

Glimpsing History through Stories: the Second World War Remembered

in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels

The original idea and title of this essay is inspired by A. S. Byatt's *On History and Story*, in which Byatt deems it worthwhile to write “a whole chapter on the profound and complex fables of Kazuo Ishiguro about the confusion and reconstructions of the postwar world, starting in Japan, and moving, book by book from Britain and Germany in *The Remains of the Day* to central Europe in *The Unconsoled* and Shanghai and the Far East in *When We Were Orphans*” (4). Brief as it is, Byatt's remark pinpoints the fact that Ishiguro situates his narrators in widely varied locales to arrest images of the Second World War from diverse angles. And it is the correlation of individual stories and world history that this essay endeavors to explore.

The war as a point of temporal reference in four¹ of Ishiguro's novels is not a random choice. Born in Nagasaki in 1954, Ishiguro is inevitably drawn to the monumental event immediately prior to his birth. He grew up among family members and relatives whose memories of the atomic bombing still remained glaringly vivid and in contemporary Britain continues to sense the remnants of the war haunting the collective psyche.² The war, as a determining force of Ishiguro's life, bounds *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*

and *When We Were Orphans* into a thematic whole. In each of these texts, the novelist alludes to colossal calamities through quotidian accounts, attending to the psychological repercussions individuals undergo as they struggle to resituate themselves after the war has unsettled what they once held firmly.

This essay takes interest in the interface of personal memory and public history. It purports to unfurl monumental occurrences that are tactfully woven into civilians' narratives, explore the metonymic correlation of quotidian experiences and epic events, and identify from the novelist's vantage point the historical ironies that enrich the reading of the narratives. It holds that *Pale, Artist, Remains* and *Orphans* allow the reader to glimpse from civilians' standpoints the consequences of the war. The word "glimpsing"³ in the essay title aims to convey the mobility of the observer and the volatility of the observed, and that this mutual uncertainty reflects the contingency of historical representations that Ishiguro illuminates through his diary novels. The transience of glimpse corresponds to the casualness of journal writing. Deploying the first-person *I* to divulge an ineffable past, Ishiguro lays bare the corporal presence of the speaking subject, vacillation of the remembrance, absence of a privileged center of knowledge, and furtiveness of the narrated object. Diary entries, kept in different emotional states, resemble glances, secretive and askew, attempting to arrest the ephemeral.

The Historical Facts Obscured in the Narrating Present and the Narrated Past

Ishiguro acknowledges in various interviews that though “his fictional world does not correspond to a historical reality” (Oe 115), he employs history as “a piece of orchestration to bring out [his] themes” (Kridler 150), and he is particularly intrigued by “periods of history when the moral values in society have undergone a sudden change” (Biggsby 26). His 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” (screen 2). Barry Lewis also characterizes Ishiguro's novels as narratives “located in transitional moments of history, when one set of values is replaced by another” (144). *Pale*, *Artist*, *Remains* and *Orphans* verify Ishiguro's self-perception and others' observations of his writing. These texts do not aim for an explicit inquiry of their respective historical circumstances. Rather, they disclose how individuals endure the ordeal of the war, inspect the past they dread remembering, confront the painful truth they have been evading, and eventually determine the position 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

fraction.

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. While quotidian accounts seem to eclipse monumental events, they adroitly unveil the ineffable trauma individuals suffer in the wake of colossal calamities. In diary entries recognizable events can be strategically encoded in the dates of entries.

Generically private, a journal prefigures the absence of any explanation why certain dates are selected, purposely leaving the gap for the reader to fill. The internal and subjective time reminisced in the narrator's diary contrasts the external and objective time indicated on the entry dates. That is, while journals are kept in chronological order, memories emerge in disrupted and recurrent temporality.

The postwar years, pieced together in these narrators' disjointed remembrances, is an epoch of drastic social disintegration. Set against the nuclear calamities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, *Pale* and *Artist* capture in the narrators' retrospect the overwhelming agony individuals undergo during bomb-induced devastation. In *Pale*, 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 Estuko's diary revolves around Etuko's past in Nagasaki rather than Niki's

stay.

Etsuko neither marks the dates of her diary entries nor specifies the years of her Nagasaki past. The moment of her narration probably concurs with the writer's present, some time between the late 1970s or early 1980s, and the Nagasaki past most likely takes place between the late 1940s and early 1950s. In her first entry, Etsuko mentions that during those years "American 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" (*Pale* 11). One may infer from this passage that the past she refers to falls into the transition period when the Allied Occupation⁴ (1945-1952) came to a near end and the U. S. military gradually diverted their attention to the conflict in Korea⁵ (1950-1953).

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 (*Pale* 11, 111, 137). The Allied Occupation is alluded to in similar impassivity when she recalls that newspapers reported "the occupation coming to an end" (*Pale* 99). The few occasions when Etsuko mentions war damages, she talks in inscrutable quietness about the charred ruins, health hazard, and reconstruction projects in her neighborhood. Yet, she does not elaborate on the cause of these ruins and the scope of the damage. When recalling the rampant infanticides during this period of time,

she retains the composure of a distanced observer, drawing attention to Sachiko's reaction rather than to her own: "I am not sure to what extent these reports worried Sachiko at the time. Certainly she seemed less inclined to leave Mariko unattended . . ." (*Pale* 100). In retrospect, Etsuko eludes the causality of the atomic bombing, postwar infanticides, Keiko's despair and eventual suicide. Each occurrence is unfolded as a singular case, irrelevant to the others.

Also obfuscated in Etsuko's remembrance is the reason why she divorces her first husband Jiro and settles in England with her second husband Mr. 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 (*Pale* 9; 90). Though the phrase "war bride"⁶ never surfaces in Etsuko's narration, it may very well explain how she starts anew through marrying a British journalist. In Japan, war-bride marriages started with the Allied Occupation in 1945 and lasted till the end of the Korean War. Etsuko's second marriage fits the profile of war bride marriage. Quietly integrated into the core narrative of *Pale*, this war-induced social phenomenon fills certain gaps in Etsuko's narration, in particular shame-induced prevarications.

