriotism, and divulges through the disjointed memories the apertures that are concealed in cohesive historical explanations. As Liz James notes that, "identities are actively constructed instead of being discovered",[22] Ishiguro's narrators construct their identities by returning to their past and promotes their identity through the awareness of the past and self in time.

In each of the four novels, diary entries juxtapose the first-person narrator's current thoughts and earlier experiences, with the former encasing the latter. Framing the past in the present, the diary fiction achieves desirable effects. Ishiguro states that in diary entries recognizable events can be strategically encoded in the dates of entries. Generically private, a

journal prefigures the absence of any explanation as to why certain dates are selected, and purposely leaving the gap for the reader to fill. The internal and subjective time reminisced in the narrators' diary contrast the aspects of external objective time which is indicated in the entry dates. That is, while journals are kept in chronological order, memories emerge in disrupted and recurrent temporality.[23] Thus in the novels the post-war years are pieced together in the narrators' disjointed remembrances which is an epoch of drastic social disintegration. Other than a literary device to capture changes of the diarist – narrators' emotional condition, the diary novel is instrumental in justifying the obscurity of the significant. Marked with dates, diary entries situate the narrators firmly in time, intimating the background of narration. The publishing date of each novel, on the other hand informs the reader from what temporal distance certain historical events are represented and how that distance is translated into narration.

Ishiguro's critical stance is discernible when he juxtaposed his text with its context; that is, the historical events are analyzed in the light of the protagonists' memories and collective experiences are glimpsed through accounts of personal reflection. Set against the nuclear calamities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* capture in the narrators' retrospect, the overwhelming agony individuals undergo during bomb-induced devastation. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko's diary entries refer to the five-day stay of her younger daughter Niki after the suicide of her elder daughter Keiko. Though triggered by Niki's recent visit, the content of Etsuko's diary revolves around Etsuko's past in Nagasaki rather than Niki's stay. Etsuko neither marks the dates of her entries nor specifies the years of her Nagasaki past. Etsuko narrates her memories of life in Nagasaki in the aftermath of the falling of the atom bomb on the city on August 9th 1945. Her reference at the beginning of her narrative to the "Americans soldiers were as numerous as ever - for there was fighting in Korea but in

Nagasaki after what had gone before, those were days of calm and relief",[24] date her memories to the period of transition when the Allied Occupation (1945-52) came to a near end and the US military gradually diverted their attention to the conflict in Korea (1950-53).[25] The world, she argues, "had a feeling of change about it".[26] Throughout the novel, the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, a tragedy that alters the course of Etsuko's fate, is nonchalantly spoken of as "the bomb" on three occasions.[27] The silence of the atomic bombing is inherently deliberate and for good reasons. One of the two cities ravaged by the nuclear warfare, Hiroshima often overshadows Nagasaki because it was assaulted first, on 6 August 1945, and Nagasaki was attacked three days later. Hiroshima also suffered significantly greater damages and casualties.[28] The two cities have accordingly become synonymous with the nuclear catastrophe, and contemporary literature on the horror of atomic bombing inevitably taps into the historical implication which the city's name evokes. The high-profile absence of the bomb explains the unutterable desolation that Ishiguro has intended for individual introspection. To explicitly evoke the memory of the bomb, Ishiguro may have even risked trivializing the grief which is most private to the survivors (and this is a risk he avoids). Obscuring the bomb, the novel implies that the horror can neither be fully articulated nor be expelled, for it is a past that continues to haunt and disturb the present moment. But the effects of the bomb are still uncomfortably close in people's minds.

Etsuko is undoubtedly in denial, not just about Keiko, but also about what she suffered in Nagasaki during the war. When she was first taken in by Ogata, she was in such a state of shock that she behaved like a 'mad person' even playing the violin obsessively in the middle of the night. In spite of her experiences, she never once spoke about her loss. Instead, she alluded vaguely a few times to the "worst days"[29] and the "nightmares of wartime".[30] Barry Lewis

observes that "Etsuko's need to blank out her past does not account fully, though, for the astonishing absence at the centre of the novel. Nor does it explain the arcane process of how the novel manages to affirm that which is denied".[31] Wood denotes:

> Almost everything is unspeakable here, and yet it gets spoken.[32]

In *A Pale View of Hills*, the tension between history and memory is depicted through Etsuko's recollection which reveals that her father-in-law Ogata San's values are at odds with the American process of democratization which the public embraced. Ogata San is incredulous that the newly implemented system of democratic government enables wives to vote differently from their husbands abandoning their "obligations".[33] The American occupation of Japan between 1945 and 1952 is deemed counter-productive to Japan's cultural uniqueness, as evidenced by Ogata's comments to his son Jiro:

> Discipline, loyalty, such things held Japan together once. That may sound fanciful, but it's true. People were bound by a sense of duty. Towards one's family, towards superiors, towards the country. But now instead there's all this talk of democracy. You hear it whenever people want to be selfish, whenever they want to forget obligations.[34]

The values that Ogata espouses unsettle Jiro, who, it seems, wishes to forget them. He forces Jiro to "glance back" at things he would rather not confront. For this reason scenes between Ogata and Jiro are often adversarial. On one occasion Ogata asks Jiro to respond to an article written by his former student, Shigeo that represents disapprovingly the careers of Ogata and his friend, Endo. When Ogata asks Jiro if he has fulfilled his wishes during a game of chess, Jiro evades the issue by claiming to be "too busy".[35] He is unwilling to perform the task. The game is interrupted

by the surprise visit of Jiro's colleagues, and the chess pieces become disturbed. When Ogata invites Jiro to complete the game later, he begins to criticize Jiro's strategy, warning his son that he has not paid attention to what he has been taught. Jiro's response is to admit defeat:

> 'A game isn't won and lost at a point when the king is finally cornered. The game's sealed when a player gives up having any strategy at all. When his soldiers are all scattered, they have no common cause, and they move one piece at a time, that's when you've lost'.
>
> 'Very well Father, I admit it. I've lost. Now perhaps we can forget about it'.
>
> 'Why Jiro, this is sheer defeatism. The game's far from lost, I've just told you. You should be planning your defense now, to survive and fight me again'.[36]

Through the conversation between Ogata and Jiro in their game of chess, Ishiguro articulates the differing views that concern Japan's failure in the war. Jiro's acceptance of defeat invites a reading of his mood as exemplary of the emergent Japanese generation - admitting defeat, accepting loss and trying to forget. For Ogata, this unwillingness to follow that which has been taught is incomprehensible, nothing short of giving in to opposition. Jiro's mood seems typical. It emerges also in the comments of Ogata's former pupil, Shigeo, during a visit from his old master. The importance of Japan's culture is openly rejected by Shigeo, who accuses Ogata of doing great damage as a teacher by espousing principles that have led to destruction:

> '[...] In your day, children in Japan were taught terrible things. They were taught lies of the most damaging, kind. Worst of all, they were taught not

> to see, not to question. And that's why the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history'.
>
> 'We may have lost the war', Ogata-san interrupted, 'but that's no reason to ape the ways of the enemy. We lost the war because we didn't have enough guns and tanks, not because our people were cowardly, not because our country was shallow. [...]'[37]

Ogata's reflection of the history of Japan shows that the defeat was caused by lack of military strength. On the other hand, Shigeo believes the war rendered redundant the values cherished by Ogata and his contemporaries. He tells Ogata that "we live in a different age from those days when ... when you were an influential figure"[38] implying that the militaristic Japan Ogata supports has been discredited, and superseded by a better society. However, Shigeo's vocabulary suggests that elements from Ogata's Japan may well remain embedded in the attitudes of the younger generation, despite their seeming opposition to the previous generation.

