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Globalisation and dislocation in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro

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Summary

Celebratory claims for the epistemic centrality of the diasporic, nomadic and non-territorial subject have been advanced in recent years. Migrancy is said to confer privileged sensibility and ocular omnipotence; it has also been proposed as a universal ontological condition. At the same time there has been immense critical investiture in the counter-hegemonic valencies of diasporic and syncretic or hybrid cultural forms, which are often parsed as inherently oppositional or subversive, all of which helps to buttress theoretical moves that downplay or dismiss paradigms of rootedness, territoriality and/or national identity in contemporary critical discourse.

This dissertation challenges the articulations above through a critical elaboration of the writings of Anglo-Japanese author Kazuo Ishiguro. It does this by drawing attention to the operation of exilic self-fashioning in Ishiguro's fiction. But, more importantly, it shows that his writing inscribes a trajectory that is metacritical in its ambit, suggesting that critical elucidation of cosmopolitan cultural production needs to attend to the systematicity and effects of international capital if its oppositional impetus is not to be emasculated. This claim derives from the propensity in Ishiguro's fiction to refine the substance of earlier work in response to their popular reception, while simultaneously restating contestatory themes, which means that his authorial trajectory is also able to illuminate some of the commonplace misrecognitions underwriting the reception of cosmopolitan cultural production. Insofar as the increasingly normative insistence on the oppositional makeup of diasporic and syncretic cultural forms and experiences tends to misjudge the appropriative proclivities of global capital the predominance of the former in critical discourse is, therefore, deeply problematised, together with the allied propensity to devalue materialist interpretative categories. The importance of exilic themes in Ishiguro's fiction and also the trajectory proposed here reminds us, however, that migrant encounters can take many forms, and hence that scrupulous attention must be paid to the negotiated specificities of different migrant encounters.

Chapter One. Introduction

On the academic left it appears there is increasing consensus about the political beneficence and saliency of syncretic cultural forms, hybrid locations and transnational positionings. Unlike the past, the stress is on 'the productivity rather than the pain' of migration, which at times seems to be characterised as a simple and sufficient good in itself.¹ The emphasis is on the way in which new cross-border movements facilitate the production and reworking of multiple identities, enabling the renegotiation of formerly static meanings and metanarratives by opening up possibilities for new subject positionings. The critical weight assigned to what has been perceptively termed an 'ethics of nonbinary complexity'² appears to find expression in the assumption that the concept-figure of diaspora and its semi-cognates - migrancy, movement, in-betweenness, hybridity - can help us not only to reorder perception and interpretation in a way appropriate to a qualitatively altered lifeworld, but that it is also constitutively counter-hegemonic, that attention to its intricate and multiple operations will tend to further the aims of oppositional discourses.

Against such an increasingly normative development this dissertation sounds a cautionary note about the inclination to foreground as inherently destabilising the political valencies of syncretic or diasporic cultural forms and nonbinary critical dispositions. It does this through a critical examination

of the writings of Anglo-Japanese writer Kazuo Ishiguro, concentrating principally on the five novels that he has published to date. Work on Ishiguro is important because of the paucity of secondary literature on his fiction, as against his emergence as a major contemporary writer. But it is also important because his authorial career raises trenchantly some of the implications left unconsidered when the search for transnational epistemologies adequate to the increased globalisation of experience and outlook subsumes all cosmopolitan texts under a monumentalised conception of diaspora and/or syncreticity. Such a move tends to downplay or dismiss paradigms of rootedness, territoriality and other geocultural factors of political identity in social and critical thought. But as my thesis seeks to demonstrate these paradigms continue to exert a regnant hold on contemporary cultural production, suggesting that their critical devaluation is in many ways premature.

The counter-example provided by Ishiguro's fiction can firstly be considered through its departure from what has in effect become a normative characterisation of cultural production traversed by the experience of geographical dislocation. Against the grain of the invocations which tend to parse the phenomena in incipiently celebratory and post-statist terms, a conspicuous feature of Ishiguro's work is the large place accorded to exilic concerns. This is arguably attributable to the specificities of Ishiguro's personal background, although by itself that gives only part of the picture. Born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Ishiguro came to England in 1960 when his father,

an oceanographer, was invited to participate in a British government research project in the North Sea.³ As Ishiguro recounts it, the expatriation was originally intended to be short-term.⁴ Well into his adolescence the family apparently had plans to return to Japan, and hence his subsequent turn to fiction-writing was his way of coming to terms with a sojourn which became permanent:

Japan was a very strong place for me because I always believed I would eventually return there, but as it turned out, I never went back. This very important place called Japan which was a mixture of *memory, speculation, and imagination* was fading with every year that went by. I think there was a very urgent need for me to get it down on paper before it disappeared altogether.⁵

In other interviews Ishiguro has also couched the fiction-writing process in terms of his personal dislocation, a lengthy citation from which is necessary for our discussion:

The creative process for me is never about anger or violence, but regret and melancholy. I had very strong emotional relationships in Japan that were severed at a formative age - especially with my grandfather. I've only recently become

aware that there's this other life I might have had, a whole person I was supposed to become,⁶

I think most writers do write out of some part of themselves - that is, I wouldn't say 'unbalanced', but where there is a kind of lack of equilibrium...Writing is kind of a *consolation* or a therapy. Quite often, bad writing comes out of this kind of therapy. The best writing comes out of a situation where I think the artist or writer has to some extent come to terms with the fact that it is too late. The *wound* has come, and it hasn't healed, but it's not going to get any worse; yet, the wound is there. It's a kind of consolation that the world isn't quite the way you wanted it but you can somehow reorder it or try and come to terms with it by actually creating your own world and own versions of it...I think serious writers have to try, in some way or the other, to keep moving in a direction that moves them toward this *area of irresolution*.⁷

As such we might say Ishiguro's early work, particularly the first two novels set wholly or primarily in Japan, could be deemed exemplars of what Elleke Boehmer in the related area of postcolonial writing calls the literature of 'fictional returns'.⁸ This exilic dimension surfaces it would seem in the underwriting of a narrative strategy where spatial dislocation is transposed to the temporal realm, such that all of Ishiguro's central protagonists are

situational exiles, or generally out-of-sync with the worlds they find themselves in. Elements of this dynamic also emerge, I believe, in the preoccupation of the protagonists with events in the past, in the abundance of flashback sequences in Ishiguro's fiction, in recurrent pronouncements in the novels about the uncertainty and malleability of memory, and also in the general melancholic tone suffusing them.

But more important than the exigencies of exilic and/or immigrant self-fashioning *per se* is that it forms an integral part of an authorial trajectory which questions in fundamental terms the critical trend mentioned above. By itself the presence of exilic motifs in Ishiguro's fiction proves little; one may well argue that it is the exception that proves the case regarding the epochal significance of a claimed general deterritorialisation of cultural forms and experiences. What is rather more important, and what this dissertation undertakes to show, is that inscribed in the trajectory of Ishiguro's authorial career (as part and parcel of that self-fashioning exercise) is the discovery that critical elaboration of cosmopolitan cultural production needs to attend to the systematicity and structure of international capital if its oppositional dimensions are not to be emasculated. Insofar as an absolutist insistence on the oppositional makeup of diasporic and syncretic cultural forms tends to lose sight of the appropriative proclivities of global capital - a tendency I will now try to establish - the predominance of these nostrums in critical discourse is, therefore, deeply problematised in Ishiguro's fiction.

Before I can proceed, however, I need to delineate in greater detail the critical trend under discussion, namely the exorbitation of diaspora and its semi-cognates in contemporary theoretical discourse. To begin with, the problematic monumentalisation of these categories can be traced, I believe, to the bewildering pace of contemporary social change. We live in an era that is widely proclaimed to be global in scope and intensity. Expansion in international trade, financial flows, labour migration, the consolidation of a global mode of production through subcontracting (post-Fordist production), the rise of new, media-based transnational culture and patterns of consumption, the shared simultaneity of media experiences, the proliferation of supranational organisations, intractability of environmental ills, and the ease of international travel and communications have all been adduced as evidence of a contemporaneous shift to a qualitatively altered lifeworld. In the human sciences it appears ‘the catchwords of the moment are globalization, transnationalism [and] even postnationalism’.⁹ From both sides of the political spectrum the talk is of new transnational logics rapidly outflanking the system of nation-states.¹⁰

Such developments have resonances, implications and repercussions for cultural interpretation, especially when they are arrogated to calls for new critical paradigms, or, conversely, when they are identified as signaling the putative obsolescence of older ones. In this regard the enhanced visibility of works by cosmopolitan authors in metropolitan social space has been accompanied by increased attention to the theoretical implications of migrant

encounters and experiences. More recently we are hearing claims for the epistemic centrality of the diasporic, nomadic and non-territorial subject, of the contention, for example, that it confers privileged sensibility and ocular omnipotence. Diaspora has been proposed as a universal ontological condition by Paul Rabinow, who proclaims that ‘we are all cosmopolitans’ while urging us to be ‘suspicious of sovereign powers’.¹¹ A certain celebratory argot ‘rife with allusions to the all-seeing eye of the nomadic sensibility’ and ‘valorised by a rhetoric of wandering’ has been identified by Timothy Brennan as a significant feature of the metropolitan reception and celebritisation of minority authors.¹² In an essay that touches on the works of such diverse writers as V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris and Dambudzo Marechera, Chelva Kanaganayakam argues that any critical attendance to the ways in which their fiction negotiates the exigencies of their location between different social collectivities would be to miss the point that these writers do not necessarily ‘inhabit a void’, that they have instead been ‘granted a special insight, a vision not available to the insider’.¹³

Echoes of Kanaganayakam’s stance is discernible in turn in the unambiguously worded title of an article examining the work of Asian-American writer Bharatee Mukherjee, which describes ‘relocation as [a] positive act’.¹⁴ In his programmatic preface marking the launch of the journal where that article appeared, Khachig Tölöyan affirms as well that ‘diasporas are the exemplary community of the transnational moment’.¹⁵ And a recent collection of essays that addresses among other topics the question of

cosmopolitan cultural production enjoins its readers in its title to think and feel ‘beyond the nation’.¹⁶

In much the same vein Homi Bhabha argues in an influential formulation that ‘the truest eye may now belong to the migrant’s double vision’.¹⁷ For Bhabha ‘all cultural statements and systems’ are constructed in a ‘contradictory and ambiguous space’ he calls the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ (37). This founding condition means that all claims to a hierarchical ranking of cultures in terms of their supposed ‘purity’ (*ibid.*) is untenable, and moreover that the recognition of this constitutive ‘in-between’-ness may help us to overcome the politically anodyne ‘exoticism’ which underlie invocations of cultural ‘diversity’ in favour of an empowering ‘hybridity’ within which ‘cultural difference’ may operate (38).

Echoing Bhabha Iain Chambers observes approvingly that ‘a significant tendency in present-day critical thought...is to adopt metaphors of movement, migration, maps, travel and...tourism’.¹⁸ Chambers adds to this trend himself when he argues for the epistemic import of migration as a thought-figure. Because a migrant ‘live[s] at the intersections of histories and memories’, is cut off from the ‘homelands of tradition’, experiences a ‘constantly challenged identity’ and is ‘perpetually required to make herself at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present’, theoretical articulation of the category should contribute in his opinion to the ‘weakening and dispersal of

the rationalist *episteme*, of the Western *cogito*, that once anchored and warranted the subject as the privileged fulcrum of knowledge, truth and being'.¹⁹

Post-statist identities

My reservations about the critical investiture outlined above will become clearer as we come to the readings of Ishiguro's novels in the individual chapters below, but the general direction of my argument - concerning the dangers of the tendency to make a normative conceptualisation of diaspora coeval with the counter-hegemonic - can be usefully illustrated through an examination of the work of the cultural critic Arjun Appadurai, and then in the tracing of connections between his argument and three critics - Pico Iyer, Bruce King, Richard Todd - who have commented elsewhere on Ishiguro's authorial career. Tracing these connections allows us to appreciate better, I suggest, the dangers attending the current exorbitation of diaspora and its semi-cognates and related notions; it allows us to see how such theoretical moves potentially serve the interests of international capital, and this then allows me to situate Ishiguro's work - outlined in the chapter précis below - as a useful corrective to the socio-critical complex formed by these pronouncements. I will first explain Appadurai's position and discuss some of its limitations before proceeding to a discussion of the other critics.

Appadurai is concerned primarily with charting the contours of what he perceives as an epochal shift to a post-statist era. He argues that we need a theoretical vocabulary adequate to the task of 'captur[ing] the collective interest of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and postnational identities'.²⁰ For him transnational non-government organisations, philanthropic movements, diasporic communities, refugees and religious movements signal 'the birth of a variety of complex, postnational social formations' (420). Disavowing the violence enacted in the name of hegemonic-nationalism Appadurai suggests that these organisational forms 'are both instances and incubators of a postnational global order' (421), creating forms of cosmopolitan culture that are increasingly *displacing* cultural forms allied to or bounded by nation-states. 'Where soil and place were once the key to the linkage of territorial affiliation with state monopoly of the means of violence', Appadurai contends that 'key identities and identifications now only partially revolve around the realities and images of place' (413-14). Thus, in his opinion, such practices as 'Chinese from Hong Kong buying real estate in Vancouver, [and] Gujarati traders from Uganda opening motels in New Jersey' should be considered 'examples of a new sort of world in which diaspora is the order of things and settled ways of life...increasingly hard to find' (424).

What that proclaimed new 'order of things' entails is evident in an earlier much-anthologised essay where the category of 'diaspora' or the 'metaphor of movement' alluded to by Chambers above appears to provide

both the thought-figure and occasion for a model of global culture exchange proposed by Appadurai, with culture deployed in the anthropological sense to designate the totality of all social practices occurring around the world. That essay - 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' - has become a telling staple of cultural studies, and as such provides a useful starting position for an examination of the problems attending the metropolitan academe's attempt to find a language and conceptual apparatus adequate to the task of figuring contemporary socio-cultural practices.²¹

Appadurai begins by pointing to the complexity of the global cultural economy, which he claims can no longer be analysed in terms of 'center-periphery models' or the conceptual separation between 'consumers and producers' as practiced by current materialist approaches (275). In place of such distinctions Appadurai proposes a topographic model consisting of five overlapping dimensions which together form a framework for understanding contemporary culture. He terms these dimensions 'ethnoscapes', 'technoscapes', 'finanscapes', 'mediascapes' and 'ideoscapes', where the suffix 'scape' is meant to highlight the 'fluid' and 'irregular' nature of global socio-cultural transactions (275), and which correspond respectively to flows of 'people, machinery, money, images and ideas' around the world (280).²²

More specifically, ethnoscapes involves the distribution and movement of economic migrants, but also refugees and political exiles; technoscapes

refers to the configuration of the international industrial landscape, including its sites of production and the distribution and flows of technology around it;

finanscapes are constituted by the capital flows occurring through currency markets, banks and stock exchanges; mediascape refers to the national and transnational configurations and circulation of media in its many forms; it includes both the images produced and modes of production, while ideoscapes are globally circulating ideologies, ideological values and ideas.

While these flows combine and intersect in numerous ways, Appadurai puts the emphasis on the heterogeneity of their effects and occasions, insisting that they all follow essentially 'non-isomorphic paths' (280). For Appadurai contemporary culture should be conceived as 'fundamentally fractal, that is, as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures, or regularities' (291). In turn global cultural flows '*occur in and through the growing disjunctions*' between all the dimensions (280, italics in original), meaning that no individual dimension 'explains' in full the flows produced therein. Thus while in the past, Appadurai suggests, it was possible to take, as it were, 'one' dimension, say, 'ethnoscape', and map out its configuration - for example, in 'push and pull' models of migration (275) - 'the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctions' between each of them now predominate. In fact, Appadurai argues, 'disjunctions have become central to the politics of global culture' (280), for now the configuration of each dimension results from the extraordinarily complex network of relationships between itself and each of

the other dimensions. In speaking of technoscapes, for example, he claims that the distribution and flows of technology are increasingly driven not by any 'obvious economies of scale' or 'market rationality' (277). Instead, they are driven by:

Increasingly complex relationships between money flows, political possibilities and the availability of both un- and highly skilled labor. So, while India exports waiters and chauffeurs to Dubai and Sharjah, it also exports software engineers to the United States...who are in turn objects of seductive messages to invest their money and know-how in federal and state projects in India (277).

Speaking of the general 'deterritorialization' which underpins such developments Appadurai asserts that another indication of how the different 'scapes' and flows are intricately imbricated (and dis-imbricated) together is appreciable when we consider that while:

The Japanese are notoriously hospitable to ideas and are stereotyped as inclined to export (all) and import (some) goods,...they are also notoriously closed to immigration, like the Swiss, the Swedes and the Saudis. Yet the Swiss and Saudis accept populations of guestworkers, thus creating labor diasporas of Turks, Italians, and other circum-Mediterranean

groups. [In turn] some such guestworker groups maintain continuous contact with their home-nations, like the Turks, but others, like high-level South Asian migrants, tend to desire lives in their new homes (280-81).

The disjunctive nature of global cultural flows is also appreciable, Appadurai suggests, if we attend to a travelogue written by the novelist and critic Pico Iyer, in particular where he describes his encounters with the entertainment industry during his sojourn in the Philippines.²³ As Appadurai sees it 'Iyer's own impressions are testimony to the fact that, if "a" global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with ironies and resistances', for in his opinion 'Americanization' would be 'a pallid term' to apply to the situation described by Iyer where 'an entire nation seems to have learned to mimic Kenny Rogers and the Lennon sisters' (271).

In response to critics who might term such phenomena cultural imperialism Appadurai argues, however, that what they 'fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one way or another' (274), and hence he insists that 'the globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization' (287). Implied in Appadurai's argument then, as Bruce Robbins points out in an approving gloss, is that 'flows of ideas and media...do not slavishly follow flows of technology and finance capital',

which means that his article is also ‘a global argument for the relative autonomy of culture’.²⁴

Despite the confidence with which Appadurai affirms cultural ‘resistance’ and also the evocativeness of his portrayal of newfound ‘political possibilities’ his argument is debatable when we consider that the metaphor of movement and migration so predominates in his model that it ends up occluding any sense of structurality or agency. In this respect Brennan is correct, I feel, when he questions Appadurai’s reluctance to ‘ascribe agency’ to the processes he writes about.²⁵ In other words what Appadurai’s colourful portrait of flows and migrations helps to obscure are the workings of transnational capital, an absence which for Brennan ‘points much more accusingly at the national and cultural fealty of the critic who can locate evolutionary trends rather than policies in this high-stakes game of global change’²⁶ - to which we might add that Appadurai’s move overlooks the experiences of vast numbers in the South for whom globalisation is experienced as neocolonialism. Masao Miyoshi rightly reminds us what we are facing now is not *post-colonialism* but a period of intensified colonialism conducted under the aegis of the corporatist agenda pursued by multinational companies.²⁷ But in Appadurai’s model global capital is in danger of becoming so radically contingent that the deeply sedimented structurality of cultural phenomena and production have become more or less unthinkable in a sustained manner.

There is, however, an even more cogent reason to be wary of the claimed virtues of a post-statist, ‘diasporic’ positioning as conceived by Appadurai, and this is where my argument implicates some of the protocols that certain sections of the metropolitan academe and popular press have developed for reading minority and cosmopolitan literature. Appadurai’s elision of international capital in his analysis is already disturbing, but what is even more troubling is the consequences of that move, which can be traced through the comments of the three critics mentioned earlier, and which I would like to delineate in some detail first before discussion.