Etsuko remembers that Sachiko talks constantly about opportunities 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 barter a future with Keiko's inconsolable despair. As she looks back to the chaotic moment of Allied Occupation and the Korean War, Etsuko 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, continues to hurt.

References of war devastation in *Artist* remain equally murky. The story is set in Hiroshima, and yet the artist-narrator Ono never mentions the name of the city; he calls it "the city." The atomic bombing, similar to that in *Pale*, is referred to twice as "the bomb" (*Artist* 11; 99), and the defeat of the war as "the surrender" (10; 11).

Though the entire city of Hiroshima is afflicted with the nuclear explosion, Ono attends mostly to the damages of his house and the desertion of the pleasure district Migi-Hidari (*Artist* 26-27; 34-35). He speaks of the deaths of his wife and son in a tone of detached quietude. That his wife is killed at a bombing raid crops up as he examines the shattered remains of his house, and that his only son Kenji loses his life

in the battle in Manchuria surfaces when recalling son-in-law Suichi's defiant talk

(*Artist* 11; 56-58).

The silence on the atomic bombing and Hiroshima in *Artist* is 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 casualties⁷. The city has accordingly become synonymous with the nuclear catastrophe, and contemporary literature on the horror of atomic bombing inevitably taps into the historical implication the city's name evokes. Easily available in the global book market are *Hiroshima Mon Amour* by Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima* by John Hersey, *Hiroshima* by Laurence Yep, *Hiroshima Diary* by Michihiko Hachiya and Warner Wells, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* by Robert Jay Lifton, *Hiroshima: Why American Dropped the Atomic Bomb* by Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima Traces* by Lisa Yoneyama, and innumerable others.

The high-profile presence of Hiroshima perhaps explains why Ishiguro silences the name of the city so as to convey the unutterable desolation he intends for individual retrospect. To erect a monument or to re-establish Hiroshima as a museum of atomic disaster, as Lisa Yoneyama cautions us, is a "containment of memories of horror" because the city will function as "Baudrillard's Disneyland . . .

generating a phantasm of the ever-present past” (72). To explicitly evoke the memory of Hiroshima, Ishiguro may risk trivializing the grief most private to the survivors. And this is a risk he avoids. Obscuring the name of Hiroshima, *Artist* 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.

Ono’s diary starts in the October of 1948 and concludes in the June of 1950. The entries document recent occurrences in his retirement and the much earlier misdeeds at the pinnacle of his career. He recalls with complacency the letter he has written to recommend Sintaro, a former pupil, and the drinking parties he has had with his students in the 1930s. The pinnacle of Ono’s career as an artist⁸ concurs with the golden years of Migi-Hidari, the pleasure district where he frequents with friends and pupils. While Ono relishes his prewar influences, he remains unusually reticent about the Allied-run Tokyo war crimes trials, a globally observed event contemporaneous with his first diary entry. He does not speak of the trials until confronted by his son-in-law Suichi’s accusation that many Japanese militarists are “too cowardly to face up to their responsibilities” (*Artist* 56). 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”(Ibid).

This argument subtly gyrates around the International Tribunal in Ichigaya,⁹ a

current affair Ono does not wish to address but finds no way to dodge. 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.¹⁰ As Barry Lewis points out, the execution of General Tojo constitutes “the unspoken background of blame against which Ono's shame and guilt is limned” (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 intimates 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, one glimpses disturbing reflections of the Japanese elite's jingoism and civilians' blind allegiance.

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. The event is so quietly integrated into the artist's retirement that its occurrence nearly eludes our attention. 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 it has brought to Japan, such as "democracy and individual rights" and for that "Japan has finally established a foundation on which to build a brilliant future" (*Artist* 185-86). On this occasion, the names of successful companies such as "Nippon Electrics" and "KNC" pop up 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, *Artist* 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.

Similar to *Pale* and *Artist*, *Remains* sets an individual's reminiscence against the backdrop of a colossal event. In *Remains*, the timing of Stevens's narration is notable. The commencement of Stevens's motorcar journey, dated July of 1956, concurs with the Egyptian government's nationalization of the Suez Canal. The significance of this historical moment does not escape critics' attention. Meera Tamaya holds that the date of Stevens's journey "provides the determining historical context of the characters' attitudes and aspirations" (45). James M. Lang also notes: "Although the Suez canal remains, as political event, entirely obscured in Ishiguro's

novel, it is difficult to imagine that Ishiguro's choice of setting was not deliberate" (152).

The concurrence of the transaction of Darlington Hall and the reversion of the Suez Canal is noteworthy. Transacted and under-staffed, the Hall parallels the Canal in the waning influence of Britain. The demise of Lord Darlington and the advent of Farraday allegorize the configuration of global power structure, that is, the emergence of the United States as the new superpower. As Steven serves Farraday his American employer, he is, in Susie O'Brien's phrase, "serving a new world order." Synchronous with the butler's nostalgic retrospect to prewar Britain, the Suez Crisis heralds a new era during which the United States fills the void left by Britain and France after they lost control of the region. The new world order thus refers to the actual situation that America replaces Britain as the leading Western power in the Mediterranean Sea and the fictional scenario that Farraday succeeds Lord Darlington as the proprietor of the Hall.

The omission of the Suez Crisis could be explained as a sign of Stevens's anachronism, for the butler, unduly immersed in bygone glory of Darlington Hall, is oblivious to current affairs of the outer world. The oversight also exemplifies Ishiguro's preference for strategic obliqueness. The obliviousness Stevens exhibits mirrors the denial Britain maintains as changes swiftly erode the very foundation of

its old values. Stevens lingers in the decades prior to the Second World War, that is, the prime of Darlington Hall, Lord Darlington's career, and hence his own profession. The earlier years the butler recounts are the period between 1920s and mid-1930s. The conference of 1923, as Stevens calls "the turning point of his profession," is repeatedly alluded to, but the calamitous outcomes of this meeting are deliberately skirted. If the conference of 1923 stands as the zenith of Stevens's professional life, the return of Suez Canal to Egypt marks the nadir he does not wish to recognize.