What is obfuscated in Etsuko's remembrance is the reason as to why she divorces her first husband Jiro and settles in England with her second husband Sheringham. She mentions neither how she meets Sheringham, a journalist posted in Japan then, nor why Jiro agrees to give up Keiko's custody. She mentions Sheringham only twice throughout the narrative, giving sketchy portraits of an Englishman whose understanding of Japan is superficial.[39] Though the phrase "war bride"[40] never surfaces in Etsuko's narration, it may very well explain how she starts anew through marrying a British journalist. Etsuko's second marriage fits the profile of war bride marriage. Quietly integrated into the core narrative of the novel, this war-induced social phenomenon fills certain gaps in Etsuko's narration, in particular shame-induced prevarications. Chu-cheuh Cheng observes:

> Japanese women of Etsuko's generation wish for something other than the material comfort that American products give; they seek the freedom and opportunities that America promises.[41]

Therefore empowered by the Allied-initiated democratization, Etsuko is no longer willing to endure the constraints of gender responsibilities and she seeks a means of escape. For her, America signifies hopes and chances that she cannot have in a war-ravaged Japan. And it is against the backdrop of defeated and divided Japan that Etsuko relates Sachiko's liaison with an American soldier and dream of starting anew in the States. She remembers that Sachiko talks constantly about opportunities which she and her daughter Mariko will enjoy in America. Unfolding her friend Sachiko's indiscreet womanhood and negligent motherhood, Etsuko indirectly divulges her remorse for marrying Sheringham against Keiko's wish. She considers her decision as unwise as that of Sachiko, who, in spite of Mariko's objection, seeks a new life in the States through the sexual liaison with an untrustworthy American soldier. Etsuko regrets that she barters a future with Keiko's inconsolable despair and this is the reason that she reflects her past in order to assert her right in leaving Japan and also to establish an account of her identity. As she looks back to the chaotic moment of Allied Occupation and the Korean War, Etsuko reorders her chaotic life and the identity which she has constructed with her memory enables her to move forward. She also offers a deceptively serene account of a Japanese war bride whose psychological wound, like that of her deceased daughter Keiko and many other bomb-survivors continue to hurt.

The Ogata-San sub-plot of *A Pale View of Hills*, and its examination of the tension between private memory and public history is displaced on to the centre-stage of *An Artist of the Floating World*. The dilemma of the central character, Masuji Ono, is a refiguration of the plight

of Ogata, as he struggles to justify his previous nationalist sympathies in the light of his post-war loss of reputation. Ishiguro notes:

> In the first book [*A Pale View of Hills*], a lot of things that I thought were just going to be subplots took over … When I finish it, I thought: "Well, the aspect of this book that is most important to me is this bit that has ended up as subplot" which is a story about this old teacher, whose career has coincided to a certain extent with the rise of militarism in Japan before World War II, and who, after the war, in retirement, finds himself in the awkward position of having to reassess his life's work. I thought I would like to explore that strand much more thoroughly.[42]

Similarly, Barry Lewis expresses:

> Ishiguro frequently returns to the same themes throughout his fictions, teasing them out in different ways.[43]

The changing political circumstances of the country in the 1930s had persuaded Ono to become a propaganda artist for the militant Japanese Emperor in *An Artist of the Floating World*. His reformation results in a temporary period of success for Ono, and by the time of the China crisis in 1937 he is surrounded by acolytes and patriotic banners in his favourite inn, the Migi-Hidari. He is ostracized after the war, when the American forces occupy Japan and begin the process of socio-economic liberalization. Ono now fears exposure as a war criminal, as he had betrayed his most gifted pupil, Kuroda, to the police, and had supported a corrupt and defeated regime. So in order to assert his right and to render himself a convincing identity, he returns to the past with the aid of his memory. Maurice Halbwachs opines that "memory depends on the social

environment",[44] as the recognition of memory requires pre-acquisition of knowledge prior to the events, and similarly, Tim Woods and Peter Middleton also denotes:

> The dominant models of individual memory help shape the self understanding of social memory too and sometimes direct the memories.[45]

Significantly, Ono's memory relates the social environment where he had served his country with the best intentions but unfortunately the present generation had condemned it at a later time.

In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ono's private memory is at odds with public memory. For instance, the public memory is depicted through the account of Ono's son-in-law Suichi, who accused many Japanese militarists and states that they are "too cowardly to face up to their responsibilities".[46] Mortified by Suichi's blunt remarks, Ono retorts:

> Those who fought and worked loyally for our country during the war cannot be called war criminal.[47]

This argument subtly gyrates around the International Tribunal in Ichigaya,[48] which is a current affair that Ono does not wish to address but unfortunately finds no way to dodge. In this regard, the dates of Ono's diary become significant. The war trials of prominent Japanese figures were conducted between May 1946 and November 1948. Ono's reflections begin at a moment when these trials were reaching their climax and verdicts were pending. They are contextualized by a public process of reflection and judgement upon the years of war just passed, and Ono's memories reflect these processes at a personal level. Among those sentenced to death in the trial, General Tojo gathers the greatest attention. The mastermind of Japan's imperialist aggression, Tojo initiated invasions of Manchuria and other parts of Southeast Asia in the 1930s.[49] Indeed, the public trial of Tojo and other major accomplices inevitably propels the artist to inspect his

earlier misdeeds. The synchronization of the public investigation and private repentance intimidates that a nation's large-scale aggression evolves from its leading figures' ambition and materializes through the general public's compliance. In Ono's propagandist aesthetics and his pupils' injudicious emulation, there are glimpses disturbing reflections of the Japanese elite's jingoism and the civilians' blind loyalty. Similarly in the artist's guilt-induced circumlocution, the collective prevarication of a disgraceful past has been depicted.