Appadurai alludes in his essay to Iyer’s travelogue in order to garner support for his claims about the ‘profoundly unpredictable’ (277) nature of global cultural flows, as well as for his efforts to outline the *oppositional* possibilities opened by a proclaimed post-statist era. Yet what most tellingly establishes the perils of an *a priori* alignment of transnational positions with an assumed counter-hegemonic valency is the 1993 article that Iyer wrote for *Time* magazine, in which he casts Ishiguro as a co-protagonist in a story of liberatory transgression, of the proclamation that new voices, at long last, are starting to enter and democratize the English canon.²⁸ As part of an entourage that includes writers such as Vikram Seth, Michael Ondaatje, Ben Okri, Timothy Mo and Keri Hulme, Iyer argues that the appearance of Ishiguro’s works on the metropolitan literary scene heralds a brave new world of commonplace syncreticism, of the emergence of a burgeoning ‘world fiction’ industry, an invigorating ‘polycultural order’ and an exciting

'new cross-cultural mix' (54). These 'transcultural writers' (56) testify to our new 'multicultural life' (54) and signal the emergence of a 'new postimperial order' (56). They also attest, in Iyer's view, to the fact that we now live in an 'increasingly small, increasingly mongrel, [and] increasingly mobile global village' (56).

Despite the claimed progressive promise of such developments, however, the duplicitous nature of Iyer's rhetoric is intimated when he switches smoothly into the register of ethnic dining and exotica, as in his announcement that world fiction amounts to 'hot spices...entering English [literature]' together with 'tropical birds and sorcerers' (56). The lineaments of what Graham Huggan in a related context calls the 'fetishisation of cultural otherness that allows metropolitan readers to exercise fantasies of unrestricted movement and free will'²⁹ begins to emerge when Iyer announces that cosmopolitan cultural production points to an era of 'instant migration' (59). The co-optive dynamic underpinning his panegyric to culture difference is also apparent when he proclaims that 'world fiction has expanded our conception of the possible and brought wonder into our living rooms' (57).

But, most disturbingly, Iyer then argues that cosmopolitan cultural production is merely the first fruits of the wonder that we now live in a 'decentred' world with a 'borderless' global economy. Echoing Appadurai's claims regarding the obsolescence of 'centre-periphery' dualities he argues

that the emergence of the writers cited above betokens a veritable revolution in the make-up of the world. They suggest:

In the process, [that] the notion of the central and the peripheral is being turned inside out. Robert McCrum, editor in chief of London's Faber and Faber and co-author of *The Story of English*, likens the diffusion to what happened during the Roman empire, when 'the literary energy moved from Rome increasingly to the provinces, the Mediterranean, Africa, Turkey and so forth'. Carlos Fuentes, an American-raised Mexican writer, notes how the same phenomenon has overwhelmed Spanish literature - the great modern novels in Spanish come not from Spain but from such former colonies as Colombia, Argentina and Mexico. 'The eccentric world is now central', he says, 'and perhaps the only way to be central in the future will be to be eccentric'. What all of them are saying, in a sense, is that we are living in a decentred world, and the publishing business has not been slow to make capital of what investors call the 'borderless economy' (58).

This effusive language of new-found promise and potential is repeated a few months later in another article written by Iyer for a special year-end edition of *Time*, where in a similar liberatory idiom he proclaims the advent of the

'transnational future', 'a common multiculturalism' and, again, the 'global village':

Values [now] travel at the speed of fax...a common multiculturalism links us all - call it Planet Hollywood, Planet Reebok or the United Colors of Benneton...the global village is defined, as we know, by an international youth culture that takes its cues from American pop culture...as national borders fall, tribal alliances and manmade divisions rise up... the transnational future is upon us...America may still, if only symbolically, be a model for the world.³⁰

In an argument that bears some resemblance to Iyer's, Bruce King is also keen to testify to the eruption of what he terms a 'New Internationalism', but this time operating in the British cultural milieu, as demonstrated by the emergence of writers such as Shiva Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo and, again, Ishiguro.³¹ King's commentary is initially encouraging because he appears to be enjoining the rejection of Eurocentrism. In his opinion the varied range of concerns in the writings of the authors above 'reflects the way modern life is characterised by the awareness of new nations, the ease of international travel and communications, the global literary market, [and]...the possibility that assimilation into British culture is no longer the ideal for many who live in England' (193).

However, King then proceeds to proffer a questionable depiction of 'First World' social space as the invigorating source of all sustaining values. In regards to *all* the authors cited above, including Ishiguro, he maintains that:

Although they are concerned with cultural and racial dignity, and although at times they find themselves torn between their two cultures, they seem to criticise the Third World both as insiders and as Westerners. Their criticism of England is in terms of British values. If they try to recover part of their origins through their writing, they have also come to expect, as British citizens, more liberties than are common in the Third World (209).

While Richard Todd does not use the term New Internationalism he does repeat King's attempt to demarcate an emergent cultural condition tied to the enhanced visibility of works by cosmopolitan and minority authors. In a book which bills itself as 'the first full study of the Booker-led explosion of literary fiction'³² Todd argues that the popular reception of 'Ishiguro' (40) and other British writers in the United States has started to displace the prejudices of its academics, as registered by the title of a 1967 book by Rubin Rabinovitz: '*The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel 1950-1960*'. Contesting the misapprehension borne out by such academic 'orthodoxy' (33) Todd offers, in contrast, the vision of a 'culturally pluralist' Britain (306).

In his opinion, the Booker prize both epitomises and sustains this development, with past winners signaling emergent genres such as 'new' Scottish fiction and postcolonial writing. One of the reason it has had this effect, he suggests, is that the prize is open to English writing from all the former parts of the empire, but barred to American citizens (77). Repeating Iyer's analogy on the transfer of 'literary energy', but this time in a centripetal direction from hinterland formations to the centre, he maintains that such transfer has contributed to a form of cultural revival, as summed up in the following passage:

Booker-eligibility has gradually enabled the literary energy that was once at the former Empire's centre and directed outwards to the colonial periphery, by a process of post-colonial transference, to be directed back at the enfeebled centre. The result is a literature that is significantly different in kind, tone and experience from the mainstream serious literary American novel (77-78).

What pertains to our discussion as well is Todd's comments on the specific significance of new Scottish fiction. According to Todd one of the most popular themes of this emerging genre concerns the issue of collective self-definition pursued under the banner of 'nationalism'. In this regard, however, 'Scotland is plagued by a characteristic common to that of all small European nations' (162). In his words:

Scotland is faced with the unpalatable fact that what little is known about it from outside is of the 'heritage-industry' nature (what has been described above as Kailyardism or Tartanry). What the Scots know about England, or indeed the United States, is both more - and more accurate - than what those more influential countries know (or wish to know) about Scotland. The result: nationalist pride jars against a sense of inferiority. When the Union finally disintegrates...this problem of self-definition will be the most pressing facing Scottish nationalism (163).

The category error that King makes above when he casually ushers Ishiguro under the heading 'Third World' writer has already been pointed out.³³ But what is significant for our purposes is not just that King needs to render 'Japan' invisible in order to fit Ishiguro into a proto-Manichean worldview.³⁴ What is equally striking is the persistence of this framework despite his avowedly internationalist stance. Despite his rejection of 'navel'-gazing parochialism (194) there appears to be no room in King's interpretative universe for commentary in terms of cross-cultural values, negotiated shared values, or even an internationalism worthy of the name. For in King's framework commentary on metropolitan culture can only be conducted in terms of 'British values' as counterpoised to the constitutive illiberality of a homogenised 'Third World' space.

But it is with Todd's comments, I think, that we can see most clearly how the self-unraveling of a claimed affinity for trans-cultural plurality operates. What is arguably incipient in King's account comes out in the way that Todd's attempt to claim the pluralist high-ground collapses into more prosaic sectoral concerns. Although he speaks encouragingly of new Scottish fiction and postcolonial writing as indicators of the increased representation of contending voices and groups within Britain, the animus with which he berates the imputed 'heritage industry' or dead-end nativist proclivities of Scottish sociality against England's countervailing 'influential' country status raises questions about the sincerity of his claims. The eagerness to assert influence suggests that his earlier odd account of the 'post-colonial transference' of 'literary energy' to an 'enfeebled centre' carries more than a touch of imperial nostalgia, that the cultural analogy sublimates at some level the desire to claim an equivalent geopolitical standing alongside 'the United States' and arrayed against the world's 'small European nations'.

In other words Todd appears to be seeking the kind of cultural self-representation recently identified by Brennan in a related context, when he criticises a proclivity in American mainstream culture to portray itself self-flatteringly as a 'cynosure of heterogeneity', thus licensing an aggrandising tendency to speak for the world as a claimed 'universal nation'.³⁵ What helps to meliorate such apparently deep-seated parochialism then is when more sober-minded critics such as George Yúdice tries to remind his readers, as

the title of his essay puts it, that 'We Are Not The World', criticising the way in which 'the impulse to recognise the diversity that constitutes the United States overshoots its mark and self-servingly celebrates "American" multiculturalism as isomorphic with the world'.³⁶

The object lesson that Todd can provide then is the need to be wary of ideological interests hidden away in moves towards the transnational or the polycultural. Because he expresses in the arena of British domestic politics an avidity for American-style 'multiculturalism' as an insignia of imperial power this suggests that the phenomena whereby falsely inflated invocations of plurality act to disguise specifically hegemonic articulations already has an established international presence. What Fredric Jameson might call the 'outsider principle' appears to be at work here, the way in which a 'non-card-carrying' visitor to a discursive arrangement (the analogy derives from the natural sciences) is able to spot more clearly its operating parameters,³⁷ which is to say that Todd's avidity for the prerogatives of imperial centrality proffers veridical confirmation of the potency of that 'cynosure of heterogeneity' move identified by Brennan. Todd's own discursive mode is nostalgic in orientation, but despite or because of that we might say his remarks help us to pinpoint more accurately one specific conjuncture of power and ideology.

If we return to Iyer's formulations in the light of the above, what is really at stake when he contrasts 'tribal alliances and manmade divisions'

with 'transnational future' and 'a common multiculturalism' is again, it would seem, the pursuit of sectoral interests in a deceptively universalist or utopian garb. The appealing rhetoric of boundary violation employed by Iyer in the two indented passages quoted above seeks, that is, to shape an environment more hospitable to multinational capital. This can be seen in the way in which his appeal to 'world fiction' industry, 'polycultural order' and 'cross-cultural mix' slides conveniently into a declaration that we now live in a 'decentred' world in which 'the notion of the central and the peripheral' has been 'turned inside out', hence conflating the realms of the cultural and the material in the attempt to imply the melioration of the North-South divide, in what can only be called a cynical mystification of the workings of global capital.

The undertaking is continued with the audacious claim that 'the eccentric world is now central', where as a euphemism for periphery the term occludes the increasing immiserisation of the South, while at the same time tagging it as a lifestyle available for consumption in the nominalised mode of 'world fiction' ('The way to be central is to be eccentric'). Finally, Iyer's apologia for 'transnational corporatism'³⁸ is most clearly demonstrated in his attempt to naturalise the 'borderless economy', to tag it as an inexorable occurrence so that his market populist rhetoric helps perpetuate the current phase of neo-liberal hegemony. It is in this context also that Huggan's recent criticism of Iyer's pronouncements on 'world fiction' seems entirely appropriate, namely that in conjoining 'literary/cultural production to

a naively celebratory global cosmopolitan sensibility' he has helped to elide 'conspicuous inequalities of technological resources and international divisions of labour'.³⁹

Seen in this light the pursuit of the global and the transcultural by King, Todd and Iyer does not suggest a genuine open-minded attitude to the world. As the above discussion demonstrates not all appeals to those categories are necessarily deparochialising, destabilising and worthy of support. It seems that an absolutist alignment of the thought-figure of diaspora with the claimed advantages of boundary violation and the 'transnational future' is as susceptible to commodification as any phenomena confronted by the co-optive powers of exchange value, ultimately to become as politically vacuous as Iyer's encomium to the United Colors of Benneton and his glib assertion of 'a common multiculturalism' unified in the pursuit of consumer goods. As Brennan cogently puts it the problem stems from the fact that such articulations are:

A discourse of the universal that is inherently local - a locality that's always surreptitiously imperial. Its covert appeal is most powerful when, in a double displacement, its political sense is expressed in cultural forms...[Such discourse typically] constructs political utopias in aesthetic or ethical guise, so that they may more effectively play what often proves, on inspection, to be ultimately an economic role.⁴⁰

Appadurai reconsidered

It is in this context then that a reconsideration of Appadurai's proposals also becomes imperative. It seems important that we question as well Frederick Buell's enthusiastic endorsement of Appadurai's model of global cultural exchange as being 'the most satisfying means to date for grasping what is specifically new about the present time'.⁴¹ For like Appadurai Buell is also convinced that the multiple, unpredictable effects of global flows support his contention that Immanuel Wallerstein's emphasis on unequal exchange between 'periphery' and 'core' capitalist nation-states is now outmoded (337). And echoing Appadurai Buell also alludes to Iyer's travelogue (5) to garner support for his claims regarding the 'progressive possibilities of contemporary postnational culture' (343), which he bases on the argument that local 'resistance' is produced when 'globalization of American commercial popular culture incites cultures and communities worldwide to produce a carnivalesque profusion of hybrid forms' (11). More recently as well Appadurai has repeated his claim about the proleptic and progressive nature of transnational cultural forms, pointing to mass media and migration as the twin building blocks of what he calls 'diasporic public spheres' which, as the term implies, replace the functions that national public spheres had hitherto provided.⁴²

But while it may be unsurprising that Iyer, writing for a publication that makes no bones about its support for transnational corporatism, is relatively

blasé about his ‘complicity with the late-capitalist global commodity culture [that he] celebrates’,⁴³ it would appear that Appadurai’s (and Buell’s) repudiation of a centre-periphery framework and confidence in the critical promise of post-statist, hybrid culture forms requires greater scrutiny. Not that one needs to abandon the search for alternatives to Wallerstein’s world-systems approach to the study and analysis of large-scale social change, or to doggedly defend his model against the charge that it overlooks ‘the role of culture in shaping developments in particular societies’, as Thomas Shannon, for instance, has argued.⁴⁴ What is pertinent to my discussion is rather the question of the interests served when in the guise of proposing new theoretical positions Appadurai and Buell refuse *tout court* to allow for the operations of hegemonic discourses, which is to say their implicit denial of the imperialist framework itself. In this regard, however, the problems I have raised about the claims made by King, Todd and Iyer should warn against any *a priori* critical monumentalisation of the concept-figure of diaspora, since it plays potentially into the hands of those adept at sloganising about ‘transnational future’ to occlude powerfully oppressive socioeconomic forces.

The imperative to watch out for the dangers of a formalistic, ahistorical exorbitation of such categories regardless of concrete social content can, in fact, be further specified. While Appadurai points to Hong Kong buyers of real estate in Vancouver as indicative of a post-statist future which is parsed as intrinsically progressive, Kathryn Mitchell has

demonstrated in compelling detail in her study of those transactions that parties trying to voice legitimate concerns about property speculation were actually sidelined by charges of ‘racism and fear of change’,⁴⁵ so that, as she sees it, transnational elites from Hong Kong and banking and real estate interests in Vancouver were able to *rework* the liberal discourse of multiculturalism ‘as an ideology of racial harmony and bridge-building’ such that it could become ‘part of a much broader strategy of hegemonic production in the interests of multinational capitalism’.⁴⁶ In this context, it seems important that we attend as well to Rachel Lee’s misgivings about Appadurai’s haste to demarcate and occupy the space of the ‘postnational’, for as Lee correctly observes his move obscures the way in which certain ‘nonterritorial, postnational groups are sufficiently ensconced within the power structures of existing nations, thereby rendering non-territoriality a literally viable option’, the upshot being an untenable theoretical tendency, as she sees it, to elide vast differences between ‘elite cosmopolitan[s]’ and ‘disenfranchised refugee[s]’.⁴⁷

Postmodern inflections

As outlined above the problem then is that Appadurai and Buell make empirically premature generalisations in their exorbitation of the concept-figure of diaspora. Yet this also invites us to scrutinise the theoretical position underwriting this move. Apart from the empirical dimension there is, I think, a theoretical dimension that needs to be addressed. This is

appreciable when we consider the extent to which the positions of Appadurai and Buell issue from a programmatic adhesion to postmodernist nostrums. Jean-François Lyotard's famous definition of postmodernism as 'incredulity toward[s] metanarratives',⁴⁸ his injunction to theorists to 'wage a war on totality' and to be 'witnesses to the unrepresentable'⁴⁹ can be discerned, for instance, in Appadurai's emphasis on the constitutively disjunctive and non-isomorphic nature of global cultural flows. Lyotard's formulations also appear to underwrite Appadurai's appeal to readers to conceptualise contemporary culture as 'fundamentally fractal', echoing as it does Lyotard's allusion to fractal geometry⁵⁰ as a metaphor for what is constitutively new about the present historical conjuncture.

For Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi postmodernism is an intellectual position that embraces the 'set of cultural projects united by a self-proclaimed commitment to heterogeneity, fragmentation and difference', and it is also at the same time marked by a 'fundamental mistrust of all attempts to theorise totalities or to posit systematic connections between institutional orders'.⁵¹ It is these nostrums that appear to underpin Appadurai's refusal to ascribe agency to the processes he describes as well as his refusal to conceptualise the multifarious operations of multinational capital. If for Mike Featherstone postmodernism is characterised by an emphasis on the 'diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses',⁵² this seems to account as well for Appadurai's countervailing confidence in the capacity that local narratives possess to produce 'indigenization', hence allowing him

to sidestep the thorny question of hegemony. Yet as Arif Dirlik has correctly argued, 'a preoccupation with the local that leaves the global outside its line of vision is [also] vulnerable to manipulation at the hands of global capital which of necessity commands a more comprehensive vision of a global totality', since it is oftentimes the enframing and generative condition for that recourse to the local.⁵³

Chapter précis

In contrast to such postmodernist-inflected protocols, however, my dissertation asserts the importance of granting due attention to the multifarious effects and deeply-sedimented structurality of transnational capital: the fundamental challenge that Ishiguro's work presents for the theoretical conjuncture under discussion is how, inscribed in the very trajectory and problematic of his writing itself, is the *discovery* that any critical project seeking to challenge Orientalist and Eurocentric discourses cannot afford to set aside questions about the systematicity and structurality of global capital, including its commodificatory and appropriative capabilities and its ability to reduce the Other to the same.

The discovery is coeval, I suggest, with the turn in Ishiguro's authorial career between his first three novels and the latest two. In my reading, the formal experimentation undertaken in the latter - *The Unconsoled* (1995), and *When We Were Orphans* (2000) - is initiated to foreground just those

questions of commodification and systematicity which the theoretical complex above damagingly shuns. Ishiguro is led to make this move because of the specific ways by which his first three novels were received, such that their oppositional impetus was emasculated, and thus he finds that the effort to stress historical and cultural specificity in these works also needs to be augmented by, so to speak, an inclusion of the global in his 'line of vision', in order to bolster the efficacy of his counter-hegemonic stance. There is a propensity in Ishiguro's writing to refine the substance of earlier work, to use the critical and popular reception of previous writing as the occasion for a self-reflexive reworking and *reiteration* of contestatory themes. This propensity - and compulsion under the force of circumstance - to re-state oppositional concerns means that inscribed in Ishiguro's authorial trajectory in nascent form is a sociology of reception illuminating the commonplace assumptions and misrecognitions of metropolitan literary discussion. And it is the insights provided by this sociology of reception, therefore, that underwrite my misgivings about the critical direction endorsed by Appadurai and Buell, which is to say that their repudiation of systematic theory and materialist categories unwarrantably runs the risk of eliding the imbalance and inequality of power relations. It is these insights, furthermore, that allow us to argue that their confidence in the counter-hegemonic efficacy of diasporic-cum-hybrid cultural forms is overstretched.

That Ishiguro seeks to undermine Orientalist articulations can be seen in the configuration of his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An*

Artist of the Floating World (1986), which I examine in chapters two and three respectively. *A Pale View of Hills* in my reading is a rewriting of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, undertaken in order to contest Manichean constructions, while at the same time appropriating the opera's storyline to address the exigencies of exilic self-fashioning; its aims are revisionary-ethnographic in that it seeks to undermine dominant exceptionalist notions about Japanese sociality. *An Artist of the Floating World* continues the project of staking out a viable space for historical and sociocultural specificity by challenging Japan's assigned metaphysical alterity, as can be seen in its interrogation of the two dominant metaphors of Ruth Benedict's influential anthropological work *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*,⁵⁴ with its exorbitation of hyper-aestheticism and militarism as timeless features of a posited Japanese ethno-national character. In addition, the insidious allochrony⁵⁵ which this assigned metaphysical alterity attests to is tackled through the proliferation of emulatory behaviour in the novel, which I read as an attempt to highlight the historical trajectory shared between Japan and other metropolitan formations.