On his motorcar journey in 1956, the butler puts on a gentleman's suit passed on to him in 1931 or 1932 by Sir Edward Blair even though the outfit is visibly unfitting for his physique, social status, and the traveling occasion (*Remains* 10). He also seeks outdated instructions from Mrs. Symon's *The Wonder of England*, a multi-volume guidebook written and popular in 1930s, regardless that the landscape of England has considerably altered after the war (*Remains* 11). On his way to Weymouth, Stevens is a relic from imperial past stepping into a different time zone, mystifying others and disorienting himself. Also noteworthy is that in 1956 the butler has just recently "taken to listening to the wireless" while others have access to the television (*Remains* 130). It does not come as a surprise that John P. McCombe depicts Stevens as "a walking anachronism" depending on radio for information regardless of "its rapidly diminishing influence" (91). Stevens's disregard of the

changes around him metonymizes Britain's denial of its decline: neither the butler nor the nation is able to embrace the present as it is.

In comparison with the aforementioned three novels, *Orphans* encompasses a wider temporal interval, spanning from 1930 to 1958. The dates of Christopher Banks's diary entries accordingly refer to a greater number of significant events. The months and years marked on the seven entries may at first appear disparate; they are in fact historically correlated. Respectively dated as 1930 and 1931, the first two accounts on Banks's professional development concur with the launch of Japanese occupation of Manchuria.¹¹ Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and immediately afterwards set up a regime to rival the Chinese government. The invasion of Manchuria signals the embarkation of Japanese military aggression across East Asia. The succeeding three accounts are kept in the year of 1937 when the Japanese military rapidly encroaches on the Chinese proper. Banks reaches Shanghai on September 20, 1937 when the city is in turmoil because the Japanese military has already advanced into the city in August. The last Shanghai entry, dated 20th October 1937, concludes with Banks's failure in finding his parents. Immediately after Banks's departure, the invasion of Shanghai, which historians name the Battle of Shanghai¹², ends in Japan's dominance in the city.

Depicting the prewar Shanghai as a city bisected into Chinese area and

Western-administered portions, *Orphans* directs the reader's attention to the indifference of the Westerners, who in 1937 observe the Sino-Japanese combat from the height of Cathay Hotel. Banks recalls: "around me people smiling, even laughing, their cocktail glasses still in their hands" while observing the battle outside the window of the hotel as "a cricket match" (*Orphans*188). The tallest building in Shanghai and the finest hotel in the Far East in the 1930s, Cathay Hotel was extremely popular among internationals; from the vantage point of the hotel building, one could see the Japanese fleet of warships advancing down the Whangpu (Dong 198-99; 252). The three entries Banks keeps during his stay in China are specifically labeled with "Cathay Hotel, Shanghai" because the site signifies the power and limitation of Westerners.

Though in 1937 the hotel granted the expatriates a privileged position and sheltered space to overlook the fighting, it confined and isolated them from the reality in China. The battle, at first appearing far away and irrelevant to the Westerners then, soon afflicted all in the city regardless of nationalities, for the city, in the brief span months, fell into the hand of the Japanese. After Japan seized Shanghai, Britain's domination of Shanghai ended and Japan rose to be the sole administration of the city. The Japanese occupation of Shanghai erased the long-existing boundaries between Chinese area and foreign enclaves (Dong 269).

The Battle of Shanghai subsequently amounted to the Second World War¹³ on the Chinese proper. Among Chinese historians, the beginning and ending of the Second World War remains a continually debated issue. While some may argue that the war started on 18 September 1931 when Japan occupied Manchuria, others would hold that the war began on 7 July 1937 when the Japanese invaded northern China near Beijing (an event named Marco Polo Bridge Incident). In Banks's journal, the dates of 1931 and 1937 play equally important roles, for most of his entries are written within the span of these seven years. Witnessing the fighting in Shanghai, Banks is aware of the multiple forces in conflict; the Second World War, for the Chinese, consists of a long-term battle against Japan's invasion and the continual internal clash between Kuomintang and Communists.

On the Chinese proper, the Second World War lingered long after Japan's surrender in 1945. The Communists, in spite of being crushed between 1934 and 1935, continued to plague the Kuomintang government throughout the Sino-Japanese War and afterwards. The intertwinement of the Chinese Civil War and the Sino-Japanese War explains why *Orphans* does not come to its finale until the year of 1958, a leap¹⁴ of some twenty years from its previous entry, dated 20th October 1937. In 1958, the crisis between the Chinese Communists and the Chinese Nationalist Taiwan once again alerted the world. Banks's final entry, dated 14th

November 1958, may very well allude to this globally observed scenario. The heightened tension, also called “the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis,” began on August 23, 1958 and ended after the States’ military intervention on September 7, 1958 (“Chinese Civil War,” screen 7). Situating an English detective in Shanghai to observe the external and internal conflicts on the Chinese proper, *Orphans* presents the Second World War as an event defined from the Chinese standpoint. It is the Sino-centric timetable that dictates the course of Banks’s reminiscence, and this personal recollection testifies a geo-politically situated interpretation of a world upheaval.

Palpable in Ishiguro’s representation of the Second World War is a civilian-centered exposition: the significance of a historical event is determined by the narrating subject rather than its relation to 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 (v). Center-staging little narratives of ordinary people, Ishiguro's treatment of the Second World War is also in line with contemporary cinematic approaches. Beginning in 1960s up to the 1990s, British cinema has at once indicated and facilitated an ideological shift from focusing on the war to attending the civilians whose lives the war spelled colossal upheavals. As Geoff Eley observes,

the wartime film produced in this period “subverts narrative and symbolic expectations, substituting a story of exciting and disruptive everydayness for the Churchillian grand narrative, the military chronicles, and all the associated iconicity” (824). In Ishiguro’s novels, one detects such a paradigm shift. As ordinary individuals supplant heroic figures, random accounts of everyday life succeed meticulous chronicles of epic events. *Pale* and *Artist* 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; *Remains* captures, from the standpoint of an aging butler, Britain’s nostalgia for the prewar splendor; *Orphans* unfolds a private detective’s naïve ambition to eradicate evilness from the prewar upheaval and his eventual realization that the actual cause of the war lies in the collective greed and folly.