Tojo's execution constitutes merely one aspect of the larger historical context in which Ono's diary entries are situated. The Allied (or more precisely American) Occupation, concomitant with Ono's narration, is also tactfully fused into his retirement and it remains an occurrence tacitly woven into his diary entries. Implicit in Ono's narration are the facts that during the Allied-initiated purge of Japan's militarism he must "finish" his career and his artworks must be "tied away".[50] His dishonor causes the Miyakes' cancellation of the marriage proposal to his younger daughter Noriko and his former student Shintaro's request for a letter of dissociation. The Allied occupation nearly eludes attention because American characters are completely absent in the novel. It is indirectly through Ono's grandson Ichiro's Americanized manners and the younger generation's avid embrace of American values that one discerns the happening of the Occupation. In one family gathering, Ono's son-in-law Taro praises America for the many good things that it has brought to Japan, such as "democracy and individual rights" and for that "Japan has finally established a foundation on which to built a brilliant future".[51] On this occasion, the names of successful companies such as "Nippon Electrics" and "KNC" are mentioned when young family members express confidence in Japan's speedy growth under the Allies-led recovery plan. The extensive political, social, and economic reforms the Allied Force instituted in postwar Japan have contributed to the sweeping changes that leave Ono obsolete in

a radically altered society. In its reticence on the International Tribunal in Ichigaya and the Occupation, the novel captures a period of collective shame through a former militarist's remorse, and in his nostalgia for prewar grandeur captures a shattered Japan in transition.

Consequently, *An Artist of the Floating World* delineates how Ono gains a limited but appreciable insight into the contours of his life. The past cannot be re-made. The realization that one has wasted large portions of one's life can nevertheless be borne with dignity. Taking up an established model of narration, the novel seems to chart the growing self-understanding of Ono. Wai Chew Sim emphasizes that it is at this moment that Ishiguro throws a spanner into the works by introducing an element of radical indeterminacy. As a result everything established up until this point is put in doubt. A reading that ignores this sharp reversal runs the risk of being incomplete.[52] With the recognition plot seemingly secured, the novel ends on a note of resignation. It depicts Ono's gaze at the pleasure district he knew as a youth, now razed to the ground and converted into a business quarter. He sits on a bench looking at the scene and admits a nostalgic longing for those "brightly lit bars" where he spent his youth. Nevertheless the sight of the rebuilt city fills him with "genuine gladness".[53] Ono's memory of his past thus produced an alternative history which does not correspond to the dominant history. Even though there is tension between his private memory and history, his return to the past has helped him in constructing his own identity and at the end, he is able to wish the young people around him and hope they will avoid the errors that he had made.[54]

Ishiguro's third novel, *The Remains of the Day*, shifts focus from Japan to England. As with the other novels, this novel is based upon the memories of Stevens, the butler of Darlington Hall and the novel sets an individual's lonely old age against the backdrop of an earlier colossal event. Once the family seat of Lord Darlington, the hall is now the possession of an American,

Mr Farraday. Stevens' narrative records a motoring journey he takes to the south west of England in July 1956. On his journey he remembers his years of service to Lord Darlington before the Second World War and affords an opportunity to measure the extent to which the England of 1956 has changed from that of the 1920s and 1930s. As it shuttles between these moments in history, the narrative complicates linear progression in a way that recalls *An Artist of the Floating World.* But the uncertainties that Ono cultivated in the previous novel are not as welcome to Stevens. The gaps in time between each section of Stevens' narrative are shorter than those in *An Artist of the Floating World*, often a night or a couple of hours. The novel has provided a much clearer indication of the occasions of the moments which Stevens recalls. The manner of Stevens' narrative is characterized by a meticulousness that protects against more spontaneous, direct statements, such as the bantering that he struggles to master in order to please Mr Farraday. It betrays his anxiety to render more stable accounts of both the past and the present. This is his main difference from Ono. Whereas Ono is engaged partly in cultivating referential uncertainty, Stevens fails to finds the means to preserve the values of an older age in the present. Stevens' defense of Lord Darlington's co-operation with the Nazis succeeds only if the values he internalized as a servant of the aristocracy still have hegemony after the war. His defense is an attempt to recover a paternalistic model of 'Englishness' in the post-war era. However, his journey through England in July 1956 exposes his version of 'Englishness' to be in ruins. In contrast with Etsuko's and Ono's Japan, in Stevens' England, elements from the past struggle to remain. The values that would legitimate his version of history have not been preserved. His definition of 'Englishness' is derived from the class which he served is brought into conflict with other versions of 'Englishness' that he encounters on his journey. This results

in a crisis of identity. The old certainties that have given meaning to Stevens' identity are challenged after the war.

The six days journey is documented in eight entries and the start of Stevens' motor-car trip, July 1956, concurs with the Egyptian governments' nationalization of the Suez canal, and it is a detail several critics attend to. Meera Tamaya considers the date of Stevens' journey as presenting 'the determining historical context of the characters' attitudes and aspirations'.[55] James M.Lang similarly holds that Ishiguro purposely sets the narration contemporaneous with the historical event, even though it is 'entirely obscured' in Stevens narration.[56] Tamaya and Lang's remarks evince that to strategically obscure the Suez Crisis in *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro succeeds in drawing attention to its absence and signification of that absence.

The transference of Darlington Hall which concurs with the nationalization of the Suez Canal is symbolic. Transacted and under-staffed, the Hall parallels the Canal in signaling the collapse of the British Empire. The demise of Lord Darlington and the advent of Farraday allegorize the post-war configuration of the global power structure. While serving his American employer, Stevens is also, as Susie O'Brien aptly puts, "serving a new world order".[57] It is true that if the social hierarchy within which Stevens served Darlington is an old order, the economic hierarchy within which he now serves Farraday is a newly emerging structure of world power. The Suez crisis heralds a new era during which the United States fills the void left by Britain and France after they lose control of the Mediterranean Sea. The new world order that O'Brien refers to, is at once the actual situation that America replaces Britain as the leading Western power in the region, and the fictional scenario that Farraday succeeds Lord Darlington as the proprietor of the Hall.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro explicitly lays out contrasting portraits of the world-making events of the novel: one sketched by Stevens in his narration, and one laid out for the public record in the form of postwar perceptions of Darlington's role in the war. It is only through Stevens that the version of the public record is depicted but from his narration, it is clear enough how vastly different the two sets of historical accounts – Stevens' and the public's - really are. James M. Lang opines:

> Public history, both in the postwar English press and as it emerges from the mouths of individual citizens whom Stevens encounters on his journey across the English countryside, condemns Lord Darlington for not recognizing, in the mid- and late-1930s, the extent and nature of the atrocities eventually perpetrated by the Nazis.[58]

Significantly, Stevens' narrative consists of his attempt to recreate, from his perspective as a private individual at the margins of power, the full historical context in which Lord Darlington made his ill-fated decisions. In this way, the novel transcribes a dialogue between the grand narratives of the war and the minor, subjective narrative of Stevens - between the macronarratives of public history and the micronarratives of private memory.[59] Dialogue plays itself out in numerous ways throughout the novel, and especially in Stevens' encounters with small-town English citizens. In those scenes, he is committed to reconciling the apparent gaps between public history and his private memories of the past: both of his own past and of the past of his employer. Stevens' recollection construct a narrative which can join coherently the generous, noble, and dignified Lord Darlington with the public vilifications of Darlington as a traitor which culminated in the years following the war. His sympathetic descriptions of Lord

Darlington's character betray a defensiveness obviously borne of Stevens' unease at the extent of the contrast between the public's perceptions of Darlington's character and his own private ones:

> A great deal of nonsense has been spoken and written in recent years concerning his lordship and the prominent role he came to play in great affairs, and some utterly ignorant reports have had it that he was motivated by egotism or else arrogance. Let me say here that nothing could be further from the truth. It was completely contrary to Lord Darlington's natural tendencies to take such public stances as he came to do and I can say with conviction that his lordship was persuaded to overcome his more retiring side only through a deep sense of moral duty ... he was a truly good man at heart, a gentleman through and through .... [60]

Stevens is working here to accommodate to his private memory both the public record of Darlington's actions and the surprisingly and undeniably immoral actions of Darlington – "to take such public stances as he came to do"[61] - in deference to visiting Nazi diplomats. Stevens' memory focuses upon the admirable qualities of Lord Darlington's character: he is a gentleman, he has noble instincts, and he feels compassion for a defeated foe. The postwar public press and British citizenry, with the hindsight afforded to them by the war, and by the German attacks on British soil, see only the despicable qualities of Lord Darlington: he attempted to negotiate and normalize relations between the British and the Nazi governments.