The sensibility underwriting these novels might be characterised, therefore, as a refusal to turn 'Japan' into an object of empirical knowledge in order to shore up metropolitan subject-formation predicated on essentialist arrangements. The distinguishing feature of Ishiguro's early work is the 'negativity' of its approach, for in contrast to much commentary which displays an *idée fixe* on establishing the *Japaneseness* of the positive

content of his writing, my dissertation argues that he seeks rather to subvert the exoticist and culturalist assumptions readers bring to the text. This is indirectly underscored in an early interview where Clive Sinclair paraphrases Ishiguro on the relationship between his writing and modern Japanese fiction:

Look...my books - especially *A Pale View of Hills* - have strong plots and three-dimensional characters. A typical Japanese novel is like a diary; it has an indistinct narrator much given to rumination, a minimal story line, and characters whose dimensions do not necessarily amount to three.⁵⁶

Moreover, this contestation of culturalist expropriation can be traced to Ishiguro's location within and between the British and the Japanese social formations; it also testifies to the perdurable longevity of such assumptions in the metropolitan popular and cultural-media imaginary, some of whose salient features I will describe below.

Ishiguro's subsequent novel - *The Remains of the Day* (1989) -, which I discuss in chapter four, is, again, anti-Manichean in scope. Because of the misrecognition of earlier works as affirming the Manichean divides that they in fact sought to undermine, Ishiguro responds by duplicating in this novel the subplot of *A Pale View of Hills* and the main storyline of *An Artist of the Floating World*. In particular, the narrative pattern whereby a character

gradually comes to realize the ramifications of his proclivity to engage in self-deception and (witting or unwitting) collaboration with oppressive discourses is replicated, this time in an English setting, unlike the first two novels which are set wholly or primarily in Japan. The transfer of the sphere of vision to the western metropolis while re-stating theme is designed to set up a poser for readers who are, again, liable to tag Ishiguro as a native informant tasked with the provision of psychological insights into a posited Japanese ethno-national character, while, in effect, affirming the culturalist agendas they bring to the text. Thus Ishiguro's penchant for what one commentator recently calls 'universalist parables',⁵⁷ where it is manifested in *The Remains of the Day*, is, in my reading, also a metacommentary on the domestication of his earlier works.

Put in another way, *The Remains of the Day* tackles homogenising discourses from the opposite side of the symbolic economy set up by Manichean allegories. For what constitutes the enabling condition of those allegories is also the (inverse) discourse of English exceptionalism interrogated in the novel. In this sense Ishiguro's negotiation between his British and Japanese patrimony is most intriguingly staged through the novel's anti-pastoral and de-mythologising thrust. Hence on my reading its warning that heritage consumerism - in which the stately-home milieu acts as a floating metaphor for a certain kind of fundamental Englishness or Britishness - potentially aids socially-exclusive tendencies associated with the rise of new rightist discourses in Britain in the seventies and the eighties

operates at the level of content to enjoin the broadening of the cultural and semantic perimeters of Britishness while at the same time contesting at the level of form - through the thematic replication mentioned above - essentialist invocations of Japanese particularity.

The key change that I am alluding to in Ishiguro's writing is then that following the greater 'realist' mode of narration in the earlier novels, there is the recourse to fabulist narration in subsequent work, prompted, I am arguing, by the failure of imagination in the interpretations his work attracted. To the extent that in its *populist* (mis)-appraisal *The Remains of the Day* was construed as a novel whereby 'the alien eye of the Japanese immigrant writer' had helped to disclose 'a once-present but now lost essential Englishness',⁵⁸ chapter five undertakes to show that the stylistic experiments undertaken in *The Unconsoled* are aimed at encouraging a parabolic optic on the central protagonist's misadventures. More specifically, it encourages a metacritical reading of the novel as a parody of Ishiguro's commodification in metropolitan culture as a supplier of Japanese and English *authenticity*. The novel mounts a diagnostic dramatisation of Ishiguro's *own* reception in the broader metropolitan literary-critical discussion. It reveals the commodificatory logic by which he became ensnared in the appropriative apparatus of a 'commercial alterity industry'⁵⁹ redolent of Iyer's formulations in *Time* magazine. This is achieved through its portrayal of an artist-musician who arrives in an unspecified town to give a recital, who is inundated with a host of inane demands including the stipulation that he initiate some form of

cultural cum socio-political revival reminiscent of the arguments of Todd and King, but who then keeps failing in what he sets out to do. As such the change of direction represented by *The Unconsoled* helps to register the customary ways by which cosmopolitan texts are sequestered by co-optive agendas.

Ishiguro's most recent novel - *When We Were Orphans* - is the subject of chapter six, where I read it as a continuation of the effort made in the earlier novels to demystify appropriative discourses. If the effect of the formulations endorsed by Appadurai et. al. above is a pernicious tendency to render the world shapeless and unthinkable and thus to perpetuate inequity, *When We Were Orphans* might be said to offer a countervailing object lesson. This is achieved through a critical focus on what ultimately underwrites a commercial alterity industry, which is to say that the novel seeks to figure the fundamental operations of global capital. In this respect, the novel's main storyline (which tells of an English detective searching for his long-lost parents in Shanghai in the 1930s), its incidence of fabulist narration, its rewriting of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and its deconstruction of the detective narrative form are read again as an effort to encourage a parabolic interpretation. However this time the formal strategies expose the reproduction of the social relations of production as the fundamental process of capitalist society, inclusive of unequal exchange operating on a worldwide basis. The novel's attempt to draw attention to the latter - through what Fredric Jameson calls a cognitive map - is seen as an

extension of the project begun in *The Unconsoled*, with its critical focus on the exposure of homogenising articulations. Ishiguro's attempt to recuperate nostalgia as the affective equivalent of political idealism is also characterised as a narrative strategy which reworks the *topos* of exile for contestatory ends, and to the extent that this means Ishiguro's oeuvre is more elegantly construed under the last, this also confounds the normative delineations of cosmopolitan cultural production outlined earlier.

Given that it is partly the force of misrecognitions exerted by the metropolitan literary reception that underpins the move in the more recent novels to foreground the interpretative categories of totality, structure and commodification, the critical tendency to privilege local narratives at the expense of those categories is, therefore, questionable. The importance of exilic themes in Ishiguro's fiction and also the authorial trajectory proposed here reminds us that migrant encounters can take many forms, that 'there is no such thing as a universal diasporic meaning'⁶⁰ rendering as politically beneficent all situations where cultural production is traversed by the experience of dislocation. It suggests that scrupulous attention must be paid to the material and negotiated specificities of different migrant encounters, that these encounters are also situated, and that unless the specific modalities of what we might call situatedness-in-displacement are spelt out, we may unwittingly further instrumentalising arrangements. It also warns against an obscurantist isolation of culture from questions of political economy. Critical elaboration of Ishiguro's fiction suggests finally that we

need to be wary of any effort to assign as constitutively emancipatory the socio-political valencies of diasporic, transnational or hybrid cultural forms. And further, that we need to consider if arguments to that effect might be operating to mystify continuing asymmetries of power within inclusive conceptions of global culture.

Popular and media zeitgeist

In order to appreciate the socio-political context in which Ishiguro's writing emerges we need to establish, however, the place of the referent 'Japan' in the metropolitan popular and cultural imaginary. For without some understanding of the exceptionalist asseverations that Ishiguro's writing strives to undercut it is difficult, I believe, to appreciate the counter-discursive thrust marking the authorial trajectory proposed above, including as suggested the textual concerns underwriting the continuation of theme between the first three novels.

This received knowledge is pervasive and readily summonable. Among its salient features Japan has been arrogated under the trope of exotica or the hyper-aesthetic (zen, kabuki, tea ceremony, geishas); it has been aligned with the war-like and the martial (inscrutable suicides, kamikaze, samurai);⁶¹ or else the two are yoked together under the sign of paradox as in Benedict's study, which declares as the title puts it that Japan is both '*Chrysanthemum*' and '*Sword*':

The Japanese are, to the highest degree, both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful of being pushed around, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid, conservative and hospitable to new ways.⁶²

Benedict is responsible, moreover, for popularising the notorious distinction between the ‘guilt culture’ claimed to designate the United States, where behaviour is said to be regulated by individual ‘conscience’ and ‘absolute standards of morality’,⁶³ and the ‘shame culture’ of Japan, where behaviour is said to be regulated by ‘external sanctions’, by fears about looking bad in front of the group.⁶⁴

The fact that Benedict’s study was commissioned by the United States Office of War Information⁶⁵ raises the question, however, of the extent to which it implicates knowledge formation in the service of politico-ideological ends. As Lisa Yoneyama correctly points out the problem with Benedict’s text as well as ‘other contemporary wartime national character studies’ is that they are flawed by ‘a simple Japan/U.S. binarism, an ahistorical and depoliticized notion of culture, and the romanticization of America through otherizing Japan’.⁶⁶ In broader terms we might add^v the that introspective turn initiated in the anthropology disciplinary field by the writings of Edward Said and Michel Foucault has also contributed to a recognition of the limits of Benedict’s study.⁶⁷ This can be indexed, for

instance, in Clifford Geertz's revealingly titled *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, which acknowledges that rather than simply describing and presenting cultures, ethnographers also *invent* them in a certain sense through the discourses and models of their *own* investigation. In Benedict's case, as Geertz concedes, this would include the rigid binarisms pervading her study - for example the shame versus guilt dichotomy just mentioned - insofar as they have led some 'professional readers' to find the study disturbingly one-track, or 'monomaniac' as Geertz puts it.⁶⁸

Yet as Daniel Ben-Ami points out in an essay on Anglo-American perceptions of Japan, Benedict's text 'still retains great influence both on academic studies...and on popular journalism',⁶⁹ and evidence supporting his general claim is on hand it would seem in a recent book-length study of Ishiguro's fiction by Barry Lewis, which finds room to praise *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* as a 'seminal' anthropological work, 'many of [whose] observations still hold true'.⁷⁰

The problematic nature of such articulations for cultural studies has, nevertheless, been acknowledged. In a study of several modern Japanese novelists David Pollack warns, for instance, that metropolitan readers need to read against the grain of the received wisdom that they bring to the texts:

Our picture of Japan...is in large part a pastiche of (among many other things) colorful and exotic dramas, bloody revenges, delicate emotions, inscrutable suicides: a whole confusing realm of the senses that has little coherence at all until caught against the backdrop of, say, *Madama Butterfly* or *The Mikado*.⁷¹

In the editor's preface to a series of academic monographs on Japan, J. A. A. Stockwin also criticises an 'extraordinarily strong' tendency in commentary on Japan to resort to 'out-dated, ill-informed or sensational stereotypes'. One entrenched perception, Stockwin believes, is that 'what is significant about it is the effectiveness of its economic institutions and practices, that the Japanese are essentially "economic animals", and that politics functions merely to serve the purposes of the economic superstate'.⁷²

Stockwin's allusion to the erstwhile potency of the referent *Japan Inc.* as a figure of danger in the metropolitan cultural zeitgeist has been rendered superfluous by that nation's sustained economic downturn.⁷³ But this warrants all the more, I would suggest, the need to contextualise Ishiguro's early work against the decade of their publication. And this is in turn appreciable if we attend to the foreword written by Ezra F. Vogel to the 1989 reprint of Benedict's study, which praises it for revealing 'the mysteries of [the] Japanese character...for those who wish to know', because

'understanding the Japanese is perhaps just as critical now, when Japanese progress is made by troops of suited businessmen, as it was when troops of khaki-clad soldiers were advancing'.⁷⁴ In contrast to J. M. McLeod, who argues in a vein reminiscent of Vogel that Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* sounds a warning about the revanchist continuation of militarist or '[ultra-]nationalist sentiment' at 'the level of business' in contemporary 'post-war Japan',⁷⁵ these are then precisely the kinds of exceptionalist categorisations that, I believe, Ishiguro's fiction challenges. They contribute, I would contend, to their substantially exilic tenor as well.

Most pertinent in this regard are the kinds of misconstructions perpetuated by sections of the media. In an hard-hitting study Phil Hammond and Paul Stirner argue, for example, that British press reports about Japan are too preoccupied with the theme (and reproduction) of 'cultural otherness'.⁷⁶ They find that 'regardless of the subject matter, journalists writing about Japan seem prone to adopting a "weird" angle, and/or to generalising wildly about Japanese difference' (88). 'Strange-but-true' (87) stories predominate and 'the more eccentric or exotic' (88) aspects are highlighted, for example the sexual proclivities of individuals or bizarre crimes. And indeed, although many of these news items 'could [also] be about any country', Hammond and Stirner maintain that their prevalence in the case of Japan is so marked that they are 'invariably remarked upon' in industry surveys (87).

More worryingly, however, the authors find that some of the generalisations could be said to apply 'double standards' (87,90). One example involved a newsreport about swimming pools, part of which they quoted:

It is time to head for the indoor beach park, with its predictable waves, clean, rubberised, sand-grained flooring and perfect weather - rain or shine...The concept is not that radical in Japan: attempts to improve on the environment have a long history. Japanese gardens are supposed to be cultivated and trimmed into perfection. Nature is not expected to happen naturally (87-88).

What pertains to the Manichean worldview I am trying to delineate then are some of the criticisms that Hammond and Stirner go on to make:

As if gardening were not enough to suggest Japan's strange, synthetic culture, the report went on to reveal the strict social regimentation reflected in rules supposedly unheard of in the West: 'tattoos, nudity, swimming clothed and picnics are not permitted'. With the exception of the first of these - presumably aimed at the flamboyantly-tattooed *Yakusa* gangsters - such rules would not be exceptional in Britain (where one can also find entire indoor resorts - Centreparks - and an abundance of

trimmed gardens). In this example, it is only the supposed ‘otherness’ of Japan which makes the report newsworthy: there is simply no other rationale for treating the story as ‘news’ (88).

In addition, a revealing insight into the populist pressures responsible for the fetishisation of cultural otherness despite the efforts of reporters in the field is provided by Tessa Mayes and Megan Rowling. Mayes and Rowling interviewed for their report fifteen Japan-based foreign correspondents, one of whom recounted the problems faced by a colleague covering the 1995 sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway by a doomsday cult, where among the instructions given he was told to speculate on what the incident revealed about ‘the Japanese character’:

He reluctantly produced the requisite 1,100 words and filed it, and they called him back saying: ‘This is fine but it’s 1,100 words long and you haven’t mentioned kamikaze and our readers expect - you know, it’s Japan - they expect kamikaze to be in there somewhere!’ So, he said ‘Do it yourself’, and they did.⁷⁷

In his book, *Japan versus the West*, Endymion Wilkinson observes, in addition, that ‘today journalists refer as a matter of course to Japan with phrases such as “...that most different and exotic country despite its surface

modernity...”, “made of contradictions”, “the world’s newest and least predictable economic superpower”, “things are rarely what they seem”,⁷⁸ and to the extent that kamikaze references contribute in much the same fashion to buttressing a conventionalised image of the paradoxical and the irrational they testify we might say to the insidious influence of the formulations first popularised by Benedict.

While such evocations can partly be explained in terms of the lay practice of cultural exaggeration which James Boon, for instance, sees as both *raison d’être* and necessary condition for culture, their perdurable nature and apparent pervasiveness is still to be regretted.⁷⁹ Ishiguro’s attempt to write ‘universalist parables’ in his early work can ultimately be characterised, I suggest, as the effort to redress such Manichean divides. And for my general argument it is also the lack of appreciation of this thematic that is implicated in the subsequent direction taken by his writing. What I have outlined above is by no means exhaustive: it is not meant to suggest that all metropolitan representations of Japanese sociality have been fetishistic or polarising; and it is also not meant to imply the absence of equivalent articulations in Japan’s media and popular culture. Rather, it is to make available what is, I feel, the necessary background to any critical discussion of Ishiguro’s writing, one which has been damagingly neglected in the secondary literature on his fiction. It provides, I hope, the socio-political context for my examination of his fiction, as the chapters below will now seek to elaborate.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), p.134.

² Timothy Brennan, *At Home In The World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.97.

³ Suzie Mackenzie, 'Between Two Worlds', *Guardian Weekend*, 25 March 2000, pp.10-17 (p.10).

⁴ 'It was supposed to be a temporary stay, but it kept getting extended. Almost without deciding to do so, the family remained in England. But as a child, I grew up thinking I was going to return to Japan any day. And so I had this very powerfully imagined country in my head. And by the time I had more or less grown up, I realized that this Japan that existed in my head, and which was very important to me, was a country that no longer existed in reality, if it ever had. I also became aware that as the years passed this place was just fading away in my head, too. At that point in my life there was a real need to tack it down, to reconstruct this world that I had the most powerful emotional incentives to imagine. I think that had a lot to do with why I turned to novel writing'. The quote is from an interview with Suanne Kelman. See 'Ishiguro in Toronto', in *The Brick Reader*, ed. by Linda Spalding and Michael Ondaatje (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1991), pp.71-77 (p.72).

⁵ Dylan Otto Krider, 'Rooted in a Small Space: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', *Kenyon Review*, 20, 2 (1998), 146-54 (p.150, italics added).

⁶ Maya Jaggi, 'Dreams of freedom', *Guardian*, 29 April 1995, p.28.

⁷ Allan Vorda and Kim Herzinger, 'Stuck on the Margins: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', in *Face to Face: Interviews with Contemporary Novelists*, ed. by Allan Vorda (Houston: Rice University Press, 1993), pp.1-36 (pp.30-31, italics added).

⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.199.

⁹ Pheng Cheah, 'Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitan - Today', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.20-41, (p.20).

¹⁰ See, for example, the essays in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. by Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). For a well-argued account countering claims to the epochal nature of 'globalization' see Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially chapter one, 'Modernity, globalization, and the "West"'. See also Linda Weiss, 'Globalization and the Myth of the Powerless State', *New Left Review*, 225 (1997), 3-27.

¹¹ Paul Rabinow, 'Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (London: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 234-261 (p.258).

¹² Timothy Brennan, 'Cosmopolitans and Celebrities', *Race & Class*, 31, 1 (1989), 1-19, (p.2).

¹³ Chelva Kanganayakam, 'Exiles and Expatriates', in *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. by Bruce King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp.201-213 (p.213).

¹⁴ Carmen Wickramagamage, 'Relocation as Positive Act: The Immigrant Experience in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels', *Diaspora*, 2, 2 (1992), 171-200.

¹⁵ Khachig Tölöyan, 'The Nation State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface', *Diaspora*, 1, 1 (1991), 3-7 (p.5).

¹⁶ Cheah and Robbins, 1998.

¹⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.5. Further references to the book are given after quotations in the text. For an incisive critique of Bhabha's formulations see Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9, 1&2 (1987), 27-58, and also 'Signs of Our Times: A Discussion of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*', *Third Text*, 28-29 (1994), 5-24 by the same author. See also Gautam Premnath, 'Remembering Fanon, Decolonising Diaspora', in *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp.57-73.

¹⁸ Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.2-3.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.6-7 (italics in original).

²⁰ Arjun Appadurai, 'Patriotism and its Futures', *Public Culture*, 5 (1993), 411-429 (p.418). Further references to the essay are given in the text.

²¹ Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. by Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 269-295. The essay originally appeared in the Spring 1990 issue of *Public Culture*. It has been anthologised in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990), in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, A Reader* (London: Longman, 1994), in Lechner and Boli, 2000, and in Kate Nash, ed., *Readings in Contemporary Political Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell,

2000). It was also republished in Appadurai's *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Further references to the essay will be to the 1993 publication and will be given after quotations in the text.

²² For an example of the use of Appadurai's model in a discussion of popular music see Martin Roberts, "World Music" and the Global Cultural Economy', *Diaspora*, 2, 2 (1992), 229-242.