The diversity of these four narrators indicates Ishiguro’s consciousness that cultural, gender and ideological positions an individual takes at once inform and restrict his or her historical perspective. Though experiencing the war firsthand, each of them witnesses merely a minute segment of reality and thereby fails to comprehend the war as a whole and its aftermaths. 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" ("The Shame of Memory" 130); the truth they gradually uncover is not "veritable historical objectivity" but "the emotional conditions of people undergoing intense experiences related to recognizable world events" (*Kazuo Ishiguro* 13).

Centering on the witness-narrator's vision and deception, *Pale*, *Artist*, *Remains* and *Orphans* disclose that the position one takes varies with the historical distance one holds from the reminisced past, the geographical location one was born into, the gender role one is expected to play, and the emotional state one maintains in relation to earlier incidents. Each of the aforementioned narrators looks back to an individual past that is entangled with the national history, unfurls a quotidian existence that is crushed by the imperial folly of his/her nation, exposes personal anguish that is too often muffled by the official rhetoric of patriotism, and divulges through the disjointed memories the apertures concealed in cohesive historical explanations. Absent in these texts is the omniscient third-person chronicler who explicates the causality of monumental occurrences. What emerge are fallible first-person narrators, conscious of their unreliability, murmuring their versions of the war.

The Historical Irony Discerned in the Authorial Present

As mentioned earlier, diaries are employed as the literary device to capture the variability of the diarist-narrator's emotional state. They are also instrumental in illuminating the obscured. Written monologues, diary entries do not elaborate on historical events, for all should be self-evident to the diarist-reader. Dated, they situate the narrator firmly in time, intimating the backdrop of the narrating present. The publishing dates of Ishiguro's texts similarly position him in their respective contexts, which help illustrating his understated critique. The novelist's derision is less noticeable in a text than it is in the juxtaposition of the text and its context, that is, a simultaneous scrutiny of the narrating present and the authorial present.

The strong correlation between Ishiguro's texts and their respective contexts call forth Jacques Derrida's most quoted statement: "il n'y a pas de hors texte" (158). In Spivak's translation, "there is nothing outside of the text," that is, the context remains within the text. Since the context and the text are inseparable, the text is open to infinite possibilities. The text-context interfusion is particularly noteworthy when contemporary issues of the authorial present inspire a novelist to re-examine an earlier event. Ishiguro's temporal position grants him the hindsight to inspect the consequences of an earlier incident while the narrator, restricted by his or her

temporal confinement, fails to comprehend its historical implication. The narrator's naivety accordingly contributes to the dramatic ironies Ishiguro intends, for he depends on the reader's knowledge of his intention so as to recognize the absurdity of the circumstances the narrator is partaking in but unaware of.

Ishiguro translates his awareness of the circumstantial twists into multiple frames of temporality and by so doing positions the reader at a vantage point from which the course of historical changes are discernible. *Pale* and *Artist* first appeared in the early 1980s when Japan exerted its economic might worldwide, a stark contrast to the defeated Japan in the texts. Weaving into both novels Japan's uneasiness of America's dominance during the Allied Occupation, Ishiguro may very well tease the anguish that America suffered when Japan domineered global economy between the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The apprehension Japan and America suffer is at once reciprocal and sequential. During the postwar years, the Allied Occupation assisted Japan to fully develop its postwar economy, and later the Korean War created a huge demand for material requirements which American military acquired locally from Japanese companies. Between 1950 and 1951, Japanese manufacturing grew by 50% because of substantial American military orders and industrial expertise; Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo were among those Japanese companies that thrived during the Korean War ("Korean

War” screen 10). The sense of hope is palpable in the talk of Ono’s son-in-law Taro when he mentions his company KNC: “The changes we have made after the war are now beginning to bear fruit at all levels of the company. We feel very optimistic about the future. Within the next ten years, provided we all do our best, KNC should be a name recognized not just all over Japan but all over the world” (*Artist* 184). Speaking of KNC’s prospect in the November of 1949, Taro probably alludes to the initial stage of economic development Japan has undergone and anticipates the subsequent prosperity it would savor in the decades to come.

The late 1950s and the early 1970s is the “High Growth Age,” during which Japan experienced speedy economic expansion. By the late 1970s, approximately the period during which Ishiguro composed *Pale* and *Artist*, Japan started to pose a serious threat to the United States. In the writing present of *Pale* and *Artist*, Japan’s annual car production reached ten million, already outpacing that of the States and making the nation the largest car manufacturer in the world (“Showa Period,” screen 2). Japanese companies, in the mean time, swiftly took over companies in the States, and the mergers inevitably incited panic among Americans. This perhaps explains why some historians would argue that the Second World War merely interrupted Japan’s Pan-Asiatic scheme to establish Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, for the Allies-initiated reforms accelerated Japan’s recovery from wartime desolation and

thrust it to global economic dominance three decades later.

Reacting to the worldwide depression in 1920s and 1930s, Japan's leaders searched for markets and resources in Asia. The nation flexed its military muscles in the region to form "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," which in 1942 encompassed "the Netherlands East Indies, French Indochina, the British colonial possessions of Burma, Malaya, and Hong Kong, and America's Philippine colony" (Dower 21-22). Through this Pan-Asiatic plan, Japan eventually dismantled, in Joyce C. Lebra's words, "the Western imperialistic structures in the Orient" (4).

Between the late 1970s and 1980s, Japan not only attained its original objective but also stretched its economic tentacles far and beyond into the global arena.