Kathleen Wall suggests that the novel gives mixed feelings about the accuracy of Stevens' historical reconstructions which "foregrounds the problem of truth".[62] In this way it can be argued that if any historical truth exists in this novel, it lies somewhat uneasily between

two competing accounts - public and private - of the past. The interactions of public history and private memory in the novel, of grand and minor narratives, reflect both a cautionary attitude toward established public memory and a guarded faith in the ability of private memory to help recapture history in the face of public memory's 'backshadowings'[63] and historical revisions. The novel highlights the public record's capacity to situate Lord Darlington's actions within the larger narrative of the war, but it also lays bare the inadequacy of the public record in the face of the historical contextualization which the private memories of Stevens make available. Stevens' private memory struggle to return to the past in order to associate with his own present: the recognition that an era had stood open to multiple possible futures - not just the horrific future which did in fact ensue. Ishiguro conveys mixed signals about Stevens' ability to succeed in this endeavor, hinting regularly that Stevens' motivation derives from his desire to excuse his own - and Lord Darlington's - behavior.

Therefore, in *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro skillfully reveals Stevens' perception of the world at the same time he unveils, more importantly, how these perceptions blind him. Although Stevens remembers with pride his years of service to Lord Darlington, his memory also evokes incidents that demonstrate layers of guilt, hidden regrets and a capacity for self-questioning. His vain attempts to justify his actions resound with feelings:

> There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such … incidents would render whole dreams irredeemable.[64]

In the last section of the novel, Stevens finally come to terms with his own identity:

> I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted that I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that? [65]

Stevens' ultimate confessions of his mistakes establish his identity and this is done through his return to the past with his memory. His introspection has made him aware of the wrong path that he had taken in the course of his life. Memory is again depicted as a constructive mechanism as Stevens, like Etsuko and Ono, finds himself incapable of "serving" as he once had.

The first three novels *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* share many things in common. Each of the three novels depicted the tension between memory and history through private memory and public history. However, in *When We Were Orphans,* Ishiguro depart from his previous strategy, as he states:

> I have to be careful not to confuse my narrators with my own identity as a writer. It's so easy, in all walks of life, to get trapped into a corner by things that once earned you praise and esteem.[66]

Accordingly, in *When We Were Orphans,* Ishiguro explores the tension between history and memory through Banks' private memory and private history. Banks' first diary entry dated 24th July 1930 coincide with the launch of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria.[67] His narration also suggest the causation between Britain's opium trade in China, and suspects that his parents being missing is related to the opium trade. However in contrast to the first three novels, the historical event in *When We Were Orphans* is not very significant. In this novel, Ishiguro elaborates more on the ambivalent nature of memory. On the one hand, it gives a powerful stimulus for intruding in history which is either unknown, or, as the protagonist suspects, has been falsified. Memory

nurtures the ambition to make a private, (if metaphorical) sense of history. On the other hand, memory also works as a playground for a stockpile of facts and myths that followed them. Even if memory favours personal and local stories, their meaning is negotiated with history's discursive trends. As to why memory is so complex in evoking the past is partly explicated by Foucault's ideas on the hermeneutic character of interpretation. Namely, as Foucault points out, the act of interpretation occurs as a response to the violence exerted by former interpretations on individuals' comprehension of historical phenomena.[68] Interpretation does not concern bare facts and can never directly refer to them. Rather, interpretation functions as a commentary on the statements that have been already used on facts. In contrast to the first three novels, in *When We Were Orphans*, the origin "in" and "of" history is not available for public use. In order to confront the history that had shaped his life, Banks concentrates all his attention on performing retrospection. Since memory, as contrasted with a detectivist investigation, does not deem historical incidents more or less crucial it is a more adequate instrument for dealing with past stories. Therefore, even for detective Banks, juvenile memories speaking through an adult male play the main part in reviving by-gone reality. For most of the time investigative tools are taken for granted in the novel. Banks relies on childhood memory much more than scientific methods of inquiry. Consequently, memories become the primal material in his analysis.

The protagonist knows that his remembering the past could have been, to varying degrees, shaped by other people's recounting given incidents. The possibility to differentiate between memory, interpretation of memories as well as other people's accounts that have been remembered (and institute interpretative strategies for dealing with the dominant discourse of history) is absolutely excluded. Additionally, the more the images from the past fade in time, the more the narratives supplement them in order to bridge gaps in the incomplete idea of history:

> For the truth is, over the past year, I have become increasingly preoccupied with my memories, a preoccupation encouraged by the discovery that these memories – of my childhood, of my parents – have lately begun to blur. A number of times recently I have found myself struggling to recall something that only two or three years ago I believed was ingrained in my mind forever. I have been obliged to accept, in other words, that with each passing year, my life in Shanghai will grow less distinct, until one day all that will remain will be a few muddled images.[69]

Apparently, the only way to retain a comprehensive picture of history is discovering the truth about it before the potential to remember will have been exhausted. For Banks, reminiscences give ground for a large-scale inquiry. As a consequence, ordinary techniques of research are substituted by a more personal and local method of tracking down the path of history. The mechanism, provided in such a way, oscillates between evoking a past event and fantasizing about it which, in actual fact, constitutes every historical narration. It therefore operates on the level of the minutest details. In this sense, Banks is in constant search of what is similar and analogical. Foucault writes that memory and emotions that accompanied it undergo "assujetissement" – adjustment to a certain commonsensical adequacy and continuity which is generated by an intentional representation.[70] Consequently, Banks is incapable of making any "rational" statements about history since his point of departure is posited in opposition to the reason which is supposed to enhance the representation.