²³ Pico Iyer, 'Born in the U.S.A.', in *Video Night in Kathmandu* (New York: Knopf, 1988), pp. 151-193.

²⁴ Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction: The Public As Phantom', in *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp.vii-xxvi (p.xxiii).

²⁵ *At Home In The World*, p.51.

²⁶ Ibid., pp.50-51.

²⁷ Masao Miyoshi, 'A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State', *Critical Inquiry*, 19, (1993), 726-51.

²⁸ Pico Iyer, 'The Empire Writes Back', *Time*, 8 February 1993, pp.54-59. Further references to the article are given after quotations in the text.

²⁹ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.10.

³⁰ Quoted in Brennan, *At Home In The World*, p.121.

³¹ Bruce King, 'The New Internationalism: Shiva Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro', in *The British and Irish Novel since 1960*, ed. by James Acheson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp.192-211.
Further references to the essay are given after quotations in the text.

³² Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996). The quote is drawn from the promotional blurb at the back of the book. Further references are given in the text.

³³ See Susie O'Brien, 'Serving a New World Order: Postcolonial Politics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42, 4 (1996), 787-806 (p.800).

³⁴ Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature', *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985), 59-87.

³⁵ Timothy Brennan, 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism', *New Left Review*, 7 (2001), 75-84 (pp.77, 83).

³⁶ Quoted in Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), p.44.

³⁷ Fredric Jameson, 'In the Mirror of Alternate Modernities', foreword to Karatani Kojin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translation edited by Brett de Bary (London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. vii-xx (p.ix).

³⁸ Miyoshi, p.728.

³⁹ Huggan, p.121.

⁴⁰ 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism', p.81.

⁴¹ Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the New Global System* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.323. Further references to the book are given in the text.

⁴² Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p.10.

⁴³ Huggan, p.121.

⁴⁴ Thomas R. Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective*, 2nd edn (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 213.

⁴⁵ Katharyne Mitchell, 'In Whose Interest? Transnational Capital and the Production of Multiculturalism in Canada', in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp.219-251 (p.222).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁷ Rachel C. Lee, 'The Erasure of Places and the Re-Siting of Empire in Wendy Law-Yone's *The Coffin Tree*', *Cultural Critique*, Winter (1996-97), 149-178 (p.154).

⁴⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.xxiv.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.82.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.58.

⁵¹ Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi, 'The Theory and Politics of Postmodernism: By way of an Introduction', in *Postmodernism and Society*, ed. by Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.1-45 (pp.9, 37).

⁵² *Global Culture*, p.2.

⁵³ Arif Dirlik, 'The Global in the Local', in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 21-45 (p.35).

⁵⁴ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946; repr. 1989).

⁵⁵ The term 'allochrony' - and its antonym 'co-evality' - derives from Johannes Fabian's influential study, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

⁵⁶ Clive Sinclair, 'The Land of the Rising Son', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 11 January 1987, pp.36-37 (p.37).

⁵⁷ Sheng-mei Ma, 'Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream for Postethnicity: Performance in *Whiteface*', *Post Identity*, 2,1 (1999), 71-88 (p.74). Ma's criticisms of Ishiguro's writing are addressed in chapters two and five below.

⁵⁸ Steven Connor, 'Outside In', in *The English Novel in History: 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.83-127 (p.111).

⁵⁹ Huggan, p.19.

⁶⁰ Brennan, *At Home in the World*, p.8.

⁶¹ Some of these depictions are elaborated at length in Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996).

⁶² Benedict, p.2.

⁶³ Ibid., p.222.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.223. According to Earl Miner, however, Benedict's double metaphor was basically obtained from travelers' tales. Miner bases his contention on an unpublished study written by a Mr. John Ashmead Jr. titled, *The Idea of Japan 1853-1895*, which he quotes as stating that: 'In general, Japan was described as on the one hand, fairy-like, quaint, childish, toy-like, polite, and honest, while on the other hand it was called proud, militaristic, cruel, revengeful and treacherous'. See Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p.42.

⁶⁵ See Daniel Ben-Ami, 'Is Japan Different?', in *Cultural Difference, Media Memories: Anglo-American Images of Japan*, ed. by Phil Hammond (London: Cassell, 1997), pp.3-24 (p.7).

⁶⁶ Lisa Yoneyama, 'Habits of Knowing Cultural Differences: *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in the U.S. Liberal Multiculturalism', *Topoi*, 18 (1999), 71-80 (pp.71-2).

⁶⁷ For the impact of Said's work on the related area of 'Japanese studies' see Richard H. Minear, 'Orientalism and the Study of Japan', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 39, 3, (1980), 507-17.

⁶⁸ Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p.111.

⁶⁹ Ben-Ami, p.8.

⁷⁰ Barry Lewis, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.155, n.1.

⁷¹ David Pollack, *Reading against Culture: Ideology and Narrative in the Japanese Novel* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p.1.

⁷² J. A. A. Stockwin, 'Series editor's preface', in Rikki Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.xi-xii (p.xi).

⁷³ The most notorious instance is arguably the outburst by French prime minister Edith Cresson, who likened the Japanese to 'ants' with 'a strategy of world conquest', who 'stay up all night thinking up ways to screw the Americans and Europeans'. See Phil Hammond, 'Introduction: questioning cultural difference', in Hammond, *Cultural Difference, Media Memories*, pp.ix-xxv (p.xiv).

⁷⁴ Ezra F. Vogel, 'Foreword' to 1989 reprint of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, pp.ix-xii (p.xii).

⁷⁵ J. M. McLeod, 'Rewriting History: Postmodern and Postcolonial Negotiations in the fiction of J.G. Farrell, Timothy Mo, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie'

(unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1994), p.143. The issues raised by McLeod are dealt with in detail in chapter three below.

⁷⁶ Phil Hammond and Paul Stirner, 'Fear and Loathing in the British Press', in Hammond, *Cultural Difference, Media Memories*, pp.85-114 (p.87). Further references to the essay are given after quotations in the text.

⁷⁷ Tessa Mayes and Megan Rowling, 'The Image Makers: British Journalists on Japan', in Hammond, *Cultural Difference, Media Memories*, pp.115-38 (p.129). The authors also quoted another correspondent as saying that: 'It seems that with Japan more than any other country, people feel that they have to judge rather than just describe and analyse...People are prepared to talk about the Japanese in a way that they would never do about the French or the Americans or the Scottish' (p.129). The journalists interviewed by the authors worked for the following newspapers: *Financial Times*, *Economist*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Express*, and *Mirror*. Two other publications - *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* - declined to provide interviews (p.137, n.2).

⁷⁸ Endymion Wilkinson, *Japan Versus the West: Image and Reality* (London: Penguin, 1991), p.151.

⁷⁹ James A. Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Chapter Two. *A Pale View of Hills*

Introduction

A Pale View of Hills (1982)¹ is a novel whose themes and concerns resonate throughout Ishiguro's oeuvre. It bears in some respects the hallmarks of a 'minority discourse',² a practice which targets the dominant population's conceptions and seeks to carve out a viable space for cultural particularity. In my critical reading of the novel I will concentrate as such on its revisionary-ethnographic valences, beginning with the dis-alienating impetus registered in its opening pages. I argue that these discursive objectives are carried over to a rewriting or reenvisioning of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, one which is accomplished through the deployment of doppelgänger figuration. Linked to this rewriting is the critique in the novel's ending of the domesticating proclivities of metropolitan cultural consumption, where the co-optive propensity of the last is staged in expressly metafictional terms in order to clear space for the possibility of meaningful cultural encounter. I also examine the readings proffered by Brian W. Shaffer, Mike Petry and Sheng-mei Ma in order to draw out in finer detail the novel's contestatory telos.³

Dis-alienating valences in *A Family Supper*

To appreciate fully the force of the anti-Manichean sentiment registered in *Pale View* it is helpful to begin with one of Ishiguro's short stories, *A Family Supper* (1983).⁴

A Family Supper opens with an account of the narrator's mother dying a painful death after eating Fugu fish - a dish that requires careful preparation to deactivate the poison inside - at the home of an old school friend. The narrator has been living in California estranged from his father and only learns these gruesome details on his return to Japan, in what is also an attempt at reconciliation: father and son have not talked in two years; the narrator's sister, who is away at university, has also returned for the occasion. Before the meal, however, several things combine to suggest that a seemingly innocuous event is about to go horrifyingly wrong: the paterfamilias declares mysteriously that his wife's death was 'no accident' (439); he calls his erstwhile business partner, Watanabe, a man of 'honour' while recounting his suicide following the collapse of their firm (435), and then when he goes off to attend to the cooking the sister reveals what the father kept concealed, namely that Watanabe had killed his entire family before taking his own life (437-38). As the siblings talk a parallel is also drawn between their deceased mother and a female ghost said to be haunting their garden (436-41), which in turn echoes the narrator's recollection of his father once beating him for 'chattering like an old woman' (435), and finally we are told that the main course is an unspecified fish dish. By the time the father mentions how he used to envy fighter pilots during his navy service days because unlike a stricken vessel an 'aeroplane' could always be used as 'the final weapon' (440)

we, therefore, have a strong presentiment of approaching disaster; the narrative appears to be headed towards a mass suicide or suicide cum double homicide of some kind.

My synopsis fails to do justice to the dexterity with which the story builds up dramatic tension, but the implication is that the paterfamilias blames his son for failing to take over the family business as well as for the mother's death, that he intends to emulate Watanabe, and that the supper they have partaken is their last. Yet against the run of expectations he then terms the latter's actions a 'mistake'. Watanabe's 'judgement' had been 'weakened' by the collapse of their firm, he says. 'There are other things besides work', he adds nonchalantly (442).

It is in this vein then of a bathetic ending parodying culturalist assignations that Ishiguro calls the story 'a big trick':

It's never stated, but Western readers are supposed to think these are people who are going to commit mass suicide, and of course they do nothing of that sort...The Japanese are in love with these melodramatic stories,...but people in Japan don't go around killing themselves as easily as people in the West assume...I'm very keen that whenever I portray books that are set in Japan, even if it's not very accurately Japan, that people are seen to be just people.⁵

Now, to say that the Japanese are ‘just people’ may seem jejune - like an author proclaiming a wish to promote friendship between nations - until the media-popular zeitgeist outlined in the previous chapter is taken into account, namely the penchant for weird-Japan stories, kamikaze, economic-animals and-or corporatist-state labels so prominent during the eighties. In fact the ‘horizon of expectations’⁶ stalked by *A Family Supper* is even more explicitly signaled in another interview where Ishiguro comments that ‘the British...seem to think the Japanese are dying to kill themselves. They seem to pick up on aspects of Japanese culture like that;...they like *kamikaze* and *hara-kiri*’.⁷

Such a reading also explains the ‘anxiety of influence’⁸ that appears to be exerted on Ishiguro’s writing by the Japanese author Mishima Yukio, although it is not so much his writing per se but the myth-making surrounding his death that seems at issue, or what Masao Miyoshi calls ‘Mishima as a presence or an event’, including his status as ‘the only Japanese writer read and remembered in the First World’.⁹ That mythologising follows Mishima’s suicide by ritual disembowelment in 1970 when he took over the commandant’s office of a military facility with a group of followers and tried unsuccessfully to rally the troops to mount a coup; and against this it is worth pointing out that Japan’s ultra-nationalist legacy is registered in both *Pale View* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, both seeking to underscore the existence of domestic political opposition to the war, and both attesting to a real history of social conflict rather than the corporatist-state notions sustained by commonplace assumptions about the lack or unimportance of

individuality in Japan. In this respect, the paterfamilias' declaration in *A Family Supper* that there are 'other things besides work' would appear to be directed as well at those 'business warrior' conceits that, according to Endymion Wilkinson, underpin many of these notions.¹⁰

I am suggesting then that Ishiguro's effort to contest the suicide-instinct label or the Mishima cult needs to be framed against wider socio-historical developments. In the intervening period between Mishima's death and the publication of Ishiguro's early novels the extremist ideas associated with him and the spectacular manner of his dying apparently provided grist to the mill for those warning that Japan's neo-mercantilism amounted to straightforward revanchism, and reacting to these propensities a prominent feature of Ishiguro's early work appears, therefore, to be a desire to assert heterogeneity and social conflict. As Ishiguro states in a 1989 panel discussion with Japanese Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe:

My suspicion is that the image of Mishima in the West confirms certain stereotypical images...He fits certain characteristics. Of course, committing *seppuku* is one of the clichés. He was politically very extreme...[It] hasn't helped people there form an intelligent approach to Japanese culture and Japanese people. It has helped people perhaps to remain locked in certain prejudices and very superficial, stereotypical images of what Japanese people are like.¹¹

The implication is that this notion of a racial instinct for suicide reinforces exceptionalist attitudes that deny ‘coevalness’ on the part of another social formation.¹² And, by extension, this might be said to raise the larger issue of ‘alternative modernities’¹³ as well, or perhaps, as Yoshio Sugitomo argues, that Japanese modernity ‘poses a wide range of questions’ about the ‘ethnocentric nature’ of our inherited sociological norms and categories.¹⁴ What bears keeping in mind then are the comments of Judith Squires, who observes that ‘Japan’ exists in some ways as ‘a figure of danger’ within ‘the Western political and cultural unconscious’ because it destabilises ‘the neat correlation between West/East and modern/premodern’.¹⁵

Vague eastern echoes

Like *A Family Supper, Pale View* also adopts, I believe, a bathetic strategy targeting the Manichean binaries that participants bring to cultural encounters, for it too questions the suicide-proclivity assignation, although the deflationary impact of the novel is admittedly more diffused. The novel opens with Etsuko, the narrator, receiving a visit by her second daughter at her home in an English village, where she recounts a compromise reached with her second husband, Sheringham, who had worked as a journalist in Japan:

Niki, the name we finally gave my younger daughter, is not an abbreviation; it was a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a

Japanese name, and I - perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past - insisted on an English name. He finally agreed to Niki, *thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it'* (9, italics added).

Niki's visit operates in turn as the frame story for Etsuko as she traces her memories of post-war Nagasaki before she came to England some two decades or so earlier. It also emerges that the flashbacks between her days as a young pregnant wife in the suburbs of Nagasaki and her widowed life in the English countryside are part of her efforts to come to terms with the recent suicide of Keiko, her daughter from her first marriage:

Keiko, unlike Niki, was pure Japanese, and more than one newspaper was quick to pick up on this fact. *The English are fond of their idea that our race has an instinct for suicide, as if further explanations are unnecessary;* for that was all they reported, that she was Japanese and that she had hung herself in her room (10, italics added).

Together with the intricately nuanced opening paragraph, which in the valences of the word 'thinking' registers Etsuko's opposition to the 'vague' Eastern 'echo' perceived by Sheringham, the direct address to the implied reader's stock beliefs above means that *Pale View* probes such received wisdom, for what Etsuko spends *the rest of the book* doing is precisely the attempt to explicate Keiko's suicide, both to herself as

well as an implied 'English' or metropolitan addressee. As Peter Wain puts it, 'no further explanation is given, so that one can only assume that the explanation is in the whole of the book'.¹⁶

But at the same time that Ishiguro promises to rend the veil surrounding the cultural Other he also confounds such expectations: he teases metropolitan readers by ostensibly arrogating to himself an insiderism affirmative of essentialist verities, and then he defeats them. Keiko's suicide is never satisfactorily explained, the book suggesting merely that she found her new home too alienating (94), and ironically, therefore, her suicide appears to stem from familial and cultural displacement rather than anything identifiably autochthonous. It is the textual indeterminacies or gaps over this matter that foreground for examination commonplace culturalist assumptions.

If we return to the opening paragraph the 'compromise' reached over the choice of names might be termed, therefore, a diagnostic dramatisation laying out paramount concerns, and indeed I would venture^v it ~~proffers~~^{to say that} an evaluative criterion applicable to all of Ishiguro's writing. To put it schematically, such an opening points out importantly that migrant encounters can be conceived differently from the dominant notions that tend to assume an equality of access to the means of representation: it registers the tension between an 'East' (or non-West) that is merely a projection, a 'vague echo' perceived by the discursive formation 'West' and the meanings the former constructs when it is not construed as a supplier of recognition for Occidental identity; it refuses to relinquish the

right to self-representation, which is what Etsuko's narrative represents, and finally it tries to pre-empt readers' exoticist demands by underscoring its own inability to provide an authoritative account of the 'East'. Setting the tone for the rest of the novel it tells its implied reader that 'vague echo' applies *en abyme* as well, that what looks like a 'Japanese' novel and the naming operation which consecrates it should be avoided.

Narrative Gaps

This concern with contesting Eastern echoes that turn out to be one-sided in their make-up is, however, nowhere more strongly registered than in the mystery surrounding the characterisation of Etsuko's alter ego, Sachiko, as set up by the novel's ending.

In outline the enigma arises like this. Although flashbacks feature prominently in Etsuko's narrative, a large measure of our attention is directed instead at Sachiko, and at the progress of the two women's friendship over the key summer months haunting Etsuko's recollections. Sachiko has a young daughter Mariko whom she neglects, and it soon becomes clear that this story about Etsuko's 'friend' is actually hers as well, for a strategy of seeing the self in others appears to form part of a necessary accommodation to Keiko's death. But Sachiko's tale is also arresting on its own terms. After the death of her husband she sets her heart on going to America with her American paramour, Frank, whom Mariko resents for displacing her in her mother's affections (85). Frank disappoints Sachiko but she keeps faith with him even after he takes up

with a saloon girl (87). When Sachiko goes off to be with Frank, moreover, Etsuko - who is pregnant with Keiko at that time - is often entrusted with Mariko's care, so that she becomes a kind of surrogate mother to the child.

By the time of the book's ending, however, it appears that Sachiko will not get to fulfil her dreams, so that symbolically it is Etsuko who accomplishes the overseas move, but to England rather than America, which she now balances against the decision to take Keiko with her when she left. From other situational parallels between the two women we begin to suspect a *doppelgänger* relationship between them, as well as between their daughters, and this is confirmed in a haunting climax when Etsuko lets slip her use of Sachiko to stage her misgivings over the past. The revelation follows Sachiko's drowning of Mariko's pet kittens, an incident which prefigures Keiko's death. Mariko runs away in pain and distress into the waste-ground near their riverside cottage - the book takes pains to imbue the locality with menacing overtones - and it is in this psychically suggestive setting, therefore, that Etsuko finds Mariko and urges her to be sensible.

But what is most shocking for us is that, without anything in the way of obvious sign-posting, Etsuko suddenly shifts into her *own* familial reveries, declaring that: 'if you don't like it over there [overseas], we'll come straight back' (173, italics added). Just as estranging is her misremembering of Keiko in place of Mariko. Speaking to Niki right at the end she tells of Keiko once going on a daytrip to Inasa, the hill-park

overlooking Nagasaki bay, and of how she had been ‘happy’ (182), when the only daytrip recounted in the novel is undertaken by Etsuko, Sachiko and Mariko. Keiko thus surfaces in place of Mariko, and what lends the narrative its compelling poignancy, therefore, is this sense that Etsuko has all along been dwelling on Keiko, that her narrative combines guilt, regret and self-flagellation over parental neglect. Because there is a displacement onto another to tell the story, Etsuko’s narration also contains an element of self-exculpation, without this necessarily lessening that poignancy.

Having appeared to follow the conventions of narrative verisimilitude,¹⁷ *Pale View* thus undercuts the latter by the frisson of the uncanny evoked by our realisation that Sachiko and Mariko inhabit an uncertain ontological realm. A great mystery ensues: we are invited to wonder whether Sachiko has all along been merely a projection of Etsuko, yet as Mike Petry notes, ‘we can at no point be totally sure that Sachiko *is* a complete fantasy’.¹⁸ Put in another way the novel stresses through our realisation that Sachiko and Mariko are doubles that Etsuko has great psychic investment in *her* version of events, and, therefore, her narration must be understood as radically unreliable. Because of the ellipses surrounding large portions of Etsuko’s narrative we have been looking to Sachiko to fill the gaps and this furthermore heightens the estrangement: the novel uses our desire for circumstantial detail to beguile us into sharing Etsuko’s self-deception, and then it undermines it. Rather than narrative verity what is underlined, therefore, is the

interestedness of memory and recall and the way they rework the past in response to current psychological needs.