The irony is that America's apprehension of its Japanese Other in the 1980s echoes Japan's fear of its American Other during the Allied Occupation. The Allied Force initiated innumerable reforms. Among these reorganizations are American system of democracy and gender equality, under which Japanese women were given equal rights as their male counterparts. The two issues surface when Jiro and his colleagues talk uneasily about women's growing disobedience and their making independent political decision. The Allies-instituted transformations also rouse the antipathy Ogata-San of *Pale* and Ono of *Artist* harbor against America. While Ogata-san rebukes that younger generations "ape the ways of the enemy" (*Pale* 147),

Ono finds it deplorable that his grandson Ichiro “mimes” the actions of American pop icons Long Ranger and Popeye the Sailor man (*Artist* 34-35).

In the 1980s, American executives’ endeavor to emulate the business management of their Japanese rivals proves a historical twist of the Japanese youth’s “aping” and “miming” their American conquerors in the 1950s. The reversal is illuminated in American cinematic representations of Japanese. Films like *Shogun* (1975), *Gung Ho* (1986), *Ransom* (1986), and *Rising Sun* (1992) portray Japanese executives as menacing figures who prioritize profit over humanity. The haughty Japanese delineated in these movies noticeably departs from the subservient Japanese depicted in much earlier films such as *Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956), *Sayonara* (1957), *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (1958), *The Crimson Kimono* (1959), *Cry for Happy* (1961), and *My Geisha* (1962). In the motion pictures produced in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Japan is personified in geisha's docility and seductiveness. On the prevalence of Hollywood-produced geisha movies in the postwar era, Gina Marchetti explains: “Metaphorically, a bellicose Japan, through the figure of the geisha, became a yielding and dependent nation” (179).

Depictions of Japan or Japanese mirror the producer/target audience’s collective attitude toward their economic rival. The feminized images of Japan in the postwar era were gradually replaced with more masculine depictions as the nation stretched its

economical tentacles worldwide. Sheila Johnson analyzes the imagery

transformation as such:

In the immediate postwar years Americans may have feminized Japanese society partly because they wanted to repress their wartime memories. They were aided in their efforts by the fact that they came as conquerors and Japanese men tried to keep a low profile. Only slowly did a more masculine image of Japan begin to emerge, both in American depictions of the traditional culture and in attitudes toward its new assertive businessmen. (109)

Narrelle Morris holds a similar view that in the 1980s the rise of “Japan” genre of popular fiction drew upon “a general apprehension created and sustained by Japan’s overwhelming economic success in the post-war period” and this anxiety accordingly accentuated its “masculinity” in the fictive representations (screen 8). Japan’s mastery over global finance in the time of Ishiguro’s writing strikes a cord of uneasiness among Americans, and this anguish of the Japanese Other contributes to the tacit and ironical context against which *Pale* and *Artist* depict Japan’s postwar anxiety of its American Other.

Also contemporaneous with Ishiguro’s composition of *Artist* is Yoshio Sakurauchi’s¹⁵ proposition for revising historical accounts of the Second World War. In 1982, Sakurauchi, a former speaker of the Lower House, advocated alteration of

textbooks to offer a euphemistic account of Japan's wartime militarism. The event adds an element of sarcasm to the text, for Ono's prevarication of his earlier misdeeds parallels Sakurachi's denial of Japan's wartime atrocities. Analogous to the politician who endeavors to tamper the history of aggression, the artist implores his friend Matsuda to answer the query of his militarist past "with delicacy" (*Artist* 93-95). Throughout the narration, Ono struggles to efface prior wrongs he does not wish to acknowledge. Both the real-life politician and the fictional artist choose to exercise obliteration when tackling a shameful past. In the aging artist's circumlocutions, memories are subject to amnesia and denial just as historical texts are susceptible to politically motivated revisions and whitewash.

The individual's wishful forgetting is metonymic of the collective mis-remembering of the war. When reading *Pale* and *Artist*, one ought to inspect them within the context that the Japanese have generally remembered the Second World War as "a moment of historical aberration," and the overwhelming majority, including the emperor, perceive themselves "victims of military misdeeds" (Fujitani, White and Yoneyama 7). Critical of Emperor Hirohito's self-positioning as the victim of the lost war, Dower poses a provocative question: "If the man in whose name imperial Japan had conducted foreign and military policy for twenty years was not held accountable for the initiation or conduct of the war, why should anyone

expect ordinary people to dwell on such matters, or to think seriously about their own personal responsibility?" (28). Herbert P. Bix also contends that the Allies' decision to retain the emperor, though serving the interests of securing political stability in postwar Japan, "delayed the Japanese people's confrontation with their wartime past" (screen 1). Japan's failure to deal with the war largely derives from its inability to place the blame when the entire population considers itself the sufferer of the war. The conflation of Japan the villainous aggressor and Japan the assaulted victim is best illustrated in the double roles of bomb survivor and militarist agitator that both Ono of *Artist* and Ogata-san of *Pale* play.

The line that differentiates the villain from the victim remains equally blurry in *Remains*. Stevens is both an accomplice of Lord Darling's treason and a victim of blind loyalty. The butler's obsessive talks on "greatness" are symptomatic of its absence: the loss of dignity in him and the dearth of grandeur in the nation.

Wai-chew Sim is astute to inspect *Remains* in the political climate of Ishiguro's composing present, that is, Margaret Thatcher's premiership between 1979 and 1990. Sim relates Steven's pompous talk to the political discourse of the period:

In a speech during the 1978-79 general election campaign, Thatcher vowed to restore the appellation "Great" to Britain. This subsequently became a mainstay of her oratorical repertoire, and, additionally, the same concept was

used in the 1987 general election campaign, where the conservatives deployed the slogan “putting the Great back into Britain” (98).

The politicians’ rhetorical exploitation of Britain’s Greatness naturally adds a tinge of farcical poignancy to *Remains*, for the text, in staging Victorian values, mocks their illusory presence. As Salman Rushdie aptly remarks, Thatcher's advocacy for re-instituting Victorian values fosters in Britons collective escapism to the “lost hour of their precedence” (92).