Indeed, Banks undertakes his task not only to get to know the truth about the past. He wants to find out which of the stories narrated by his memory is his real story. He is also conscious that the truth about him is located somewhere in the discourse of history. Banks

engages all his time and energy to sort the issue out. When Banks is about to solve his case, it turns out that history as he remembered it has no visible reflection in reality. Even the beginning of his story – the source of his identity – everything has been remodeled by distance and time. The sense of history, even though approached from a personal stance, did not obey his intention. Banks is disillusioned with history because it did not supply him with the story that he meant to find:

> But now do you see how the world really is? You see what made possible your comfortable life in England? How you were able to become a celebrated detective? A detective! What good is that to anyone? Stolen jewels, aristocrats murdered for their inheritance. Do you suppose that's all there is to contend with? Your mother, she wanted you to live in your enchanted world for ever. But it's all impossible. In the end it has to shatter. It's a miracle it survived so long for you.[71]

To Banks, history reveals that there is no source or origin and that there have never been any whatsoever. His idea of the world, his family and even the political situation come to disempower his detective authority and also undermine the value of childhood reminiscences. In "Nietzsche, Genealogia, Historia", Foucault follows Nietzche and dismisses the concept of source as definable in a historical research and presumes it to be a metaphysical predicament.[72] He further denotes that true stories exist only as wishful projections: one of them is the supposition that history can be examined and explained at every point it makes and that it contains or constitutes the truth about the past. There is no truth in history – on the contrary – the only history is that of untruthfulness.[73] As a consequence, Banks realizes that the significance of his memories is minor since they either prove to have never been true or cease to be true after he

has believed they were. It is not because the memories are faint or inadequate but because there is no certainty as to the creditable link between the emergence of reminiscences and the history that surrounded them. There is, furthermore, no effective interpretative stance for a historical subject that would facilitate discrimination between interpretation which results in 'objective' knowledge and the assumption of the 'objective' truth which is the by-product of interpretation:

> Knowledge whether it is true or not, whether it is only a perception based on myth or whether it is based on fact, can equally 'make itself true' changing the fabric of the real world.[74]

Now, Banks is deprived of any illusions concerning his life. During all the time that he spent in England, he was neither an orphan nor was he a legitimate member of the higher walks of life. But the belief in his origin made him live his life by almost aristocratic standards. What he presumed to be his fate and vocation turned out to be a waste of time. To a paradox, it was also a waste of his mother's sacrifice which she made in order to save her son from history and he unconsciously used it in order to live up to it:

> Perhaps there are those who are able to go about their lives unfettered by such concerns. But for those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents. There is nothing for it but to try and see through our missions to the end, as best we can, for until we do so, we will be permitted no calm.[75]

Finally, Banks confirms that a single story cannot prevail in the battle with history. Banks declares his identity outside the order of linear history. For several years trying to locate the whereabouts of his parents, Banks learns how to come to terms with the undesired identity.

The use of individual or autobiographical memory in Ishiguro's novels - *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of The Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans* is in contrast with history. The narrators' subjective treatment of memory enables them to establish a relationship with their personal identity. The transition from helplessness to hope and the recovery of identity from the recognition of the scars of history is witnessed at the end of each novel by the narrators, triumph over the forces of destruction and solitude that permeate their remembrances. Ishiguro's novels develop a series of individualistic autobiographical searches which become the revelation of traditions and recollections of disseminated identities, resulting in personal retrospection that attempts to gain a sense of identity and a vision for the future. The characters' use of memory implies an interpretation of history that at times severs its connection to memory. The memories reconstructed in Ishiguro's novels accomplish a reflexive revision of the past in such a way that the value and purpose of retrospection become central to their mission. Memory is not a historical object, but rather its own referent which recognizes two forms of legitimacy: historical and literary.

This chapter excludes *Never Let Me Go* because in this novel, Ishiguro has departed from his earlier technique of using the history of the nation as turning points in the life of the protagonists. His first three books, each featured a diffident narrator, namely, a widow from bomb-ravaged Nagasaki in *A Pale View of Hills,* an artist damaged by collusion with Japanese militarism in *An Artist of The Floating World,* and a butler tainted by service to a fascist British aristocrat in *The Remains of the Day* comprise a kind of 'trilogy' about the disorientation caused by the war. Ishiguro observes:

> In the first three novels, I was rewriting the same thing. I was on the same piece of territory, and each time I was refining what I wanted to say. …

> my second novel was an expansion of the sub-plot of my first novel, but it's about how somebody wasted his life in terms of his career … *The Remains of the Day* is a re-write of *An Artist of the Floating World*, except it's about a man who wasted his life in his career and his personal arena. Each time, I'd think, "It's not quite here yet. I've got to do it again but with another dimension".[76]

Following the publication of each of Ishiguro's first three novels, Ishiguro was labeled as a writer who wrote only about Japanese topics. What Ishiguro had attempted was to produce a book with universal theme and in the first three novels, he never intended to emphasize on his Japanese ethnicity. In an interview, he expresses that *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* have been misread respectively as a realistic description of post-war Japan and *The Remains of the Day* as about Britain's aristocracy and the country's involvement in fascism and the Second World War and *When We Were Orphans* as the Sino-Japanese war.[77] Therefore, from his fourth novel, *The Unconsoled* (1995) [which is not included in the study], a shift occurs. Mathew Beedham correctly notes:

> Frustrated by critics who attempted to categorize him as a realist and who continually sought to ground his novels in their historical context, he introduced a radically new structure that has had a sharply polarizing effect on readers …and have a unique contribution to the representation of consciousness.[78]

Ishiguro has therefore departed from his previous technique and has developed a new strategy in order to convey what matters to him most: "the extent to which we accepted our fates, the kind

of lives we were allowed to live as people, rather than focus on the rebellion spirit we gain and try to move out of our lives".[79] Therefore, in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro emphatically explores what preoccupies him that is, the constructive nature of memory which becomes a means of relating the past to the present in order to make sense of the present life. Historical event is completely absent and Ishiguro has created characters who are clones and who have no public history (prior to the moment they were made) and the novel is also set in fictional England in the 1980s. Again, the novel was regarded by reviewers like Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff[80] amongst others as science fiction because of Ishiguro's use of clones. But Ishiguro notes:

> There are things I am more interested in than the clone thing. How are they trying to find their place in the world and make sense of their lives? To what extent can they transcend their fate? As time starts to run out, what are the things that really matter? Most of the things that concern them concern us all, but with them it is concertinaed into this relatively short period of time. These are the things that really interest me and having come to the realization that I probably have limited opportunities to explore these things, that's what I want to concentrate on.[81]

However, in *Never Let Me Go* Ishiguro still continues to explore the underlying themes of memory and identity. Even though public history or historical event is absent in the novel, the personal component of history, that is, an individual's retrospection of his or her life is still at the centre in *Never Let Me Go* which is also very significant in *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*. Therefore, Ishiguro's narratives define the function of memory as a primary source for understanding how differing versions of the past are reconstructed. Memory, as such, is the process by which the quest for

identity becomes the search for one's own history. By producing alternate narrative patterns, Ishiguro's writing provides openings for other narratives, and other versions of history which are precipitated by memory and reinforce remembering.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Kazuo Ishiguro has produced a body of best-selling work that receives consistent praise from both academic and broadsheet critics whilst appealing to a global readership. His works occupy an important place in contemporary culture. Leavis states that the major novelists "not only change the possibilities of art for practitioners and readers' but also that 'they are significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life".[1] These terms certainly included Kazuo Ishiguro. The works of Kazuo Ishiguro is a powerful exploration of ethics as well as an insightful exploration of the human psyche. As Sebatian Groes denotes:

> The power of Ishiguro's fiction lies in its ability to make us care about the world, about other people, about ourselves. The carefully crafted narratives invite us to invest our time and emotions in his fictional worlds and characters. This ethical imperative is Ishiguro's signature.[2]

In all of his novels, Ishiguro makes an overt attempt to denote his protagonists' private penchant for disillusioning themselves as a way to seek comfort from a difficult past. Each of the novels selected for study therefore ends on a somewhat odd or confusing note: an awkward cheerfulness permeates each character's consciousness. Ishiguro expresses:

> I do feel it somehow pathetic, that kind of cheering up of oneself. But on the other hand, I have a certain kind of admiration for the human capacity to do just that. There's something admiration and courageous about it, even if it seems completely futile. [3]

This remark is a reminder that literature, like all reflections about human experiences, is an aesthetic form of understanding life: all fictional utterances represent "homesickness [as the expression of] the urge to be at home everywhere".[4] Ishiguro keenly and sympathetically

portrays people who are searching for identity with the aid of their memory. Ishiguro admits that leaving Japan has left him a sense of "emotional bereavement or emotional deprivation", a regret for "never having gone back… [for the] whole person [he] was supposed to become".[5] Like his protagonists, he feels nostalgia for missed possibilities, wondering about the kind of person which he might have been. Though not overcharged with the raw nerves of unhealed exile, this sense of loss may be deemed as a defining streak of his personal and artistic temperament. This is how he describes it:

> For me, the creative process has never been about anger or violence, as it is with other people; it's more to do with regret or melancholy. I don't feel I've regretted not having grown up in Japan. That would be absurd. This is the only life I have known. I had a happy childhood, and I've been very happy here. But it's to do with the strong emotional relationships I had in Japan that were suddenly severed at a formative emotional age particularly with my grandfather.[6]

The process of atoning for emotional and physical losses stems deeply from his own past and his novels demonstrate clearly that memory of the past enables an individual to come to terms with one's own identity and that memory is the means of finding solace in an often inconsolable world. This study has predominantly concentrated upon the problems and possibilities of creating or preserving a sense of identity. Ishiguro's novels challenges the idea that memory is a mere keeping of records and argues how memory allows to fulfill the important functions in reconstructing past events in a way that generate meaning for the present. The major concern of Ishiguro's work remains the ability to select and interpret relevant experiences in retrospect. In

"How We Tell It and How It Was", Janet Feigenbaum explains the importance of memory and its vital connections to identity:

> Without memory we would have no goals or direction, no ability to plan a course of action and no concept of ourselves in relation to the world. Our capacity to learn from mistakes and to change and grow as individuals depends on our memories.[7]

Similarly, Ishiguro's protagonists selected for study - Etsuko, Ono, Stevens, Banks and Kathy H., despite all the grave differences between them, are all characters who have a lot in common. The novels which they narrate respectively, all "deal in the same meticulous, elegiac way, with the unreliability and the difficulty of self-knowledge".[8] Ishiguro's protagonists "draw us into their emotional world".[9] The narrators deceive themselves and they have to do this because otherwise they would consciously subvert their own identities. Unconsciously of course, they do exactly that, and thus Ishiguro has his first-person narrators unwittingly reveal their identity crisis. Feigenbaum's article expresses "scientifically" what Ishiguro's novels and his narrators exemplify, comment on, and make the readers aware of, in a literary form:

> We know from research that autobiographical memories are not accurate historical accounts of events as they happened at the time of encoding, but rather a reconstruction based on a number of affective and motivational factors. Memories are contaminated with information from similar events and so change over the years as we encounter new experiences. What we remember about an event depends on when and for what purpose we are remembering, reflecting our beliefs about ourselves and the world at

> present. Thus memory is continually reprocesses and reinterpreted with changing contexts and perceptions.[10]

Thus the nature of memory is clearly depicted in these lines where distortion, suppression and unreliability functions as the texture of memory and which in turn becomes the establishment of one's identity. Ishiguro has repeatedly and diversely used memory as a literary trope and as a mechanism to enrich his characters and his plot. His novels are fictional memories that are written by ordinary people tormented by guilt and doubt. The moment of remembering or recollecting occurs at the time of crisis, when the narrators are nearing death or the end of their productive lives. Instead of bringing peace, their introspection makes the characters aware of their faults, personal failures and past mistakes. Memory is then a cathartic filter which allows for manipulation by the narrators so as to provide them with what they need. As Linda Grant suggests [quoting Steven Rose]:

> The self isn't a little person inside the brain, it's a work-in-progress, 'a perpetually re-created neurobiological state, so continuously and consistently reconstructed that the owner never knows its being remade'. Memory … is a fabrication, a new reconstruction of the original. And yet out of these unstable foundations we still construct an identity. It's a miracle.[11]

In *A Pale View of Hills,* Etsuko thus goes back to the past in order to render a conceivable identity. With her fragile memory, she reconstructs the past. The past has sometimes "grown hazy", and accepts her memory's unreliability.[12] She also hints at supernatural possibilities or refers to events or people (in both the past as well as the present) whose significance she leaves

unexplained. The calm tone she has used throughout shows that Etsuko is suppressing or hiding from the painful facts of her period. Her narrative only appears lucidly constructed, despite her own misgivings about a flawed memory, but it is riddled with evasions of more painful truths about her life and her daughter's death. In an interview Ishiguro notes:

> She[Etsuko] feels a great guilt, that out of her own emotional longings for a different sort of life, she sacrificed her first daughter's happiness. There is that side of her that feels resistant to her younger daughter Niki, who tells her, "You've got nothing to worry about", and that she did exactly the right things. She feels that this isn't quite a true account. But on the other hand, she does need to arrange her memories in a way that allows her to salvage some dignity.[13]

Therefore, in *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro denotes memory as a facilitator that allows his narrator, Etsuko to come to terms with her guilt on a number of issues by analyzing her life in Japan and later on in England. Ishiguro's narrator thus used her memories with three distinct but interrelated functions: as a means to form her own identity in the present time; to free herself from the responsibility of her past life in Japan and her daughter's suicide; and to overcome her guilt by relocating her identity through her alter-ego Sachiko. Similarly in *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ishiguro depicted memory as a means of reshaping and rearranging the past in order to serve one's own end. The narrator Ono like Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills* is not so sure of the things that happened in the past and has employed a number of strategies so as to conceal the fact that he is now regarded as a traitor after Japan has lost the war. Jeffrey Prager in *Presenting the Past* elucidates:

> The construction of a self depends upon our capacity to provide a coherent, consistent, cohesive, continuity-producing account that, partly by reference to the past, locates us meaningfully in the present situation in relation to ourselves and to others, and poised to reckon with the future.[14]

After the war, when Ono realizes that the tide of thought has turned against him, he pretends that he is not concerned about prestige, but he admits to being wrong in supporting the Nationalists. His influence however is put into question by slips in his narrative. Ishiguro expresses his interest in such characters:

> I'm very interested in people who have a great desire to do something of worth, something to distinguish themselves, but who, maybe in the end find that they don't have it in them to be more than ordinary.[15]

Ono's narration is replete with manipulations and elisions that seek to belie this ordinariness. As Ishiguro has pointed out, Ono's diary entries allow Ono to make slight changes he can modify as he goes.[16] Wong suggests that when Ishiguro lets his characters unknowingly reveal their flaws, those characters are able to salvage dignity, "a quality important to the author's version of how people accept and deal with failure in their lives".[17] The identity crisis faced by Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* and Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* is summed up by Scanlan as:

> Ishiguro's narrators, both old men looking back from the postwar period of their involvement with fascism in the 1930s, in some ways resemble the unreliable narrators of older fiction. But Ishiguro uses them to explore the extent to which identity is socially constructed, and the consequent instability of selves formed in a traditional culture when that culture dies.