As a consequence much of our interest will be drawn towards unraveling the precise nature of Sachiko's psychogenic relationship with Etsuko, to the question of when she crosses the line from being a convenient prop with, so to speak, an independent (fictive) ontological status to being pure phantasmagoria. Because *Pale View* is narrated through Etsuko's first person perspective, and because she adopts a compensatory strategy of seeing the self in others, the Etsuko-Sachiko relationship assumes centre stage.

Madama Butterfly

But as the foregoing implies, Sachiko's plight also echoes powerfully Cho Cho San of *Madama Butterfly* fame (1904). Jean-Pierre Lehmann has traced Puccini's opera to Pierre Loti's 1887 novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, which spawned a sub-genre known as the 'novel of desertion',¹⁹ while Earl Miner observes that the latter 'usually revolves around Europeans, especially naval officers, who visit Japan, acquire "wives," and desert them'.²⁰ This mantle appears to fits Frank, whose name recalls Puccini's protagonist Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton.²¹ Befitting the genre's marine associations, Frank is offered a job aboard a cargo ship (169); like Pinkerton he supposedly returns home first promising to bring his lover over later (*ibid.*); *Pale View* is set in Nagasaki, where the opera is set as well, and even the Inasa locality is suggestive,

given that there is a 'Glover Mansion' overlooking Nagasaki harbour which was the home of a '19th-century British merchant' reputed to be Puccini's fictional Pinkerton.²²

Moreover, the exoticist move rehearsed in the naming of Niki echoes Lehmann's description of the literary vogue started by *Madame Chrysanthème*:

Following *Madame Chrysanthème* more plays, novels, poems, operas and operettas were written and composed about some O-Kiku, O-Hana or O-Haru - names which indeed were often not Japanese at all, but that did not matter as long as the exotic appearance was maintained.²³

Wilkinson adds that following a 'temporary hiatus' brought on by of the Pacific War, this 'dream of escape to a submissive lover in an exotic land' was to make 'a triumphant return with a spate of best-sellers all set in Japan: *Sayonara*, *Tea House of the August Moon*, *You Only Live Twice* [also made into a James Bond movie] or *Shogun*, all of which contained large doses of the original Loti formula'.²⁴ Thus *Pale View* would seem to be targeted at the Orientalist impetus of such popular articulations as well.

Inasmuch as *doppelgänger* figuration foregrounds Sachiko's ontological status for consideration, *Pale View*, therefore, encourages a corresponding scrutiny of her figuration qua *Madama Butterfly* or qua

Madame Chrysanthème. These two dimensions of her characterisation are inextricable, and we are invited, I suggest, to consider how they might be linked.

A useful comparison can be drawn in this respect with the rewriting exercise undertaken by Chinese-American playwright David Henry Hwang. In his Broadway play *M. Butterfly* (1987) Hwang inverts Puccini's opera by presenting a western male rather than an oriental female as the gullible victim of romantic love for a man masquerading as a woman. He makes the male protagonist Gallimard a diplomat who is also an architect of Western foreign policy in Vietnam; and the imperialist semiotics inscribed in such tropes are then underscored when, as one reviewer puts it, Gallimard 'disastrously reasons that a manly display of American might can bring the Viet Cong to submission as easily as he or Puccini's Pinkerton can overpower a Madama Butterfly'.²⁵ Hwang shows as such that race is also a 'gendered' term of analysis.

Like *M. Butterfly*, *Pale View* also challenges exoticist discourses but what occurs more specifically, I suggest, is a modification of the desertion plot to articulate Etsuko's misgivings about her failure to honour her 'promise' to 'come straight back' if Keiko didn't like it 'over there' (173). That is why Etsuko needs to mis-remember Keiko's happiness during the Inasa trip mentioned earlier. Ishiguro's rewriting extends Cho Cho San's story so that the female protagonist fulfills her dream of reaching the metropolitan West. Yet this does not presage a happy ending because it is the child who commits suicide following the

dislocation. *Pale View* we might say 'appropriates'²⁶ the *Madama Butterfly* trope to voice migrant encounters, with Keiko taking over, so to speak, the *Madama Butterfly* mantle from Etsuko.

The significance of Inasa

But it is not just through the counter-naming of Franklin in the diminutive form of Frank that Ishiguro appropriates the opera, or even the irony that Frank's name contrasts with his implied duplicity. Nor is it the use of revisioning to tell an immigrant story, a question I will take up when I discuss the reading proffered by Sheng-mei Ma. What is equally as intriguing, I think, is to find the *Madama Butterfly* iconography occupying a key place in a cluster of imagery that implicates Mariko's troubled psychological state, hence anticipating the problems awaiting Keiko. That this occurs during the Inasa trip, in what, I contend, is the narrative fulcrum of the novel, is also significant. In what follows as such I will expand on my claim that the Inasa trip constitutes the narrative fulcrum of *Pale View*. On that basis, I argue that the articulation of *Madama Butterfly* iconography within a general dis-alienating thematic strengthens the work's contestatory resonances. My contention is that these two dimensions of the novel are brought together by the doppelgänger figure, and as a result, therefore, the novel also clears space for articulating socio-cultural dissonance. I will begin by discussing the significance of the Inasa daytrip within the overall plot dynamic.

That the trip is retrospectively accorded a pivotal role in Etsuko's recollection is suggested by the way she mulls over their chance encounters that day with an American woman named Suzie-San. Etsuko speaks of 'the first of our encounters that day with the American woman' (104), of meeting 'the American woman for the second time' (109) and then a third when 'the American woman came striding across the clearing' (113) so that something about this reiteration becomes uncanny, like a portent that she reads into the past. The first of their encounters occurs at the foot of Inasa at a cable-car station situated there. Apart from themselves Suzie-San's party - comprising herself, a Japanese lady and her son - are the only ones going up, and as they wait Sachiko strikes up a conversation with the other two women. Etsuko is surprised to find Sachiko speaking English fluently with Suzie-San; but, more pertinently, she notices that a second brief exchange between them (their paths cross again about an hour after they disembark at the top) has a 'curious effect' on Sachiko, who becomes 'quiet' and withdrawn (109). As gradually becomes clear Sachiko is reassessing her declared intent to go stay with her uncle after Frank takes up with the saloon girl (68, 86-87). While she applauds Etsuko's decision to heed the advice of a mutual acquaintance, Mrs. Fujiwara, who has been telling her to put aside her misgivings about motherhood, her language suggests, therefore, that she does not share that enthusiasm:

And so you should [be optimistic] Etsuko. After all, you have a lot to look forward to. In fact you'll discover soon enough, it's being a mother that makes life truly worthwhile.

'What do I care if life is a little dull at my uncle's house. All I want is what's best for my daughter. We'll get her the best private tuition and she'll catch up on her schoolwork in no time' (112, italics added).

In this way the text suggests that the exchanges in *English* between Sachiko and Suzie-San leave the former pondering over the courses of action still open to her. And indeed sometime during the day she appears to change her mind completely, for significantly she picks up the thread of their conversation again in the evening as Mariko tries to win a box for her kittens at a toss-and-win stall:

It's funny, but I had a quite different impression of her. Your friend, Mrs. Fujiwara, I mean...I'm afraid I never saw her in quite the way you do. Your friend struck me as a woman with nothing left in her life (122).

Despite Mariko's joy at winning a box for her pets, and despite the promise she elicits from Sachiko that she can keep them since they are going to their uncle's home (124), the novel preserves through this exchange, therefore, the possibility, confirmed later, that Sachiko will initiate efforts to win Frank back. The encounter with Suzie-San appears to launch in Sachiko a train of thought which is initially rejected ('all I want is what's best for my daughter') and then embraced, for that is what her assessment that Mrs. Fujiwara has 'nothing left' amounts to.²⁷ But in the interim what marks the moment when the die is cast is, I suggest, the last

of their three encounters that day with Suzie-San, when the latter spots a 'butterfly' Mariko is drawing in her sketchbook and uses the word 'delicious' to praise her effort, when the appropriate term would have been, say, pretty or life-like (114).

Butterflies and Spiders

The Nagasaki portions of *Pale View* are understood to be in Japanese so the error demonstrates Suzie-San's lack of proficiency in the language. But given the *Madama Butterfly* sub-text I do not think the mistake is innocuous. It depicts the violence of translation into a different sensory register (taste) because the error undermines Mariko's own efforts at self-representation. Since as we established above Sachiko's story shadows Etsuko's this has immense ramifications for the latter. At this point in her life the novel stresses that Etsuko does not 'understand English' yet (105), and since it is the *English* exchanges that prompt Sachiko's rethinking, we might say that Etsuko casts the episode as a portent she ought to have heeded.

Seen in this light other incidents also take on a prefigurative cast: to the extent that Mariko's bullying of the son of Suzie-San's friend foreshadows Keiko's adjustment problems, the fact that Etsuko is the only adult to notice her misdeed turns it into another augury (119). *Pale View* appears to establish a parallel between Sachiko's failure to honour her agreement that Mariko can keep her kittens and Etsuko's own unfulfilled promise to bring Keiko back to Japan (124, 173), and if we consider that

both of the parties at Inasa are made up of two women and a child, a parallel also appears to be drawn between Etsuko and Suzie-San. Speaking in a more speculative vein we may then wonder whether the logic of the association works to contrast masculinist fantasies of the 'Suzy Wong' variety with Etsuko's misgivings over how things eventually turned out.

In this respect, and despite Suzie-San's well-meaning praise for Mariko's drawing the encounter dramatises we might say the curtailment of cultural production *in situ*: it dramatises the subsumption of autochthonous self-representations through Orientalist discourse in the vicinity of the fictional Pinkerton's home. It is Suzie-San's version of 'butterfly' that prevails, in the same way that the various offshoots of *Madame Chrysanthème* delineate Japan as a ready supplier of exotica and sexual gratification. The episode foreshadows Keiko's eventual loss of psychical and socio-cultural moorings.

In addition, the sinister undertone attached to the engulfing image called up by Suzie-San's error is strengthened appreciably if we contrast it with another symbolic incorporation initiated by Mariko. This second deployment of incorporation imagery occurs during one of the times when Etsuko is entrusted with Mariko's care, when Mariko teases Etsuko by pretending to swallow a spider (78-82). But despite appearances I would argue that the first deployment is more menacing, because Mariko's incorporation is actually a bid to overcome the trauma of witnessing an infanticide in the war ruins of Tokyo (73-5). In contrast, Suzie-San's

incorporation of Mariko's 'butterfly' represents violence (114), it gestures at the way Keiko is eventually swamped by an alienating culture personified by Suzie-San.²⁸

More specifically, my assertion that Mariko's symbolic incorporation is a form of self-healing is borne out if we consider her loss of a pet cat in Tokyo the day before they moved to Nagasaki. The novel suggests that Sachiko, perhaps unwilling to cart an animal around, had disposed of it (81), and it is this cat then that Mariko identifies with as she teases Etsuko ('the cat we used to have, she could eat spiders. What would happen if I ate a spider?' - 78). Because the inexplicable disappearance of a beloved pet is emotionally connected to the witnessed infanticide Mariko's copes with the latter - an ultimate act of abandonment in which to some extent she sees herself - by pretending to be a cat swallowing a spider; the act of symbolic resuscitation (of her cat) allows her to cope with her fears.

In like manner we might say Mariko's preoccupation with finding a home for her kittens (18, 83-84 - these are the off-spring of a second cat taken from the home of Sachiko's uncle) is also an attempt to assuage the insecurity reflected in her troubled, difficult behaviour, and indeed Sachiko herself alludes to such an identification just before she drowns them. ('it's not your little baby, it's just an animal' - 165). Because Mariko is Keiko's alter ego, Mariko's investment in the idea that the plight of the kittens mirrors her own suggests that their drowning is an analogue for Keiko's death, which is why I suggested earlier that the drowning

prefigures her suicide. But, more pertinently, what this underscores is that despite the macabre nature of Mariko's pretence the novel assigns a *positive* gloss to her symbolic incorporation - it being a form of, or an effort at self-healing - and a pejorative one to Suzie-San's.

That these events are thematically significant is suggested, moreover, by the way they are worked into the novel's title. 'Pale View' refers to the 'pale outline of hills, visible against the clouds', which on 'clearer days' offers Etsuko 'a rare sense of relief' from the 'emptiness' of long summer afternoons spent in her apartment (99), and later it emerges that the view is of 'Inasa' (103). Thus the book's title alludes to the way Etsuko collapses Keiko and Mariko into a blurred outline, which is to say her psychic investment in mis-remembering Keiko's happiness. Yet this turn to Inasa is entirely of a piece with the way Etsuko coped with earlier tragedies, for the text suggests that the view had provided succour when she was still mourning the death of a former lover (76), and probably her entire family (57-58) following the nuclear destruction wrought on Nagasaki.

Metonymic gaps

It is significant then that the menacing valences attached to the daytrip extend as well to the political implications of the book's linguistic usage. Although Etsuko's recollection is skewered by her need to emplot putative clues to Keiko's alienation, there is a sense in which Ishiguro constructs through Suzie-San's error something akin to what Bill Ashcroft,

Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in the context of postcolonial fiction call a ‘metonymic gap’:

[A metonymic gap is a] cultural gap formed when appropriations of a colonial language insert unglossed words, phrases or passages from a first language, or concepts, allusions or references that may be unknown to the reader. Such words become synecdochic of the writer’s culture...its very resistance to interpretation constructs a ‘gap’ between the writer’s culture and the colonial culture.²⁹

Clearly the formulation is not applicable in its entirety to Ishiguro. What is useful is rather the theoretical kernel, namely that for writers portraying a birth culture from a minority-positioning vocabulary or phrasal items can be deployed as synecdoches for larger ensembles, in order to designate cultural dissonance. This applies to Suzie-San’s error, although in her case the episode is understood to be taking place in Japanese, so that instead of inserting unglossed items to set up a metonymic gap, Ishiguro *dramatises* we might say the workings of one.

That cultural dissonance is at stake is even more evident when Etsuko uses ‘*kujibiki*’ to describe a toss and win store, for the novel takes pains to stress that the referent ‘has no equivalent’ in England (120). When Sachiko uses another transliterated term ‘Ame-ko’, it is also to say that she knows an ‘Ame-ko’ father would be disruptive for Mariko (86). Thus we might note prominent instances of linguistic hybridism, including

the only time Etsuko refers to her bi-cultural experiences (when she uses the term *kujibiki*) are actually used to spotlight cultural incommensurability: while the use of Ame-ko is self-explanatory, the box that Mariko wins at the *kujibiki* stall is subsequently used by Sachiko as a sarcophagus for Mariko's kittens. As such Keiko's eventual estrangement is again foreshadowed.

Splits and doubles

Summarising the argument so far we have established the significance of the *Madama Butterfly* subtext, the place of Suzie-San in the counter-Orientalist configuration of the novel, and the centrality of the Inasa daytrip in Etsuko's recollection. We have also stressed the effort made to register cultural dissonance under the aegis of a general revisionary-ethnographic stance. But additionally, I would contend, it is through the doppelgänger tie between Sachiko and Etsuko that these multifarious elements are pulled together: it is through a doubling or secret-sharer relationship that a critical rewriting of *Madama Butterfly* iconography is accomplished; and thus the thematic core of *Pale View* lies in the way this relationship is managed.

First of all there is little doubt that a doppelgänger set-up is at issue: in the nature of a secret-sharer relationship Etsuko is 'not sure' how she 'first met' Sachiko (13); she confesses to 'a kind of sympathy' when she overhears two neighbourhood women complaining about her, because Sachiko's aloofness mirrors her own, and her first words to her

in the book are 'I'm glad I found you' (14). In addition, Etsuko finds herself bound to Sachiko by an 'eerie spell' when Mariko is found hurt by the river near their homes (41); and then when Sachiko drowns Mariko's pet kittens textual deictics binds them as well so that 'for one brief moment' they both stare upslope at Mariko (167).

One of the few commentators to address this key dimension of the novel is Petry, who suggests that we draw on Robert Alter's distinction between 'doubles' and 'splits' when considering the novel's use of figuration:

The term *Doppelgänger*, which has been applied to a variety of literary works, actually brackets together two different figures, allied in nature but distinct in origin. We may conveniently call them splits and doubles. In the case of the former, the self is divided inwardly in a kind of moral meiosis, its mixed properties separated and polarized; Stevenson's tale of 'polar twins' [*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*] is the supreme expression of this version of the *Doppelgänger*. For the splits, it is ghastly difference rather than resemblance that is the key. In the more common case of the double proper, the self encounters a disturbing mirror-image in the external world. In the supernatural versions, this doubling of the self is affected by capricious fate or infernal powers; *in the more psychological versions*,

*it is a projection of the self, and as such begins to converge with split[s].*³⁰

For Petry then Sachiko ‘for the largest part of the novel...is a *double* of Etsuko’s, before we realise that she is actually one side of the latter’s *split personality*’, and thus the possibility that she is part of Etsuko’s projective *fantasy* is strengthened (57, italics in original). Drawing on the work of Freud, Petry also argues that Mariko’s figuration is uncanny or *unheimlich* because she adopts at times an ‘automaton’ or ‘doll-like’ posture, as, for instance, when she ‘woodenly stares at Etsuko for long periods of time and utters not a single word’ (61).

Now I think a distinction between splits and doubles is a helpful heuristic device for a preliminary delineation of Sachiko’s narrative function - it explains in part the estranging impact of the novel’s ending. Nevertheless, our discussion needs to move beyond the psychological dynamics of the individual-universalist psyche if we are to avoid eliding the specificities of minority subject-formation in the metropolitan West. Furthermore, as my discussion suggests, Mariko does not lack agency. Despite her troubled demeanour her sketching might be said to represent autochthonous cultural production, her pretence at swallowing a spider signals self-healing, and she is also hardly an automaton when she bullies the son of Suzie-San’s friend.

We need then to grant greater weight to socio-historical specificities, and this can be accomplished, I contend, through an

adaptation of Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's study of the use of doppelgänger figuration in Asian-American fiction.³¹ Although Wong addresses a specifically American milieu, her arguments are pertinent to Ishiguro because her focus is on authors of East-Asian extraction writing within an Anglo-centric culture. Thus, for instance, Wong cogently argues that while formulations of doubling derived from EuroAmerican texts tend to elide socio-historical particulars, critics of works by minority authors cannot follow fully that tack. She points out that the terms which figure prominently in traditional approaches - 'personality', 'the civilized self', 'antisocial tendencies' - 'have never been neutral or unmarked' for minorities (85), and thus critics need to rethink these categories in the direction of 'greater sociopolitical emphasis' when they use them - primarily to insert race (92). Wong warns as well that psychogenic elucidations of doubling - a category under which we can place Mike Petry's account - are potentially idealist because the preoccupation with reconstructing hypothetical mental processes means that they 'tend to flatten the materially shaped contours of a double story to quasi-mythic patterns' (85).

Along these lines we need to recall that Ishiguro's Japanese novels were received in an aesthetic-political environment characterised by a dearth of unmarked categories of Japanese personhood, for Etsuko's problematisation of the suicide-instinct label is recognisably part of a wider textual desire to contest just those essentialist delineations of the Japanese *national* character that feature so prominently in metropolitan public discourse. And what gets suppressed in an entirely

psychogenic focus is precisely this dimension. Drawing on Gregory Mason's study of the influence of Japanese *shomin-geki* (domestic drama) films on Ishiguro, Petry observes that both *Pale View* and *An Artist of the Floating World* contain sections that repeat 'almost word-by-word'³² scenes from Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953). On that score what is surprising is that he does not go on to consider if the recourse to a genre focusing on domestic and inter-generational concerns is precisely to stress unremarkable normality, or in other words to underline that the Japanese are 'just people'. Put in another way the textual decision to incorporate *shomin-geki* material, including some tenderly characterised scenes between Etsuko and her former father-in-law Ogata-San (28-35, 56-58), would appear to be aimed at countering the exoticising and alienating impact of many EuroAmerican representations of Japan.