Other verbal obsessions of Stevens include “honour” and “professionalism,” which again echo in derision Thatcher’s rhetoric of self-glorification. In a TV interview for ITN, Thatcher responds to questions regarding the resignation of Lord Carrington over her decision to wedge a war against Argentina. While acknowledging Carrington’s “honour,” Thatcher assures Britons: “... with all our professionalism, all our flair and every single bit of native cunning, every single bit of professionalism and all our equipment and we must go out calmly, quietly, to succeed” (screen 5). Interesting parallels can be detected between this interview and *Remains*. Lord Carrington, sounding like Lord Darlington, in charge of the Foreign Office (which Darlington also served before the war) at the time of the Falkland crisis, resigned, in Thatcher’s term, out of a sense of “honour.” In the same interview, Thatcher reiterates the inevitability of the war, using “recover” nine times, “honour”

five times and “profession/professionalism” three times. In her concluding remarks, she even quotes Queen Victoria’s speech: “Failure—the possibilities do not exist” (screen 5). Repeatedly employing the euphemistic phrases of “recover,” “honour” and “professionalism,” Thatcher the Prime Minister sounds uncannily like Stevens the butler.

In response to the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands on April 2, 1982, Britain immediately declared war against Argentina and by June 14 of the same year re-claimed its sovereignty in the region (“History,” screens 1-2). To launch the Falkland Islands War, Thatcher appealed to Britons’ nostalgia for the empire’s former splendor. As she emphatically stated in interviews and speeches in 1982, the war was to “recover” Britain’s overseas territory despite that this patriotic action was executed at exorbitant price. Ishiguro composed *Remains* in the mid-1980s when most Britons still remembered the Falkland war; he stages Stevens’s longing for the prewar Britain to ridicule Thatcher’s use of the Victorian Past, and with the interfusion of *Remains* and its context to unfurl the cultural implications and political maneuvering of nostalgia.

In addition to Thatcher’s political slogan, Britain's multiculturalism also constitutes an interesting backdrop. Written in an era when the British government calls for embracing cultural diversity, *Remains* invites double reading: the novel is at

once a perfect emulation and perceptive derision of Englishness. Stevens's sense of "greatness" is deeply ingrained in Anglo-centrism: not only does he see butler as a profession quintessentially English but he also considers the restrained beauty of rural England an emblem of Britain's unrivaled magnitude. As Luke Strongman remarks, multiculturalism constitutes "the contrastive subtext" for *Remains*, for the novel is "an allegory of imperial decline, and the anachronisms and idiosyncrasies which make up the British and international conception of the stereotypes of British imperial characters" (170-71).

Stevens's exaltation of Englishness echoes Thatcher's speeches in the 1980s, and the resonance betrays the prime minister's inconsistency. While advocating multiculturalism as a policy to deal with the reality of demographic diversification, Thatcher emphasizes the importance of restoring the "Greatness" to Britain and re-instituting Victorian values. What Thatcher's rhetoric discloses is the paradox of multiculturalism that to embrace the otherness is at the same time to further alienate its differences. Of Britain's multicultural development, Bhikhu Parekh writes: "Britishness, as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations" (38). Britain's multicultural policies indeed camouflage racial tension, social anxiety and political maneuvering. While invoking the Victorian era as a usable past, Thatcher's administration capitalizes on the nation's growing diversified

ethnicity as a useful present, construing political euphemisms of ideological contradiction.

If *Remains*, as Rushdie remarks, raises “the Big Questions of Englishness (What is Englishness? What is greatness? What is dignity?)” (245), *Orphans* manifests the vacuity of Britain’s imperial control through an English detective’s childish fantasies of eradicating evil and averting global catastrophes. The novel alludes to Opium wars and their aftermaths, and by so doing it unveils the intricacy of power struggle that continues to tie China and Britain together in the twentieth century. The authorial present of *Orphans*, some time between the mid and the late 1990s, concurs with Hong Kong’s reversion from Britain to Mainland China in 1997. Highly anticipated long before its actual occurrence, the finale of the British rule in Hong Kong very likely prompts Ishiguro to re-examine the political entanglement of Britain and China. The geographical setting of International Settlement in Shanghai and the temporal frame of the Japanese aggressions in China are chosen to corral three imperial powers, Japan, China and Britain into a narrative on the transience of imperial power. Through Banks’s father’s company, his mother Diana Banks’s anti-opium campaign, and later Wang Ku’s control of the opium traffic, the novel discloses the intricate web of Britain’s opium trade, China’s widespread opium addiction, Britons’ guilt-driven anti-opium campaigns and Chinese warlords’

manipulation of their repentance.

To invoke the multifaceted history of the opium-related exploitation and redemption, no city in China is more fitting than Shanghai and Hong Kong. Shanghai was one of the treaty ports opened to Western merchants after the first Opium War of 1842, and Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking and then later in 1898 chartered to Britain on a 99-year lease (“Emergence of Modern China,” screens 1-2; “History of Hong Kong,” screens 4-5). The Lease expired in 1997, approximately the time of Ishiguro's composing *Orphans*. Similar to the Suez Crisis and the Falklands War, Hong Kong Handover symbolizes a global transfer of power. This monumental event not only signals that Britain is further marginalized in the world arena but also declares that China, embracing its long-lost territory, re-asserts its dominance in the region. The reverting of Hong Kong is one of these occasions that prompt Britons to retrospect in lament. The finale of Britain's colonial rule in Hong Kong in 1997 invokes memories of Britain's exit from Shanghai sixty years earlier.

Though Hong Kong does not serve as the actual backdrop of *Orphans*, it remains an obscured double to Shanghai, which the greater part of the narrative is set against. Hong Kong and Shanghai share a similar fate that after Opium Wars both endured ravage and exploitation of foreign forces. Stella Dong gives Shanghai's

unique position an expressive description: “Half Oriental, half Occidental; half land, half water; neither a colony nor wholly belonging to China; inhabited by the citizens of every nation in the world but ruled by none, the emperor’s ugly daughter was an anomaly among cities” (2). This depiction equally captures the extraordinary dynamic of Hong Kong: a cosmopolitan accommodating both cultures and yet belonging to neither. When interpreting the possible reference for the first plural *we*¹⁶ in the novel title, one considers Christopher Banks and Sarah Hemmings the *we* Ishiguro has in mind, but alternative references could also include locations because ceded territories are geopolitical orphans. Shanghai and Hong Kong, in terms of national identity, are orphaned because they, deprived of parental protection, have to fend themselves against alien exploitation.