> Identity in these novels is not an essence but instead depends on a social context that has changed so radically as to leave characters floating in an unfamiliar world. Through his first-person narrators, Ishiguro dramatizes the connections between public history and an 'I' dependent for definition on its circumstances, suggesting that the inconfident and marginalized self of the posthumanist world view is drawn to find authority in totalitarian politics.[18]

At the end of the novel, Ono however discovers that a large portion of his life had been wasted. Through the character of Ono, Ishiguro explores how rearranging and reshaping of memory enable an individual to finally accept the painful truth about oneself. And this is what Ishiguro deems as dignity. He notes:

> He[Ono] keeps having to admit this and admit that, and in the end he even accepts his smallness in the world. I suppose I wanted to suggest that a person's dignity isn't necessarily dependent on what he achieves in his life or in his career; that there is something dignified about Ono in the end that arises simply out of his being human.[19]

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro thematises memory by constantly reminding the readers that the narrator is attempting to recall.[20] Lowenthal remarks that "all awareness of the past is founded on memory"[21] and such awareness is fundamental to establishing identity. Freud's model of archaeological excavation which illustrates that memories are believed to exist 'somewhere' and waiting to be rediscovered by the remembering subject and uncontaminated by subsequent experience and time's attrition[22] has been challenged by recent theories of memory and Ishiguro's novels also challenge this notion and presents memory to be highly foible,

fragmented and unreliable. In this novel also, Ishiguro produces two distinct narratives of Stevens' life: set in two time periods – the past between the world wars and the present as Stevens undertakes his holiday. The narrative incorporates both Stevens' knowledge of and his blindness to the events he recounts. Like Etsuko and Ono, Stevens also casts himself as both progenitor of a virtuous life and victim of inexplicable physical or historical circumstances. Like Ono, he comes to believe fully in his version of events; unlike Ono, Stevens eventually reveals that this mask is too great a burden to bear and he is depicted as almost crying at the end of the novel. Stevens, like Ono before him, does not have much confidence in his story. Mark L.Howe states that:

> Both memory and self[identity] are dynamical systems, neither remain static during the interval between event encoding and autobiographical recall. In fact, both the content of memory and the element that constitute the self are thought to change as function of new experiences, knowledge, and reorganization of what already exists. Interestingly, such changes can include the creation of false memories about past events, false memories that tend to be constrained by our self concept. In particular, false memories about our past are more easily thought to be authentic if they are consistent with our cultural view of ourselves.[23]

Therefore, Ishiguro presents in Stevens how memories are not mere reflections of the past, but eclectic, selective reconstructions and this further denotes that Stevens remembers the past according to the needs of the present identity. However, in examining his past with his fragile memory, Stevens is able to come to term with his own identity. Although he is just a butler, he

desperately wants to contribute to something 'larger' and work honestly for a great man like Lord Darlington. As Ishiguro notes:

> He[Stevens] gets a lot of his sense of self-respect from an idea that he is serving a great man. If he were someone who didn't care at all about how his contribution was being used, then he wouldn't end up a broken man at the end. He is driven by this urge to do things perfectly, but that perfect contribution should be, no matter however small a contribution it is, to improving humanity. That is Stevens's position. He's not content to say, "I'll just get by and earn money so that I can feed myself".[24]

Stevens at the end of the novel finally learns who he really is and with the aid of his memory he has finally accepted his identity. Ishiguro states several times in an interview that the ability to accept life with all its flaws and failures, the kind of identity that are formed with memory, rather than focusing on the rebellious spirit, has helped people in moving on with their lives.[25] Stevens' search for dignity is finally achieved at the end when he admits the mistakes he had done.

The role played by memory in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me go* is different from *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* where in these novels, memory was something to be searched through very warily for the crucial wrong turns, and for the sources of regret and remorse. On the other hand, in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go,* Banks' and Kathy's memories are more benevolent. They are principally a source of consolation. For Banks, his childhood memories or his nostalgic yearning for childhood days with his mother and father becomes a source of inspiration. Therefore, the constructive character of memory is depicted in *When We Were Orphans* where Banks' memory becomes the driving force in his life. Similarly in *Never Let Me go* Ishiguro foregrounds the fact

that identity resides in memory, not in the body. Kathy's time runs out and as her world empties one by one of the things she holds dear, what she clings to are her memories of the same. In contrast to the narrators of *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* who confessed openly to flawed memories and then worked transparently to disclose gaps, even when they were cognizant of efforts to conceal the less flattering aspects of their lives, the narrators of *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me go* – Banks and Kathy – operate with a more unusual subtlety. W.Wolfgang Holdheim describes a process of "narrativity as knowledge" where characters in a text – in the process of constructing a text, as these first – person narrators do – undergo a gradual reordering of cognition, a reshaping of understanding, and a re-evaluation of meaning. "Contingency" is a concept elaborated by Holdheim to describe how individuals' anticipation of events to transpire depends on chance, uncertainty, or fortuitousness beyond their immediate control:

> Contingency has always been considered a basic category of human duration, and in the constant reassessment of what is acceptable we recognize that incessant shaping of the fragmentary, that continuization of the discontinuous that is the very earmark of lived time.[26]

In order to continue living and to organize the fragmentary identity, Ishiguro's thus narrators return to their past.