For my purposes Wong's reservations about the dangers of unconsidered borrowing from a dominant critical tradition are also pertinent. Commenting on Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *The Woman Warrior* (1976) she argues that the quiet Chinese girl in the last chapter is not dramatically different from the narrator Maxine, and so cannot 'in the usual sense, be described as [an] anti-social or criminally inclined [double]': she is not some 'primordial self' or Freudian id lurking beneath an 'eminently civilized', 'rational' or 'conventional' self, as could be said of figures such as Hyde, Dorian Gray or Ivan Karamazov (88). Recommending instead a 'lowest common denominator' (86, 91) aetiology shorn of received categories, Wong observes that critical

explications of doppelgänger figuration are 'remarkably consistent' on the 'central role' of psychological 'disowning': they take its presence as 'symptomatic of a crisis in self-acceptance and self-knowledge', and on that basis she poses the question, therefore, of what exactly Maxine tries to disown (82). Since the similarities between her and the quiet girl outweigh their differences Wong contends that the quiet girl represents that 'residue of racial difference' whose 'irreducibility' infuriates Maxine and frustrates her assimilationist stance, thus allowing Kingston to stage a politics of difference around Maxine's painful reassessment of her behavioural code, including her recognition of the need to formulate an identity incorporating both her Asian and American heritage (89).

Returning to Petry's formulation we might say then that Sachiko is not some primordial, lurking Freudian id or watered-down version of Hyde; and that is why his assertion that she is a 'ghastly different' *split* is problematic - Sachiko is no Mr Hyde to Etsuko's Dr Jekyll. Her alterity is premised instead on her situational resemblance to Etsuko. It is this resemblance - heightened by the gaps in Etsuko's narrative - that drives forward the novel's recognition plot. More significantly, I would contend, it is Sachiko's enthusiastic espousal of all things American that allows Etsuko to stage her ambivalence and guilt over Keiko's death, to both approach and deny what haunts her recollection, namely the question whether Keiko's death can be traced to her ('Inasa') decision to leave Japan.

If following Wong we try to move beyond hackneyed praise for the ‘compelling realism’ of endo-psychic conflict or ‘the author’s masterful evocation of the frisson [of the uncanny]’ (85), and try instead to address the materially-shaped contours of *this* particular double story, to pose, that is, the question of what *is* disowned, I would suggest that the answer lies in an inversion of the pattern underpinning Kingston’s novel, namely that what is disowned was never ‘irreducible’ in the first place, and that in fact Ishiguro seeks to undermine the Orientalist impetus underwriting the *Madama Butterfly* story performed in the Sachiko-Frank relationship.

What the *doppelgänger* motif provides, I suggest, is a mechanism for psychological ‘disowning’ transposed to the socio-political arena, that is, to the act of ‘disowning’ objectification and commodification. Since the ‘disowning’ or dissociation enacted via *doppelgänger* figuration is simultaneously an appropriation of the *Madama Butterfly* trope to make it ‘bear the burden’³³ of articulating migrant encounters, we might frame it alongside other (postcolonial) reversals of European cultural icons that question the authority of narratives such as *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* or *Heart of Darkness*. Additionally, we might note, this recourse to aspects of the dominant culture to mount a counter-discourse is also entirely consistent with Ishiguro’s deployment of the suicide-instinct appellation in *A Family Supper*.

Ogata-San and Sheringham

Also salient to this rewriting of *Madama Butterfly* as revisionary-ethnographic project is the way *Pale View* carefully sets the enterprise apart from the two versions of exceptionalism exemplified respectively by Sheringham and Ogata-San. It is through this differentiation, I suggest, that Ishiguro tries on the one hand to steer clear of the danger that the exilic tenor of *Pale View* may come across as nostalgia for some prelapsarian golden age, and on the other hand of the problem, as Fredric Jameson correctly points out, that any invocation of radical difference runs the risk of re-legitimising Manichean binaries.³⁴

Ogata-San's exceptionalism is implicit in his revanchism as regards Japan's militarist past and is suggested by the language he uses when he plays chess with his son, Jiro. Although Jiro is plainly uninterested Ogata-San rebukes him for showing 'defeatism': he should, Ogata-San says, be 'planning' his 'defence' in order to 'survive and fight again' (129). But since considerable space in the novel is devoted to a subplot establishing his role in the imprisonment of five teachers opposed to an expansionist war (148), Ogata-San's revanchism is also censured in no uncertain terms. Any suggestion that the rewriting of *Madama Butterfly* accompanies essentialist asseverations - of the kind proclaimed, for example, by Japan's militarist era rulers - is as such pre-empted.

In much less reprehensible but still thematically significant terms Sheringham's exceptionalism is also questioned, this time through the actions of his daughter Niki. Niki's most interventionary act in^{the} novel occurs when she rifles through the cupboards of the house for

Sheringham's articles on Japan, perusal of which leads her to tell her mother that he should not have neglected Keiko (91, 175). That she subsequently enters the garden to straighten some young tomato plants in response to Etsuko's lament that she had neglected them that year comes across as symbolic restitution for Keiko's neglect (91-92), and thus Etsuko's declaration that Sheringham 'never understood' the ways of her culture 'despite all the impressive articles' he wrote about it is reinforced (90). This, as it were, posthumous reconciliation between the two half-sisters, whose relationship had not been sound, problematises, therefore, Sheringham's stubborn belief that Keiko 'inherited her personality' entirely from her father, Jiro (94).

But since the book's opening pages establish the sisters as synecdoches for Japan and Britain, Etsuko's critique of Sheringham's assessment 'as far as he was concerned' that they were 'complete opposites' (94) is, therefore, given a socio-political gloss which encapsulates just those Manichean allegories that the book contests. In like manner Etsuko's insistence that her daughters 'had much in common, much more than my husband would ever admit' (*ibid.*) is, I would contend, an allusion to the historical trajectory shared by Japan and the metropolitan West, an argument I will pursue in the next chapter. What concerns us here, however, is that the casting of Japanese 'personhood' as immutable and incorrigible is again being contested. Indeed the culturalist biases challenged through the criticism of Sheringham - and by extension Western media practices - are discernible in the way Ishiguro's novels were themselves received. For example,

Francis King appeals to a timeless, immutable racial essence when he writes that: 'Although Mr Ishiguro has spent most of his life in England and has even acquired an MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, his novel is typically Japanese in its compression, its reticence and in its exclusion of all details not absolutely essential to its theme'.³⁵ A similar appeal to some dyed-in-the-wool *Japaneseness* is again evident when King encourages patronising generosity for Ishiguro's third novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989): 'It is a difficult undertaking for someone born in Nagasaki in 1960 to attempt to impersonate an English butler in 1956, and there are times when, inevitably and excusably, Ishiguro gets things wrong'.³⁶

While Ishiguro writes in some ways from a uniquely syncretic positioning King's remarks recall Masao Miyoshi's complaint that the terms which pepper many First World responses to Japanese fiction - 'delicate', 'lyrical', 'suggestive' and the like - are actually 'pseudo-comments' which 'conceal the absence of [a cultural] encounter by cluttering up the field of reading and distracting the reader from the text'.³⁷ By underscoring that the rewriting of *Madama Butterfly* does not embrace either of the two exceptionalist positions adumbrated above Ishiguro clears space we might say for meaningful cultural encounter and engagement in all its complexity, including a recognition of what is shared and not shared.

Setting and tone

Such a careful specification of the novel's revisionary-ethnographic ambit is most thematically significant, however, when we consider its use of setting and tone, as well as the roles played by minor characters. Because these features imbue things foreign with a menacing or sinister undertone *Pale View* appears on first reading to harbour exceptionalist sentiments, until we realise that those avenues have been closed off. But if an exceptionalist stance is not at issue, then something else, what, I would contend, is the operation of an exilic sensibility comes into play. Ultimately the rewriting of *Madama Butterfly* can be traced, I suggest, to such a dynamic .

I have commented at length on Suzie-San's role in the staging of Etsuko's misgivings over the past. In like manner exilic valences are also discernible in the naming of Mrs. Waters, a piano teacher who taught Keiko and Niki when they were young. Mrs. Waters is the only person Etsuko and Niki meet in the frame story in the metropolitan West (50-52), yet her name immediately recalls the gruesome imagery surrounding the novel's infanticide and kitten-drowning episodes. As they exchange pleasantries Etsuko says, moreover, that 'nothing you learn at that age is totally lost' (52), hence alluding it would seem not just to Mrs. Waters' lessons but to Keiko's post-migration misfortunes. Again, therefore, the episode shows Etsuko dwelling on her daughter.

At the same time exilic resonances can also be traced in the novel's use of setting and tone. One of the most striking features of *Pale View* is the way the environs surrounding Sachiko's cottage (i.e. the river

next to it, the bridge spanning the river and the piece of waste-ground between the river and Etsuko's apartment block) are glossed with intimations of death and destruction, which in turn imbue 'foreign' encounters with a sense of foreboding or presentiment. In an early episode prefiguring the novel's ending, for example, Sachiko and Etsuko have to search for Mariko by the riverbank after she disappears. Although the background to the incident is not fully detailed Sachiko explains that she had planned to watch an American film - 'a film with Gary Cooper' - with Frank just as they cross the aforementioned bridge (40), thus prefiguring the ending where Etsuko makes her un-kept promise ('if you don't like it we'll come straight back' - 173) at *exactly* the same spot. This bridge, with its unambiguous reference to the 'culture industry'³⁸ is then used to figure socio-cultural boundaries, and the crossing of it linked with injury, death, or the preternatural: the opposite bank is a wilderness, 'just trees and forest' (18), or 'woods' (39); Mariko's fears about becoming a victim of the woman who committed the infanticide is expressed in terms of a crossing to the far bank, and in her disturbed state this woman becomes a sort of (imagined) grim-reaper figure - the 'woman from across the river' (18) - who promises to 'show' her 'where she lives' (28). When they finally find Mariko, moreover, she is pictured lying injured on the opposite bank in a puddle of water with blood on her thighs (41), so that the sheer casualness of this detail, together with the fact that she is not old enough to be menstruating, enhances the novel's unsettling impact. The cause of the injury is never specified, and this adds to the tension created by news of an unapprehended child-killer terrorising the neighbourhood (100).

Just as tellingly, the waste-ground between the river and Etsuko's apartment block also imbues her two sightings of a 'large American car' (12, 157) with foreboding overtones, as the village previously situated there had been flattened during the atomic destruction wrought on Nagasaki (11). At the beginning of the novel the image of the car moving in an ungainly manner over the waste-ground already carries intimations of the air-transport responsible for the earlier destruction. The sighting marks Sachiko's move into the neighbourhood; and the implication is that it belonged to Frank and was being used to ferry her belongings. As such the reappearance of the car towards the end suggests that the two have patched up their relationship, that their move overseas would proceed, and hence Keiko's death is tied to the nuclear imagery as well. But most surprisingly this second sighting of the American car is explicitly recalled by Etsuko as the occasion of a 'premonition' that Keiko would die by 'hanging' (156), just as earlier on stepping for the 'first time' on the far bank - a figure for exile - had caused Etsuko to feel something 'not unlike premonition' (40), which had caused her to search with greater urgency for the injured Mariko. In addition, the car's reappearance is laced with dramatic tension as it coincides with the arrival of a woman with a 'thin figure' (157) crossing the waste-ground towards Sachiko's cottage, which we initially think is the aforementioned child-killer, or the disturbing 'thin-face(d)' woman Etsuko catches staring at Mariko on the tram coming back from Inasa (125), before we are told that she is Sachiko's cousin, come to urge her to return to her uncle's home (159).

Because these images and associations have a cumulative impact beyond the sum of their parts they help the novel acquire its pervasive sense of the macabre without us being able to pinpoint one incident or even a number of them; and incidentally that is one of its strengths. Inasmuch as the depiction of Mrs. Waters, Suzie-San, the grim-reaper lady, Sachiko's cousin, and the child-killer are all glossed with varying degrees of threat and presentiment they suggest varying degrees of self-recrimination and self-exculpation on Etsuko's part. And indeed these elements are heightened by the implied association between Etsuko and the child-killer, as when Mariko spots a piece of 'rope' (84-84, 173) in Etsuko's hands and becomes frightened (the rope had caught around Etsuko's ankle and she is merely removing it).

Yet both these dimensions of Etsuko's narration mean that they also become tinged with menace. As Michael Wood suggests, Etsuko appears to see aspects of herself writ-large not only in Sachiko but also in these other figures³⁹; like Sachiko they are versions of Etsuko, and thus we might say they all contribute to and sharpen the charge of the uncanny accompanying the revelation of Sachiko's, as it were, full-fledged doppelgänger status. But to the extent that this underscores in turn the question of Sachiko's ontological indeterminacy it also foregrounds the *Madama Butterfly* trope: menacing and uncanny figuration, together with the use of setting and tone, contribute we might say to the *disowning* dynamic suggested above.

Critical readings

My analysis has assigned great weight to the significance of *Madama Butterfly* sub-text and imagery within what I claim is a general revisionary-ethnographic manoeuvre overlaid with themes of exile. This approach is manifestly different from the separate discussions of the novel undertaken by Mike Petry and Brian Shaffer. Shaffer, for instance, makes a cursory reference to *Madama Butterfly* as a potential intertext of *Pale View* without elaboration,⁴⁰ and Mike Petry relegates the same idea to a footnote (32, n.11). But as my reading suggests such moves are questionable, given that the novel's figurative and narrative structure both coalesce around a rewriting of Puccini's opera. By way of authorial support for his position Petry cites Ishiguro's remark in an interview that he is not concerned with the provision of 'insights' into Japan (7, n.13), while Shaffer argues that he is writing largely within a 'Western [literary] tradition' (6). But by a sleight of hand these nostrums are taken to eschew Puccini or indeed any consideration of minority or migrant concerns, or of Ishiguro's complex positioning within and between social formations. The upshot is that both Petry and Shaffer concentrate on Ishiguro's putative fealty to that 'tradition' conceived as a kind of hermetic textual cosmos. Shaffer offers James Joyce's 'Eveline' from *Dubliners* as a potential intertext of *Pale View* (18-20) while Petry offers, among others, works by Balzac, Henry James and E.T.A. Hoffmann (25-62). Both critics read *Pale View* as being concerned primarily with the articulation of Etsuko's endo-psychic conflict, or, in other words, with human nature in the abstract. Petry titles his chapter on the book 'A

Mother's Disturbing Memories' (25); Shaffer asserts its 'debt to modern psychoanalytic theory' (30).

Wittingly or unwittingly, however, the elision of the *Madama Butterfly* sub-text works, I think, to suppress the novel's agonistic priorities, its questioning of canon formation, and also its critique of the links between knowledge and power. In this context it obscures the novel's disclosure of the links between exoticist and Orientalist discourses. To reduce a text to questions of psychological verisimilitude works I think to decontextualise it. And even if one feels justified in restricting examination of literary texts to purely aesthetic lines of development it is still difficult to see how the *Madama Butterfly* trope can be sidelined.

Salvaging Immigrant Subjectivities

But if Shaffer and Petry lack a minority discourse optic to situate their readings of *Pale View* and as a result elide its agonistic configuration, Sheng-mei Ma might be said to veer too far in an opposing direction, in that his critique adopts an overly restrictive conception of what oppositional discourse entails. Ma's main complaint is that Asian-American and other Asian diasporic writers are too quick to consummate authorial self-fashioning and empowerment by a strategy of self-Orientalisation directed at immigrant figures, who are portrayed using internalised hegemonic norms, including the idea that they often have a 'split personality' or 'buried self' that renders them inextricably alien or

'schizophrenic'.⁴¹ With *Pale View* in particular he is chary of the fact that Etsuko is depicted as a 'self-deluded' mother (55), as exemplified in the way she mis-remembers Keiko in place of Mariko during her narration of the Inasa daytrip, in what he calls a 'fabricated moment of happiness' to 'defuse' her role in Keiko's suicide (54-55). And Keiko's portrayal, he continues, is even more damaging because she ends up destroying herself (55).

This distancing proclivity towards immigrants leads Ma to criticise Ishiguro for rejecting his 'Asian heritage' (14), a charge he extends in a recent essay to include the trajectory of his career since *Pale View*. Because Ishiguro 'resorts to pop psychology, or the banality of [the] minority's divided self' in his portrayal of Etsuko, Ma reiterates that Ishiguro fails to take up the task of 'self-representation'.⁴² Yet even that narrative positioning between two social formations is lacking in his subsequent fiction: *Artist* is set entirely in Japan; whereas in his third and fourth novels Ishiguro abandons entirely the use of minority narrators. For Ma, however, this trajectory represents a 'suppression of ethnicity' (72) because Ishiguro fails to address his position as 'an Asian minority living in the West' (81). He acknowledges that the use of white protagonists in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* is a reaction against essentialist responses to his early work, but counters that this 'reaction against Orientalism has turned reactionary by subsuming racial differences' (80); Ishiguro's post-*Pale View* work betrays in effect a 'persistent dream for universalist parables [that go] beyond identity politics' (74):

That he never locates the central consciousness of his novels in Anglo-Japanese but vacillates between Japanese and English characters testifies to the intangible subject-position of minorities in the West, a position so laden with minority dis-ease that one rushes to join seemingly wholesome, well-integrated, and immutable identities. As such, the likes of the butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and of the pianist Ryder in *The Unconsoled* (1995) suggest not only *reaction* against readers' ethnic stereotypes generated by Ishiguro's two earlier 'Japanese' novels, but *reactionary* cooptation into a dream world of postethnicity. The minority complex over how one's differences are being perceived and received by others is projected by Ishiguro onto the majority, specifically Stevens and Ryder, whose professions consists of public performances which put private selves under erasure...To defy Orientalist characteristics imposed on him, Ishiguro passes as white (71-72, 80).

Ma suggests, in addition, that the narratives of Stevens and Ryder both appeal to notions of a 'shared human condition' which makes them unwarrantably universalist (77). The operation of this dynamic also explains why Ishiguro's central protagonists become increasingly stylised and abstract.

My position as regards the charge of racial passing will arise from the contestatory thematic I trace in subsequent chapters, but for *Pale View* it ought to be clear from the foregoing that the novel does not perform some post-ethnic wish-fulfillment dream. Although Niki is not the novel's main protagonist her attempt to atone for Keiko's mistreatment suggests that she embodies in some sense the moral force of the novel. Yet Ma fails to discuss her figuration or even acknowledge her Anglo-Japanese status. With regards to the politics of linguistic usage Ma complains that David Henry Hwang's 1979 play *FOB* features an immigrant whose use of pidgin comes across as another instance of defeatist self-Orientalisation.⁴³ Yet in *Pale View* it is actually Suzie-San who speaks *pidgin*: it is her persistent clapping and one-word utterances that come across as marionette-like or dehumanised, in keeping with her thematic function (*Pale View*, 114-19). Most importantly, however, Ma fails to examine the novel's appropriation of Puccini's opera.