Banks’s childhood house in Shanghai, now belonging to and occupied by a Chinese family, is a metaphor¹⁷ of Britain’s lost power in China. Analogous to the English detective who must relinquish the childhood house in Shanghai and wake up from his boyish fantasy, Britain has to hand over its governance of Hong Kong to China and acknowledge the finale of its global dominance. Of the Hong Kong Handover, Melvin Rhodes writes: “Great powers seem to rise to towering heights only to inevitably decline. The 19th century belonged to Great Britain, the 20th to the United States. Perhaps century 21 is destined to be dominated by yet other

superpowers” (Screen 4). One of the new superpowers that Rhodes refers to is China (or more broadly Chinese communities). In the hindsight of 1997, Rhodes discerns, as Ishiguro does, the frailty of powers and transience of possession.

The occurrences at the time of the author’s composition inevitably mold the explanation of the text. Ishiguro’s narratives on the Second World War manifest just that. The narrative in each of the aforementioned diary-novels is thrice encased and doubly interlaced: the authorial present contains and complicates the narrating present, which encompasses and interfaces with the reminisced past. Just as each diary bears the marks of its keeper’s narrating present, each of the aforementioned four novels is inscribed with the signs of its particular milieu. Accordingly, each diary fiction ought to be studied in the light of significant occurrences of the moment in which it is situated and the period in which it is written.

On the necessity of hindsight on historiography, Noël Carroll notes: “To propose a historical narrative of t1--a narrative that reveals the significance of t1--requires knowledge of subsequent events, such as the consequences of t1--that occur at t2. Thus, the historian must be located temporally at t3 in order to say what is significant about t1 in light of t2”(162). Carroll believes that legitimate historical accounts necessitate the chronicler’s full comprehension of the reporting present’s relation with the reported past. This theorization may apply to Ishiguro’s writing present in relation

to the fictionalized past, for he must look back from t3, observing the consequences of a specific event at t1 and assessing its impact at t2, and recreating t1 and t2 in his texts.

Though Carroll does not explain the spatial-temporal aspect of t3, one may add that t3 remains a variant because historians do not always situate themselves at a permanent temporal node, much less do they occupy the same geopolitical, gender, cultural, and social position. The varied positions Etsuko, Ono, Stevens, and Banks take evince Ishiguro's consciousness that the variability of t3 engenders the instability of historical visions. Perspectives shift with the lengthening of historical distance, and each altered standpoint prompts an amendment of the earlier interpretation.

As illustrated in *Pale*, *Artist*, *Remains* and *Orphans*, Ishiguro consciously excludes his migratory experiences and family's bombing-related losses. Though admitting that the sense of "displacement" informs his writing, he characterizes his creative process as originating from and revolving around "regret or melancholy" rather than "anger or violence" (Jaggi 23). As he translates his personal understanding of dislocation into the universal concern of postwar dispossession, Ishiguro presents the war as a global tragedy rather than a national calamity or individual losses. Allocating himself to the margin of his narratives, he seeks to see and speak *otherwise*, seeing and speaking from various individuals' perspectives. As

he steps outside of his usual self, Ishiguro envisions the standpoint each of his fictional characters takes and consequences such a position might entail.

Pleading loyalty to neither Japan nor Britain, Ishiguro attends to the mortifying process during which a former empire succumbs to the will of a new power. With a delicate blend of humor and acuity, he depicts Britain and Japan as victims of self-inflicted villainy deliriously pursuing unattainable ambitions and only at the end awakening to their vulnerability. This is a vision he has, a revelation he wishes to share, and an irony he anticipates us to comprehend.

Conclusion

To read *Pale*, *Artist*, *Remains* and *Orphans* contrapuntally with the immediate context of World War II and American postwar dominance, and the distant context of Japan's economic ascendancy, Britain's endeavor to restore its former glory and its domestic policy of multiculturalism, one discerns the vacuity of imperial powers. Ishiguro's approach to the issue of imperialism is less a direct denunciation on its atrocity than a circuitous derision on the absurdity of self-delusion. As Byatt observes, Ishiguro is "looking at British life from inside and outside and [being] different from the postcolonial and purely British writers" (4). His representations

of the Second World War indeed chart for a global readership the parameters of a trans-national community for which history is pieced together through individual accounts. Writing beyond national boundaries, he invites international readers to inspect the war in double hindsight, that is, to scrutinize the psychological ravage in the retrospection of the narrator and then the historical twists at the vantage point of the author.

In his reconfiguration, the historical details of the Second World War hover at textual margins to highlight the civilians' confessions of agony and regret. Ishiguro's war narratives traverse the boundary between a text and its context, allocate an all-important center onto obscure corners, and most noteworthy of all integrate epic events into quotidian existence. Tactfully alluded in the wording of their titles, *pale*, *floating*, *remains*, and *orphans*, these four novels unveil that history can be neither complacently gazed upon nor systematically discovered, that it can only be glimpsed and conjectured, and that quick glances, taken in different moments and localities, capture ephemeral and hazy remnants of a past defying any finite interpretation.

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Notes

¹ Though Byatt cites *Unconsoled* as a text on the Second World War, this essay does not consider it attending to the issues of the war because it is surrealistically set in an unidentified town in Europe without specified time frame. *Never Let Me Go* does not fit into the thematic concern of this essay, for it addresses prematurely the ethical issues of human cloning in the narrating present of 1980s.

² Since the end of the Second World War, the war remains a recurrent theme in contemporary novels, among which are works by Graham Green, Nadine Gordimer, Doris Leesing, and Milan Kundera. The war exerted such an indelible impact on different parts of the world that its aftermaths, immeasurable, continue to shape the course of contemporary literature.