Ishiguro's works thus establishes that remembering and reflecting upon personal memory is a key to forming a sense of identity and personal continuity. All the five novels within the study namely, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), *The Remains of the Day* (1988), *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) demonstrates that memory becomes a very important tool in formulating identity. Through his novels, Ishiguro

illustrates that the painful past cannot be remade but memories of the past can help in the understanding of how events have evolved, which is essential for the acceptance of an identity. At the same time, throughout his oeuvre, Ishiguro has depicted the fragile, foible, selective and unreliable nature of memory which foregrounds the complexity for one's search of identity. It is the nature and function of this unreliability that gives Ishiguro's work a distinctive, and powerful, contemporary resonance, and that has driven much of his critical reception. Kathleen Wall correctly notes that *The Remains of the Day* both facilitates and frustrate the discovery of truth, and that the text: "deconstructs the notion of truth, and consequently questions both 'reliable' and 'unreliable' narration and the distinctions we made between them".[27] Ishiguro has presented his protagonists, namely, Etsuko, Ono, Stevens, Banks, and Kathy H. as ordinary figures in extraordinary times and places. They narrate complex and ambiguous stories that reveal, in their haunting and incurious incompleteness, the traumatized, the fragmented sense of identity of the narrators themselves. The troubled form and direction of their memory and narrative reveal the difficulty of reconstructing an identity that is shattered by personal suffering in the midst of a wider catastrophe. Typically, the events of their original trauma, which are at once personal and general remain absent or occluded from the account, beyond description or precise recall. Universal themes of love and loss are interwoven as the narrators struggle against processes of misremembering, forgetting and suppression, to construct for themselves a story that draws together either the fragmented elements of their own identity, or a coherent account of the traumatic historical events. Ishiguro's fiction illustrates that remembering the past with the help of memory is not a case of restoring an original identity, but a continuous process of 're-membering' of putting together the disconnected events in order to come to terms with one self

and eventually with one's own identity. Ishiguro also commented on his use of storytelling in his novels:

> I am interested in storytelling in the sense of … how individuals come to terms with their past and decide what to do next … What are the tools by which we tell these stories? What exactly are these stories that we tell ourselves? … Are we trying to be honest or are we trying to deceive, or comfort ourselves? [28]

In exploring these questions, Ishiguro's novels evoke a delicate evocation of universal human concerns where his protagonists have engaged themselves in a "quest for consolation" that is "universal".[29] Throughout his oeuvre, Ishiguro states that "international books are rooted in a very small place",[30] a statement that explains much of his fiction. He is an international writer not because his works have been set in Japan, United Kingdom, Europe and China, but because of his ability to concentrate on the very small spaces of the characters that inhabit those settings and Mathew Beedham also astutely opines that Ishiguro is an international writer because his novels "peer into the experiences of so many of us in so many places".[31]

However, Ishiguro's narrators of *A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of The Floating World, The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans* are nonetheless situated at precise points of imperial crisis and collapse, whether in post-war Japan or in the country houses of Britain and it is significant how the problems of their narratives can be brought into clearer focus through analysis of the ways in which the stories they narrate involve the construction of historically specific identities. Their identities are destroyed not only by the unspeakable catastrophic event, but also by the processes and institutions of nationhood, government and ideology that determine, and then mediate such events. However, Ishiguro has analysed that in his novels he

presents not the conventional "historical text".[32] It is therefore in this connection that Ishiguro's work is related to what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" interrupting the discourse of history to reveal the ideological essence of all its representations.[33] Ishiguro's portrayal of history questions the extent to which public history bypass private memory and thus shows how differing versions of the past can be reconstructed in examining the history of the nation.

A Pale View of Hills, An Artist of the Floating World, The Remains of the Day and *When We Were Orphans* engaged historical context which led critic like Barry Lewis amongst others, interpret Ishiguro's fiction as an attempt to emphasize upon his Japanese ethnicity. But a deeper study of Ishiguro's fiction shows that history and politics are explored primarily in order to plumb the depths and shallows of the characters' emotional and psychological landscapes. Significantly, Ishiguro has adopted a new technique to explore what preoccupies him and thus abandoned incorporating the history of the nation in presenting the crisis of identity in *Never Let Me Go*. However, despite what appears as radical shifts in the subject mood, Ishiguro remains faithful to his task of presenting characters who are caught in circumstances beyond their immediate control but through which they begin the arduous process of reconsidering and understanding their complicated lives. Therefore in this sense, what preoccupies Ishiguro is the psychological defenses and the "emotional arena" most broadly construed: the "suppression of emotion",[34] the idealization of the self, and the ways in which individuals self-protectively mix "memory and desire".[35]

Significantly, as denoted at the very outset, the thematic concern of the research has been focused upon the aspect of memory and identity, and thus the study has concluded that Ishiguro is concerned in terms of constructing identity with the aid of memory. His novels portray the

silent anguish of people who suffer, and in like manner he renders them a voice for locating solace. Through his literary art, Ishiguro opens up a new consciousness which examines how people simultaneously deceive and protect themselves by the language that they use. The study has also concluded that always in his writing there is a depiction that people reflect their past in the light of 'what wasn't known then',[36] and that each had done something in the past which they regret or are ashamed of. It has also established that through his characters, Ishiguro explores the intrinsic nature of memory with all its fallibilities to serve one's own end. With each successive work, Ishiguro captures the elusiveness of human consciousness and the manner in which people justify losses as well as failures. His characters reflect their past in terms of establishing a kind of identity which they would want to have, but eventually arrive at the conclusion that they have lived a failed life. Consequently, his characters locate their own selves within the narratives and have thereby established a semblance of their own identities.

In conclusion, the study has reflected that in Ishiguro's work, the dignity of an individual lies in the acceptance of identity, and that memory, however fragile has formulated the foundation of identity. Each of the novels that have been selected for study support Ishiguro's contention that, though his characters fail at something essential in their lives, they eventually find the momentum and energy (with the help of their memories) in order to keep moving forward. The futility of their plight, coupled with their ability to remain forward-looking, adds a poignant dimension to Ishiguro's view of the world. With his literary approach to the subject of memory, Ishiguro has contributed to the understanding of how the human mind works and how memory remains integral in the formation of identity.

NOTES

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APPENDICES

NAME OF CANDIDATE	**:**	**C.Lalrinfeli**
DEGREE	**:**	**Ph.D.**
DEPARTMENT	**:**	**English**
TITLE OF THESIS	**:**	**A Study of Memory and Identity in Select Works By Kazuo Ishiguro**
DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION FEE	**:**	**No.4321, Dt.14.9.2007**

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1.BPGS	**:**	**31st October 2008**
2.SCHOOL BOARD	**:**	**25th November 2008**
REGISTRATION NO.	**:**	**MZU/Ph.D./258 of 25.11.2008**
DATE OF SUBMISSION	:	**14th March 2012**

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Educational Qualification

Class	Board/University	Year of Passing	Division	Percentage
X	MBSE	1997	Distinction	77.9%
XII	MBOSE	2000	II	51%
B.A.	MZU	2003	II	51.37%
M.A.	MZU	2006	II	58.50%
B.Ed.	MZU	2007	I	68.29%
M.Phil	MKU	2008	II	50.3%

Ph.D. Registration Date: MZU/Ph.D./258 of 25.11.2008

Other Relevant Information:

i) Attended and participated in a regional seminar entitled "Rewriting Narratives of North East" sponsored by Sahitya Akademi and the Department of English, Mizoram University on 18th – 19th November, 2008 at Aizawl, Mizoram.

ii) Attended and participated in a national seminar entitled "The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity: Emerging Literature of Northeast India" organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on 10th – 11thMarch, 2009 at Aizawl, Mizoram.

iii) Secured Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship in 2010.

iv) Published an article entitled "Reordering the Self in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*" in *Labyrinth An International Refereed Journal of Postmodern Studies* in July 2011.

v) Attended pre-Ph.D. course work (August – December 2011).