Terse triangular relationships

Nevertheless, what most strongly invalidates the charge of disaffiliation is that even within the ambit of Ma's critical priorities *Pale View* might be said to contest assimilatory discourses. For Ma the self-Orientalising proclivities of some Asian-American and Asian diasporic texts stem from what he calls a 'terse triangular relationship' between the raconteurs of these experiences, the metropolitan book market, and the immigrants figures who feature in them: both raconteurs and the market compete in effect for migrant stories in a setting where 'ethnicity' has

become the ‘surest’ indication of the marketable, and where ‘a significant source of that ethnicity is Asian American writers’ emplotment of immigrants’ heart-wrenching and almost always “exotic” experiences’. As a result, however, Ma argues that immigrant voices often end up being suppressed: they ‘remain largely a blank, an absence - the voiceless, plastic other waiting to be born by their children’.⁴⁴

A close reading of *Pale View* reveals, however, that this terse triangle - the silencing of migrant voices by raconteurs’ need to accrue cultural capital hand in glove with the publishing industry’s commodification of difference - is actually dramatised in a key episode in the frame story, when Niki tells her mother that a friend of hers wants to write a poem about her. Niki in effect takes up the task and responsibility of immigrant representation when she says that she has been telling her friend about how her mother ‘left Japan’ (89). She explains that her friend ‘appreciates what it must have been like, how it wasn’t quite as easy as it sounds’ (*ibid.*), and Etsuko’s reaction is significant because it is the closest she comes to expressing anger in the novel: she calls the undertaking ‘absurd’; adds sardonically that ‘I’m sure your friend will write a marvelous poem’ (*ibid.*) and then labels their shallow lionisation of what they think she went through ‘presumptuous’ (90, *sic*). Etsuko thus rejects the ventriloquist disposition of *both* Niki and her friend’s attempts to represent her experiences. And indeed if the concern is that the casting of migrant narratives as heroic-migration stories effectively neutralises any oppositional valences they may possess, then the latter is also the most glaring textual gap in the novel, for *Pale View* does not devote any

space to the specificities of how Etsuko ends up in a cottage in the English countryside.

This suggests that the novel's counter-discourse takes on board critical considerations of the kind raised, for instance, by Timothy Brennan, who complains insightfully that the metropolitan book market often turns immigrants into 'fetish[es]' in what amounts to a self-aggrandising exercise where 'images of immigration as heroic survival' so overdetermines the reception of writing from minority and/or non-metropolitan locations that such work is effectively yoked to hegemonic articulations.⁴⁵ In other words, *Pale View* sustains rather than undermines Ma's avowed aim of 'salvaging immigrant subjectivities'.⁴⁶ By contesting that terse triangulation it stages in expressly metacritical terms the threat of co-optation by the metropolitan book trade (personified in Niki's friend) and a succeeding generation seeking to represent its forebears (Niki).

Resolution

In this light it is even more compelling that Etsuko subsequently gives to Niki's friend a memento that emphasises the gap between narration and reception. Responding to the friend's request (conveyed through Niki) for a visual token so that she can write her laudatory poem, Etsuko provides a calendar-picture of Inasa (177, 179, 182). But what she gives, by definition, is only the picturesque, for Niki's friend has no inkling of the personal tragedy associated with the keepsake, with its echoes not just of the loss of Keiko but also of a former lover and

probably an entire family. My point is not just that Niki's friend threatens the decency of witness by presuming to write the narrative of a nuclear-holocaust survivor, although that is a significant consideration, but also that the *closing* action of *Pale View* demonstrates a keen appreciation of the domesticating agendas underpinning metropolitan consumption of cosmopolitan texts. It is telling in fact that *both* the opening and closing actions of the novel are given over to diagnostic dramatisations aimed at pre-empting co-optation: both opening and ending take pains it would seem to fend off discursive moves that effectively silence migrant voices.

That the *closing* action of the novel anticipates co-optation is already significant. Yet by giving away the keepsake Etsuko also gestures ironically at the fetishisation of migranthood criticised by Brennan. She affirms instead her own need to give up a fetish-tinged object, to turn away from mourning before it becomes melancholia, and thus her action is doubly important. But this is not even the first time that Ishiguro anticipates the appropriative tendency of a succeeding generation or of metropolitan public discourse as regards the articulation of migrant encounters. In a short story that is a precursor to *Pale View*, for instance, the narrator describes at one point a visit by her daughter seeking her signature for an anti-nuclear petition, and of how although 'she mentioned various facts and figures...[she] never mentioned Nagasaki', as if she had 'forgotten' her mother's presence in the city during the conflagration.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Ishiguro apparently felt the need to supplement such metafictional warnings with an article in *The Guardian* several months after the publication of *Pale View*. In an op-ed type article he complains that while the lure of preserving childhood memories made him site the work in Nagasaki, his novel was being cast unaccountably as a book about nuclear destruction. He speaks about learning ‘cynical professional lessons’ from the publicity generated by such a label, suggests that fears raised by the Euro-missile debate⁴⁸ was giving his book ‘an easy kind of global significance’, and also comments tellingly on the coincidence of this heightened publicity dovetailing with literary fashion: ‘the British literary world’, having grown tired of the ‘Hampstead novel’ - usually concerning ‘failed relationships’ among ‘members of the London media’ - was turning instead to books with ‘the large global theme’. As a result, Ishiguro warns that a fad for holocaust-themed works might inaugurate a new form of ‘escapist entertainment’ that would actually de-sensitise the public to the horrors of nuclear warfare.⁴⁹

Coupled with a subsequent interview in which he implies that cosmopolitan writers like himself were valued because they were placemakers or substitutes for a once commanding ‘global significance’ arising from possession of Empire,⁵⁰ this suggests Ishiguro’s consistent alertness to how socio-political articulations translate into commercial-literary pressures, or at least that an initial naivety had been quickly quashed. And in addition to these illustrative instances we could cite as well the dramatisation of violence at Inasa when Mariko’s attempt at self-representation is curtailed.

Although my recourse to Wong's work above rests on the assumption that the interpretative paradigms of Asian-American literature and criticism can help illuminate the contestatory *telos* of Ishiguro's fiction, the rigidities of Sheng-mei Ma's position suggests that we also need to adjust these paradigms - and they are themselves internally divergent of course - if we are to avoid eliding the specificity or even singularity of the historical moment from which Ishiguro writes. While 'Asian-American' cultural production, retrieval and interpretation have traditionally been co-articulated with the adoption of a common 'ethnic' identity by the different Asian diasporas in the United States as a means of political and institutional space-claiming, critics in the field are also asking whether a pluralist idiom of inclusion potentially turns 'U.S. ethnic groups...into apologists for the further penetrations of the world by American capital, culture, and political ideology'.⁵¹

The lack of a sizeable Japanese diasporic and-or post-migrant enclave in Britain compared to America, together with the fact that Ishiguro's dislocation arose not from conditions of birth or economic migration, but from a father's expatriate job-posting which became permanent, helps frame, I think, the substantial exilic tenor of *Pale View*, as well as its attendant concern with political aggregates larger than migrant enclaves. In this respect Ma's preoccupation with the self-fashioning of hyphenated identities has, I feel, only a limited purchase.

Conclusion

I proposed above that *Pale View* can be fruitfully read as a text mediating agonistic, contestatory and exilic articulations. This is achieved principally through a rewriting of the *Madama Butterfly* trope. What helps reinforce the discursive move are three key self-reflexive moments when the novel glosses its own status as migrant or minority text: when it stresses in the opening its aversion to the whole business of cultural voyeurism or vague 'Eastern' echoes; when the notion of autochthonous self-representation being suppressed by projection and wish-fulfillment is staged through Mariko's expropriated sketch (114), and when Etsuko derails the attempt of Niki's friend to appropriate her experiences.

In this way we might say Etsuko challenges the violence signaled by the earlier appropriation: her gift to Niki's friend not only rejects domestication but also tries to clear space for meaningful cultural engagement. Most important in this respect is the deployment of doppelgänger figuration. A doppelgänger is by definition 'the Other who is also the I',⁵² and thus its deployment might be said to address the vexed question of cultural representation, in a problematic neatly summarised by Jürgen Habermas: 'I cast about, sometimes here, sometimes there, for traces of a reason that writes without effacing separation, that binds without unnaming difference, that points out the common and the shared among strangers, without depriving the other of otherness'.⁵³ Incorporated in the intriguing sameness and difference of Sachiko and Etsuko is, I would contend, just this effort to transpose the idea of 'the

'Other' who is also an 'I' into the sociopolitical arena. And in the figuration of Ogata-San and Sheringham we can note as well the effort to negotiate the disjunction between difference and exceptionalism. Such a deployment of *doppelgänger* figuration is important to keep in mind, as well as the incidence of metacritical self-reflexiveness, because they come to the fore again in subsequent novels, where different kinds of agonistic objectives are pursued.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as *Pale View* and cited parenthetically in the text.

² Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd, eds, *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also David Lloyd's elaboration of the term in his essay, 'Ethnic Cultures, Minority Discourse and the State', in *Colonial discourse/postcolonial theory*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp.221-38.

³ Brian W. Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); Mike Petry, *Narratives of Memory and Identity: The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999); Sheng-mei Ma, *Immigrant Subjectivities in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Literatures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), and 'Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream for Postethnicity: Performance in Whiteface', *Post Identity*, 2, 1 (1999), 71-88, by the same author. Ma's and Petry's readings of *The Unconsoled* will also be discussed in chapter five.

⁴ Kazuo Ishiguro, 'A Family Supper', in *The Penguin Book of Modern British Short Stories*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), pp.434-42. First published in T. J. Binding, ed., *Firebird 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp.121-31. Further references to the story will be to the 1988 publication and are given in the text.

⁵ Gregory Mason, 'An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', *Contemporary Literature*, 30, 3 (1989), 334-47 (p.343).

⁶ Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp.58-63 passim.

⁷ David Sexton, 'Interview: David Sexton meets Kazuo Ishiguro', *Literary Review*, January 1987, pp.16-19 (p.18, italics in original).

⁸ This is a more prosaic use of the term than the one proposed by Harold Bloom. See, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁹ Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.149-50.

¹⁰ *Japan Versus the West*, pp.135-140 passim.

¹¹ Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Oe, 'The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation', *Boundary 2*, 18, 3 (1991), 109-122 (p.113).

¹² Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 37-69 passim.

¹³ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities', *Public Culture*, 11, 1 (1999), 1-18.

¹⁴ Yoshio Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.20.

¹⁵ Judith Squires, 'Editorial', *New Formations*, 16 (1992), iv-viii (p.viii).

¹⁶ Peter Wain, 'The Historical-Political aspect of the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro', *Language and Culture*, 23 (1992), 177-204 (p.180).

¹⁷ As described by Pollack these include: 'The convention of plots constructed according to a plausible Cartesian logic of cause and effect, consistent narrative point of view, lifelike characters, circumstantial detail, convincing dialogue - in short all of the novel's technical ability to provide a particular sort of bourgeois credibility'. See *Reading against Culture*, p.141.

¹⁸ *Narratives of Memory*, p.56 (italics in original).

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850-1905* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978), p.92.

²⁰ *The Japanese Tradition*, p.48.

²¹ Cho Cho San's suicide at the end of the opera is caused in part by Pinkerton, who returns not as promised to bring her and their child back to America, but actually to claim the child for himself and his new American bride.

²² 'Nagasaki', in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn, 32 vols (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1995), VIII, 481-82 (p.482).

²³ *The Image of Japan*, p.92.

²⁴ *Japan Versus the West*, p.118.

²⁵ Frank Rich, "M. Butterfly," a Story of a Strange Love, Conflict and Betrayal', *New York Times*, 21 March 1988, p.C13.

²⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 38-77 *passim*.

²⁷ Despite losing most of her family during the war, Mrs. Fujiwara is rebuilding her life around her surviving son, and has been advising Etsuko to face the future with optimism.

²⁸ Ishiguro's writings often imbue introjection imagery with pejorative connotations or with a sense of the macabre. This can be seen, for instance, in his television play *The Gourmet* (1993), where the plight of the homeless is accentuated through the protagonist's farcical desire to capture and 'eat' the 'flesh' of a ghost. In *A Family Supper*, as mentioned, the mother's death stems from food poisoning, and in *The Unconsoled* (1995) the protagonist's failure to reconcile with his family is signaled by his partaking of food in the ending.

²⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.137.

³⁰ *Narratives of Memory*, p.56 (italics in original). Further references to the study will be given where possible in the text.

³¹ Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). See especially chapter two, 'Encounters with the Racial Shadow', pp.77-117. Further references to the study are given after quotations in the text.

³² *Narratives of Memory*, p.42. See Gregory Mason, 'Inspiring Images: The Influence of the Japanese Cinema on the Writings of Kazuo Ishiguro', *East West Film Journal*, 3, (1989), 39-52.

³³ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp.10, 38.

³⁴ Jameson sets out the problem thus: 'It is clear to me that *any* articulation of radical difference - that of gender, incidentally, fully as much as that of culture - is susceptible to appropriation by that strategy of otherness which Edward Said, in the context of the Middle East, called 'orientalism'. It does not matter much that the radical otherness of the culture in question is praised or valorized positively...the essential operation is that of differentiation, and once that has been accomplished, the mechanism Said denounces has been set in place. On the other hand, I don't see how a first-world intellectual can avoid this operation without falling back into some general liberal and humanistic universalism: it seems to me that one of our basic political tasks lies precisely in the ceaseless effort to remind the American public of the radical difference of other national situations'. Fredric Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65-88 (p.77).

³⁵ Francis King, 'Shimmering', *Spectator*, 27 February 1982, pp.24-25 (pp.24-25).

³⁶ Francis King, 'A Stately Procession of One', *Spectator*, 27 May 1989, pp.31-32 (p.31).

³⁷ *Off Center*, p.10.

³⁸ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), pp.120-67 *passim*.

³⁹ Wood argues that when Etsuko utters the words, 'I was thinking about someone I knew once. A woman I knew once' (*Pale View*, p.10), she is referring not just to Sachiko but also to these other women who haunt her memories. For Wood, 'the sheer bareness of the language' gives it 'a kind of richness' implying this idea. See Michael Wood, 'The Discourse of Others', in *Children of Silence: On Contemporary Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp.171-81 (p.177).

⁴⁰ *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, p.21. Further references to the study will be given where possible in the text.

⁴¹ *Immigrant Subjectivities*, p.41. Where possible, further references to the study will be given in the text.

⁴² 'Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream', p.81. Further references to the essay will be given after quotations in the text.

⁴³ *Immigrant Subjectivities*, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁴⁵ *At Home In The World*, p.205.

⁴⁶ *Immigrant Subjectivities*, p.108.

⁴⁷ Ishiguro, 'A Strange and Sometimes Sadness', in *Introduction 7: Stories by New Writers* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), pp. 13-27 (p.25). In an interview with Christopher Bigsby Ishiguro states, additionally, that this story is written 'from the point of view of a woman' who is 'rather like' Etsuko. Christopher Bigsby, 'An Interview with Kasuo [sic] Ishiguro', *European English Messenger* (Fall 1990), 26-29 (p.27).

⁴⁸ Ishiguro appears to be referring to the so-called 'Euro-missile crisis' triggered by the stationing of American Cruise and Pershing missiles in response to the former Soviet Union's deployment of SS20 missiles.

⁴⁹ 'Bomb Culture', *Guardian*, 8 August 1983, p.9.

⁵⁰ 'I tend to think if I didn't have a Japanese name and if I hadn't written books at that stage set in Japan, it would have taken me years longer to get the kind of attention and sales that I got in England with my first two books...In the early 1980s there was an explosion of tremendous interest in literature,...with people like Garcia Marquez, Milan Kundera, and Mario Vargas Llosa, who became very trendy people. At the same time, there was a whole generation of younger British writers who often had racial backgrounds that were not the typical white Anglo-Saxon...So there definitely was this atmosphere where people were looking for this young, exotic - although exotic may be somewhat of an unkind word - writer with an international flavour. I was very fortunate to have come along at exactly the right time. It was one of the few times in the recent history of British arts in which it was an actual plus to have a funny foreign name and to be writing about funny foreign places. The British were suddenly congratulating themselves for having lost their provincialism at last...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 was being covered at the time...There was a time when Britain thought it had this dominant role in the world,...[that] it was the head of this huge empire. I think for a long time it was supposed you could just write about British issues and about British life and it would automatically be of *global significance*, since people all around the world would be interested. British writers didn't have to consciously start thinking about the interests of people outside Britain, because whatever

concerned them was, by definition, of international interest. I think there was this gray period - because literary habits take a long time to die - before the British finally, both intellectually and consciously, had accepted that the empire had gone'. The quote is from Vorda and Herzinger, 'Stuck on the Margins', pp.7-8,10 (italics added). The telling detail here, I think, is the use of the phrase 'global significance' in the *Guardian* article as well as in the interview just cited.

⁵¹ Tomo Hattori, 'China Men Autoeroticism and The Remains of 'Asian America', *Novel*, 31, 2 (1998), 215-36 (p.228).

⁵² Wong, p.84.

⁵³ Quoted in Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.184, n.19.

Chapter Three. *An Artist of the Floating World*

Introduction

I discussed in the previous chapter the revisionary-ethnographic and exilic valences underwriting *Pale View*. I highlighted the way Ishiguro probes dominant constructions and contests culturalist modes of thinking. His treatment is ‘negative’, proffering not so much a ‘Japan’ of presence but a critique of Orientalist and Manichean constructions that reduce it to a mere negative reflection, a shadow of the ‘West’s’ self-image. Hence the deployment of the ‘suicide-instinct’ label to question culturalist assignations, the echoes and rewriting of Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, and also the efforts to resist co-optation as a heroic-migration text sustaining metropolitan self-aggrandisement.

An Artist of the Floating World (1986)¹ continues we might say this project of staking out a viable space for historical and socio-cultural specificity. More specifically, I would contend, it challenges Japan’s assigned metaphysical alterity by interrogating the two dominant metaphors of Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*, which is to say that it demonstrates the exorbitation involved when hyper-aestheticism and militarism are cast as timeless attributes of a posited Japanese ethno-national character.

As I established in my introduction chapter Benedict's nostrums still exert a disproportionate influence despite their repudiation by the anthropology academic community. To the extent that Benedict's paradigms draw strength precisely from her juxtaposing of two diametrically opposed tropes - 'worshipper[s] of the chrysanthemum' and 'wielder[s] of the sword'² - that work in tandem to reinforce the notion of an inherently paradoxical, irrational or alien psyche this dual critique is, therefore, important. The undermining of the one aids we might say the undermining of the other. For as Earl Miner puts it 'the small element of truth which may lie in this double image does not alter the fact that neither aspect of it pictures the Japanese as human beings with human faults and virtues'.³ Benedict's book both reflects and reinforces essentialist paradigms, and reading *Artist* against its prescriptions thus allows us to appreciate in more concrete terms Ishiguro's attempt to denaturalise the dominant ideas which continue to designate Japan as an official Other to the 'West'.

To begin with the 'sword' metaphor first an immediately noticeable feature of *Artist* is the proliferation of apprenticeship relations, and this underscores I will argue below Japan's efforts at emulating the Asian empires of the 'Western' imperial powers (173-74). Such a move highlights what historian Tu Wei-ming usefully places in context when he says that Japan's modern history can be described as a 'Faustian drive to outsmart the West at its own game'.⁴ It is in this way that Ishiguro challenges a stubbornly ascribed allochrony manifested, among other

ways, in the proclivity to portray Japan's second world war aggrandisement in *sui generis* terms, by registering the expansionist trajectory that both Japan and the Western metropolitan formations share. In this way an alternative to the seamless quality of culturalist descriptions is opened up, namely that Japan committed itself to war for intelligible if condemnable reasons of self-interest.

Again as in *Pale View* such a move needs to be framed, I think, against the expanded Japanese presence in the world economy and the related demonisation of the referent 'Japan Inc.' in the metropolitan cultural and political imaginary in the eighties. It does not appear to be aimed at justifying Japanese expansionism. And generally it would seem a tactic of countering allochrony by registering shared historical trespasses would not work if that were the case.

I suggested earlier that this move to stress historical commonalities can be traced to *Pale View*, to the portrayal of Niki and Keiko as synecdoches for Japan and Britain respectively, and thence to *Etsuko*'s declaration that they 'have much more in common than' her deceased husband, Sheringham, 'would ever admit'.⁵ What is telling in this respect is that apart from developing the Niki-Keiko analogy to stress historical specificity *Artist* also extends its scrutiny of the *Madame Chrysanthème* and *Madama Butterfly* tropes, in the sense that the related notion of Japan as 'worshiper of the Chrysanthemum' is interrogated. The novel's title alludes to a tradition of Japanese art - *ukiyo-e* - depicting

evanescent beauty, and which according to James Michener used two different Chinese characters meaning, respectively, float and grief to represent *uki*; the character for *yo* in turn referred to world, and thus the term for this art form carried strong Buddhist overtones of ‘the sad, floating, evanescent, grief-stricken world’.⁶ Yet in the narrator’s practice of this mode of art Western influence is preponderant. Thus the most ironic feature of the novel is that in the most hyperaesthetic or ostensibly nativist-authentic-Edenic stage of the artist-narrator’s career he is attempting to modernise his art form according to declared ‘Western’ precepts (141).