³ “Glimpse” in this essay holds a similar connotation to “glance” in Norman Bryson’s definition. Bryson characterizes “glance” as “a furtive or sideway look . . . which shifts to conceal its own existence, and which is capable of carrying unofficial, *sub rosa* messages of hostility, collusion, rebellion, and lust” (94). The term “glimpse” ought to be differentiated from “gaze,” which is “prolonged, contemplative, yet regarding the field of vision with a certain aloofness and disengagement” (Ibid).

⁴ Though the Allied Occupation, led by General Douglas MacArthur, is often called the American Occupation, it consisted of forces from other nations. The

official British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), comprised of Australian, British, Indian and New Zealand personnel, was deployed from 1946 until 1951. While the American forces were in charge of military government, BCOF presided over demilitarization and the configuration of Japan's war-related industries ("Occupied Japan," screen 2). This may very well explain Sheringham's presence in Japan in the postwar era.

⁵ The conflict is the Korean War, a result of the long-term contention between the United States and its Western democratic allies and the communist powers of China and the Soviet Union ("Korean War," screen 1). The war repeats in variation the earlier historical course of Korea, which has suffered continual invasions and colonization from China, Japan, Russia, America and England ("The Growth and Tribulations," screens 1-3).

⁶ "War bride" refers to a woman who married a foreign GI (usually Westerners) working in the military during the Second World War; the man was not necessarily a soldier, for he could have been a military police, a journalist, or even a clerk. Though at the early stage of the Allied Occupation, General MacArthur declared that no Allied personnel were to fraternize with a Japanese woman, the marriages between American servicemen and Japanese women grew in large number from the end of World War II in 1945 until 1955 shortly after the Korean War ("Occupied Japan,"

screen 1). In addition to all the reforms the Allies executed to recover a shattered Japan, war-bride marriages occasioned an unexpected exodus of Japanese women.

⁷ The numbers of casualty vary from one source of information to the other. It is generally estimated that by the end of 1945, death tolls in Hiroshima by the atomic bombing and its related effects is around 140,000 while in Nagasaki the number reaches approximately 74,000 (“Atomic bombings,” screen 1). NHK reports that the number of deaths in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 is near 170,000 while the death toll in Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 is 73,884. No matter which version one chooses to believe, the nuclear destruction in Hiroshima proves far more severe than that in Nagasaki (“The Atomic Bombs,” screens 2-3).

⁸ As the narrative comes to its conclusion, we learn that even in his hey days, the artist is merely a poster painter. Ono's rhetoric of honor and guilt is deflated when his older daughter Setsuko urges him to “see things in a proper perspective”: “Father was simply a painter. He must stop believing he has done some great wrong” (*Artist* 192-93).

⁹ Sometimes referred to as “the Tokyo tribunal” or “the Tokyo war-crimes trials,” the International Military Tribunals for the Far East in Ichigaya tried Japan's “Class-A” war criminals. Beginning on May 3, 1946 and concluding on December 24, 1948, the trial is one of the major steps the Allies took to purge the nation of its

imperialist remnants (“Occupied Japan,” screen 4; Dower 444).

¹⁰ John Dower considers the trial “the victor’s justice” and the execution of Tojo and the other six Class-A defendants a shield to protect Emperor Hirohito from the international humiliation. He holds that Hirohito, under the Allies’ tacit agreement, evaded any personal responsibility for Japan’s atrocities (460-61).

¹¹ The occupation of Manchuria also constitutes a textual linkage to *Artist*, in which Ono's son Kenji was killed in Manchuria.

¹² Moving Sino-Japanese military conflicts to Shanghai is Chiang Kai-shek’s military strategy to bring the Western powers to China’s side. The battle began with Japanese military’s invasion on 13 August 1937 and ended with the defeat of Chinese troops on 26 November 1937. The battle escalated the regional clash into a full-scale war and soon engaged Western powers whose interests in China were seriously affected by Japan’s aggression (“Battle of Shanghai,” screens 1-5; Dong 251).

¹³ Historians have yet to come to a consensus on the starting date of the Second World War. Those in Europe generally consider the German invasion of Poland, 1 September 1939, the beginning date of the war though some would argue the German invasion of Prague on March 15 1939 ushered in the war (“World War II Timeline,” screen 1; “World War II,” screen 4). The war that broke out between China and

Japan on July 7, 1937 is often regarded as one scenario of the lengthy prelude to the war.

¹⁴ One possible speculation of this narrative skip is to parallel the Great Leap Movement that Mao initiated in January of 1958. The speedy forward from the sixth account to the seventh, unusual in Ishiguro's diary-narrative, resembles the hasty rise in Mao's advocacy. The Great Leap Forward Movement, a five-year plan Mao launched to reform China's economy, soon proved catastrophic. The failure of this reform prompted Mao to step down as the head of the government by the end of 1958 ("The Great Leap Forward," screens 1-3).

¹⁵ In the September of 1996, Sakurachi stirred another global uproar when he publicly stated his doubt that the Nanjing Massacre had ever happened (Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama 22-23).

¹⁶ In addition to the immediate association of Banks and Hemmings, *we* may very well encompass various alliances of individuals. Jenny reminds Banks at once of the bewildered orphan in him and the helpless girl in Hemmings. On a socio-psychological level, *we* may also refer to Banks's alliance with his childhood friend Akira, a Japanese expatriate who shares Banks's anguish of lacking ethnic authenticity. Shao-Pin Luo's definition of "we" of *Orphans* is even more comprehensive, adding Mei Li the Chinese maid to the set (60).

¹⁷ M. Griffiths considers Darlington Hall a great English house Ishiguro stages to unsettle “a resonant, recurring and dynamic symbol of ‘Englishness’” (489).

Griffiths’s remark, with slight modification, can be extrapolated to explain the broader implication of the house in Ishiguro’s writing. The novelist uses the house as the metaphor of imperial power. While Sachiko’s wooden cottage in *Pale* and Ono’s bomb-damaged house in *Artist* allegorize a crushed Japan in desolation, Darlington Hall in *Remains* and Banks’s childhood home in *Orphans* symbolizes the status Britain no longer retains.

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