In what follows I will argue that the critique of Benedict’s double metaphor is effected by the narrative configuration of *Artist*. I trace the protagonist’s career with particular attention to how his professions of autonomy are destabilised by unreliable narration. Insofar as unreliable narration foregrounds the question of conformism and tutelage it helps underscore historical commonalities, in keeping with wider revisionary-ethnographic objectives. One problem with the textual pattern set up, however, is that it potentially aids culturalist readings of the novel. Drawing on studies in Japanese cultural and political history I argue, nevertheless, that it is the gaps and lacunas in popular conceptions of the post-war settlement effected in Asia that underwrites the textual decision, because these gaps then delimit the textual choices available to Ishiguro. Moreover, this narrative strategy has an obvious precedent in the deflationary deployment of culturalist tropes in *Pale View* and *A Family*

Supper. I close by discussing the drawbacks of this strategy and by suggesting how Ishiguro's subsequent work is an attempt to overcome its conceptual limitations.

Synopsis

To begin with *Artist* picks up and develops the Ogata-San subplot in *Pale View*. Unlike *Pale View*, however, the book is set entirely in Japan. Composed in four narrative sections stretching between October 1948 and June 1950, it tells the story of a retired artist named Masaji Ono who had supported the rise of militarism during the 1930s with propaganda art pieces. At one point he denounces one of his pupils, turned dissident, who as a result spends the war in prison. When the novel opens Ono's wife and only son are dead, the former from an allied bomb raid, the other from fighting in Japan's expansionist ventures on the Chinese mainland. Over a number of months Ono is visited by his eldest daughter, tries to arrange a respectable marriage for his second daughter, revisits an ex-colleague, drinks at a bar with a former pupil and attends a monster movie with his grandson.

Behind these quotidian events, however, the scale of post-war changes, exchanges with former combatants such as his son-in-law, the ideological desertion of his ex-pupils, and more immediately the desire to secure his younger daughter's marriage causes Ono to review his past. Afraid that any disclosure of his misdeeds will derail the nuptial

arrangements Ono tries without success to initiate reconciliation with Kuroda, the pupil he had betrayed. He confesses his misdeeds before the family of the prospective groom but his behaviour strikes us as self-serving: his so-called confession seems to be aimed merely at forestalling possible qualms on the part of the groom's family about the marriage. It is only after further self-scrutiny, coupled with the unremitting impact of disturbing social changes that Ono gains a limited insight into the contours of his life. The novel ends on a note of resignation as Ono gazes wistfully at the pleasure district he knew as a youth, now converted into a business quarter. He consoles himself with the thought that a younger generation will 'make a better go of things' (206).

Business, Art and Politics

As suggested by the foregoing the focus of *Artist* is the meaning of Ono's artistic career. What is underscored indeed are the strong parallels between the progress of his career and wider historical developments. During his sojourn in an artists' colony, for instance, a top student, Sasaki, is branded a 'traitor' to the teacher and expelled (143), with the result that Ono takes over the mantle of star pupil. Yet in the narrative present he is also labeled a *traitor* to the nation by a pupil of Kuroda (113-14), and moreover in an exchange with Suichi, his son-in-law, the latter pointedly vents his anger at those 'no better than war criminals' who have return unpunished to their previous vocations (56).

More obviously than in *Pale View* then *Artist* maintains a strong isomorphism between private and public, so that Ono is in many ways a representative figure. Through his flashbacks and garrulous narration, his description of his training and work conditions before the war more general questions about responsibility and blame during this *contested* period of Japanese history are raised.

In this respect Brian Shaffer suggests that Ono's career passes through three distinct 'stages': 'art in the service of purely commercial, aesthetic or political ends' (59). These correspond respectively to his sojourn with a commercial-art studio run by a Master Takeda, an artists' colony led by Seiji Moriyama or Mori-san, and the Okada-Shingen (New Life) Society, an ultra-nationalist body which subsequently became 'one of the many victims of the occupying forces' (*Artist*, 88), and for whom Ono paints his propaganda pieces. Sometime after Ono joins the organisation he also sets up his own school, although the text is vague on this.

Adopting Shaffer's categorisation initially I will delineate how Ono's narration of each 'stage' of his career problematises his claims of autonomy. However, I argue that the idea of his career progressing through 'purely' discrete phases elides more fundamental continuities that the novel is concerned with establishing. As a representative figure Ono's career needs to be considered in holistic fashion and not as discrete stages, which is the approach that many commentators adopt. It is the

former moreover that helps break the seamless quality of cultural descriptions by adding a temporal aspect to the process of reading, so that the progress of Ono's career corresponds to Japan's movement from isolationism to aggressive expansionism.

Master Takeda

Ono begins his career as an artist-illustrator at an establishment run by Master Takeda. However, his recollection of the sojourn is remarkable chiefly for its unreliability, in keeping with an interpretive challenge congruent to the rest of the novel as well. This develops in the course of Ono's reminiscence of Nakahara, an ex-colleague nicknamed 'the Tortoise' whom he first met in the early 1910s. The impetus behind the recollection is set up in the narrative present when Ono's grandson innocently lets slip what Suichi said about him, namely that Ono 'used to be a famous artist' but 'had to finish' because 'Japan lost the war' (32). When Ono observes later that the occupation authorities saw 'no reason' to remove Nakahara as they did 'so many of his fellow teachers' (67) the sense that he is dwelling obliquely on his own removal is, therefore, established.

In this respect, Ono's sneer that Nakahara 'never achieved any kind of reputation' (67), and also that one of his self-portraits painted while at Takeda attributed without foundation a 'lofty intellectual air' (*ibid.*) to himself comes across as rancour at a former colleague he had been

accustomed to snubbing. But given this resentment Ono's claim that he rose to defend Nakahara's 'artistic integrity' (68) when the other artists berated him for his slowness, therefore, becomes suspicious. And we are even more loath to take him at his word because this contradicts his earlier revelation that the Takeda outfit is a sweatshop whose *modus vivendi* is speed and the provision of kitsch. For such an outfit would appear to have little time for notions such as 'artistic integrity': as essentially commercial artists they sometimes paint 'around the clock' to complete commissions 'on time' (66), and the 'essential point' about these commissions for 'geishas, cherry trees, *swimming carps*, [and] temples' is that they 'look "Japanese" to the foreigners' to whom they are 'shipped out' (69, italics added).

Interestingly, Ishiguro uses the same language to describe the response to *Artist in Britain*:

People have not paid much attention to the ideas and just treated it as an exotic kind of little thing, and drawn comparisons to Japanese painting and brushwork, *carp splashing about in still ponds*. I've had every kind of Japanese cliché phrase - even Sumo wrestling.⁷

Perhaps Ishiguro exaggerates for effect but as in *Pale View* it seems we have here a metafictional injunction - unsuccessful it would appear - against the use of the novel to fulfill exoticist needs. The caution,

reinforced perhaps by a title that underscores the notion of accelerated change, is that readers should refrain from reducing *Artist* to kitsch. But, additionally, Ono's claim to have rescued Nakahara from bullying colleagues in the name of artistic integrity is questionable because he seems to construe the last solely in terms of how long one is able to maintain one's career, thus making a mockery of the notion. Moreover Ono sees the occupation authority's failure to remove Nakahara as some kind of vote of confidence, quite apart from his professional conduct, thus suggesting that he still clings to the sanction of authority figures *qua* authority figures.

Mori-san ('the modern Utamaro')

One the most curious features about *Artist* is that instances of this dynamic *and* problematic are strewn throughout the text. Again and again, that is, the novel uses unreliable narration to delineate a social space replete with authoritarian figures, and where behaviour is generally emulative. Thus, for instance, Ono recalls telling Nakahara that they should move from Takeda's outfit to Mori-san's because 'loyalty has to be earned', the implication being that Takeda had failed in that arena - Ono claims, additionally, that that was how he successfully persuaded Nakahara to join him in the move (72). However, Ono's quick conferral of allegiance onto Mori-san suggests the obverse of earned loyalty, merely that the latter had a reportedly high 'opinion' of his work (71).

At the new establishment, moreover, Mori-san is the only sanctioned source of artistic innovation (138-39). As Peter Wain correctly observes, the new place is different, 'but no less authoritarian' than the Takeda studio: although there are 'no targets or deadlines...the content, form and ideological purity [of their work] must conform to the demands of Mori-san'.⁸ This comes across most forcefully in expelling of the aforementioned Sasaki, whose paintings are confiscated when he starts to experiment in a new style, and whose colleagues, following Mori-San's lead, appear more than ready to ostracize him, so that he departs without even a word of leave-taking from his erstwhile friends (143). Similarly, Ono's first response to the overtures of Chishu Matsuda, the representative of the Okada-Shingen society, is to seek the 'advice' of Mori-san (88). And likewise Matsuda is quick to ask whether Ono's initial hostility is a considered response or one his teacher had 'happened to decree' (*ibid.*).

From Mori-san to Okada-Shingen

What sustains this focus on doctrinaire authority and emulative or non-deliberative behaviour is also the foregrounding of psychological compensation arising from inter-generational conflict. Although Ono successfully defies his father to become a painter the novel suggests that he remains locked in a quasi-Oedipal struggle, a fixation on his father's allegation that artists are invariably 'weak-willed and depraved' (46), and which eventually returns to harm him.

The roots of that fixation stem from the psychological and verbal violence enacted on the young Ono by his father when he discovers his ambitions. Angered by the development he recounts how a wandering monk, telling the boy's fortune at birth, had predicted a 'tendency towards slothfulness and deceit', for Ono even now was proving the monk right and threatening to 'grow up to be a good-for-nothing' (45). More drastically, the father appears to burn Ono's paintings (47), although this only fuels his antipathy to his father's plans for him to take over the family business. But what is most telling is that even after Ono grows up and becomes a trained artist the confrontation continues to haunt him. The father's wandering monk tale appears to leave behind a residual animus to mendicant-type figures, as when Ono questions Mori-san about their frequent intercourse with 'Gisaburo-san' (148), the leader of a troupe of 'wandering' dancers (145) who often perform at the Mori-san villa. Mori-san replies that he understands 'young men' finding the colony's bohemian lifestyle 'decadent', implying that Ono's objections will fade with time (150), but Ono nonetheless decides to leave, insisting that 'it is not necessary that artists always occupy a decadent and enclosed world' (180).

Ono's subsequent extremism appears in some measure, therefore, to be a compensatory response to his father's accusations, cathected compulsively around the referent 'depraved' or 'decadent'. For instance, the novel suggests that Matsuda's success in recruiting the initially hostile Ono stems from his taunt that artists are 'an astonishingly

decadent crowd' (170). Angered by Matsuda's charge that the charity he is advocating - to be funded by the sale of artwork solicited from painters - would have little impact in reducing poverty, Ono retorts that even if Matsuda were correct such a charity would at least open the eyes of 'decadent' artists (172). And it is then Ono's subsequent question, when in response to Matsuda's continued insinuation he asks 'how...decadent, foolish artists' (173) can impact the wider world that the way is open for the latter's demagoguery, thus paving the way for his adoption of the Okada-Shingen's ultra-nationalist positions.

In a similar vein this compensatory dimension also surfaces in Ono's post-Mori-san work. He urges his students, for example, to rise above 'decadent influences' (73). His support for a military-themed bar set up by an ex-soldier is couched in terms of its ability to counter the 'decadence' that might otherwise infect a pleasure district (64). And moreover the fact that one of his pictures contrasts the 'decadent' bearing of 'three fat, well-dressed men' with three youths who are 'ready to fight for their dignity' (168) suggests a transfer of antipathy to the father's 'business meetings' (41) and 'business box' (42), and all they represented of the unknown and the strange. Late in his adult life, therefore, Ono appears to discover a need to become 'one of the handful [of artists] with extraordinary resolve and character' (46) that his father had conceded might make some headway in the profession.

Post-war Japan

Another mark of the novel's persistence in raising the question of non-deliberative behaviour can be seen in the platitudinous nature of Ono's proclamations about the importance of moral autonomy. Although he tells his students that he learned from his Takeda sojourn the importance of not 'follow[ing] the crowd blindly' or of the need to 'question...authority', he betrays in the next breath the grip of a proto-reactionary concern with the moral 'fibre' of the nation (73). The self-regard he garners from recollecting how his students lap up his words also casts doubts on his claim to respect independent thought (*ibid.*).

Again and again, that is, Ono's claims to deliberative behaviour are undermined. Before his comfortably imprecise confession at a pre-nuptial meeting ('the *miai*'), for instance, he asks Matsuda to dissimulate on his behalf if detectives hired by the suitor's family approach to gather information about him (94-96). The request stems from the social custom of establishing a partner's family history to ensure a good match, and Ono is worried as an earlier arrangement had apparently been wrecked by revelation of his misdeeds (18-19, 50-56). However, he is then unwilling to extend the same favour to Shintaro, an ex-pupil who has applied for a teaching position that also requires a character reference (102-04). Ono gives his confession at the *miai* as the reason for his callousness (123-24). He claims that his confession is an object lesson in how one should assume 'responsibility for...past deeds' (124). Indeed, he

declares, Shintaro would do well to emulate his 'courage and honesty' (125).

Nevertheless, the novel suggests that Ono's confession stems more from the fear of public denunciation than anything else. The strong physical resemblance that Ono discerns between the younger brother of the prospective groom and Enchi, the Kuroda pupil who had earlier reproached him, suggests that the overwrought imagination of the guilty is at play. This is apparently reinforced by the revelation that the brother is a student at the college where Kuroda teaches (121). In one of the many illuminating self-disclosures that pepper the novel moreover Ono lets slip that a sense of 'prudence' had motivated his confession (124), which leaves the sincerity of his action open to question. Pertinent to this problem of the extent to which Ono indulges in self-exculpation as well is Michael Wood's observation that the operative question is *who* Ono should address when he apologises: that is, it is Kuroda rather than the family of the prospective groom who should hear his words.⁹

What further damages Ono's claim to moral autonomy is that his recollection appears to be geared towards bolstering a self-righteous indignation at Shintaro's vocational longevity. Whereas in the past he had needed Ono's patronage to secure a position for his brother (125, 19-21), he now succeeds in his job application, despite Ono's refusal to help him. Ono's complaint that Shintaro must have 'persisted with his small hypocrisies' to attain his 'goal' (125) ironically glosses his own

confession. But in any case the latter is already tainted by his oneupmanship: in arguing that Shintaro should be man enough like him to acknowledge his trespasses the self is amplified in the very act of being abnegated, so that overall Ono's narration does not appear trustworthy. The fact that he labels Shintaro and Nakahara the respective 'tortoises' (159) of their artisan circles also encourages us to interpret his rancour with reference to the proverbial story of the hare and the tortoise - in this case of the star pupil resenting the slow but steady catch-up of the class laggards.

Reconciliation

Nevertheless, it is when Ono's garrulous narration of his role in Kuroda's incarceration approaches his most egregious transgression that signs of a limited self-understanding begin to emerge. Despite numerous *prevarications* it is this vexed, imperfect understanding that constitutes the climax of the novel's recognition plot, rather than the problematic confession at the *miai*. What prefigures this development is also the advice that Ono gives to Enchi, namely that it is 'no bad thing' for a student to 'mimic' his teacher and then 'in good time' develop his 'own ideas and techniques' (111).

The novel suggests several reasons for such intimations of Ono's move to a more meaningful level of self-scrutiny. These include the continuing pain from the death of his son, Kenji; the ideological

abandonment of Shintaro, who of all his pupils had stayed loyal to his teachings; his exchanges with Suichi, who is embittered by his war experiences, and most proximately the signs of his grandson's enthrallment with American cultural icons (30, 34-37, 136, 151-52). Reacting to such monumental changes Ono seeks solace by reasserting his continued influence on the world. He finds a meagre consolation in contemplating the physical resemblance between Kenji and his grandson, Ichiro, and then in mulling over the idea that apart from biological inheritance, 'a teacher or mentor whom one admires greatly in early adulthood will [also] leave his mark' (136). Indeed, he concedes, some of his own 'mannerisms' or even 'whole phrases' were 'originally acquired' from Mori-san (137).

This proclamation is initially self-serving. As even die-hard supporters like Shintaro desert him, Ono needs reassurance about his own artistic influence. To say that Mori-San's personality impacted on his own is, therefore, a way of asserting his continuing influence in the face of contrary evidence. It allows him to claim that despite any 'reassessments' his pupils may have made of him 'most of them will have remained grateful for much of what they learnt' (137).

Nevertheless, this move to raise the whole question of tutelage also suggests that he is starting to progress beyond earlier platitudinous assertions. Ono, it seems, is beginning to tackle the question of pedagogical influences affecting his actions as well as the issue of moral

responsibility when influence is assimilated and replicated. Thus an indication that he has all along been wrestling with the demons of self-doubt is provided by his observation that the words he attributed to Mori-san when discussing Gisaburo-san - 'no man will make me believe I've wasted my time' - were actually his own views offered in grandiloquent exhortation to his pupils to produce militarist-propaganda pieces (151). What allows us perhaps to empathise with Ono as we censure his behaviour is this intimation that even his most strongly recidivist moments are last gasp efforts to roll back Freud's reality principle, which insists nonetheless that he *had* wasted huge portions of his 'time'. Ironically, it is the force of his need to believe in his continuing influence that leads him to confront the question of personal blameworthiness in his treatment of Kuroda.

The way in which Ono subsequently quibbles over whether the phrase 'exploring [unsanctioned] avenues' (177), were words that he used to condemn Kuroda's artistic experimentation or those that Mori-san used to describe his own propagandist turn is thus arguably part of this dim realisation of being a party in the transfer of violence. The telling moment occurs when Ono, recounting how Mori-San confiscates his propagandist pictures, comments that while it was understandable that teachers who had invested heavily in their pupils were doctrinaire that was no excuse for high-handedness:

Though the manouevring over the possession of the paintings will no doubt appear petty, it is surely understandable if a teacher who has supplied most of the paints and materials should forget in such a moment that his pupil has any right whatever over his own work. For all that [however] it is clear that such arrogance and possessiveness on the part of a teacher - however renowned he might be - is to be regretted (181).

Since these words occur immediately before the section recounting the ransacking of Kuroda's home by state security we might argue that they constitute an implicit acknowledgment of culpability. They imply Ono's growing realisation that the way Mori-san humiliated him had been replicated in his treatment of Kuroda, as prefigured by his earlier acknowledgment that Mori-san's personality had impacted his own. Such a reading is sustained as well by the figurative associations between the burning of Kuroda's paintings by the security officials who go to arrest him (184) and the separate confiscation of Ono's paintings by Mori-San and his father, with the suggestion in both instances that these were subsequently burnt as well (178-79; 46-47). Likewise a parallel is drawn between Mori-san's disparagement of his claims to being a 'serious artist' (180) and his father's earlier verbal violence (43-47).

True to the unreliable narration that pervades the novel this putative acknowledgement is undermined by what appears to be a

shifting of responsibility onto Mori-san and Ono senior. Nonetheless we might say significant advance has been registered, because recognition of familial or environmental determinants on our behaviour is a crucial first step towards the self-reflexivity underwriting meaningful autonomy. Whereas previously Ono's claims to deliberative behaviour have been platitudinous and implausible, it is actually the wrestling with the question of tutelage that signals progress, in so far as it bespeaks the deeper self-examination on which meaningful autonomy depends. It is this hint of an understanding that he had been *both* reactionary *and* culpable in his actions that sets up the novel's ending, where Ono gazes at three young men speaking in the forecourt of an office block and consoles himself with the idea that another generation will do better:

I feel a certain nostalgia for the past and the district as it used to be. But to see how...things have recovered so rapidly over these years, fills me with genuine gladness. Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things. One can only wish these young people well (206).

Anti-business attitudes

In his commentary on this ending J.M. McLeod states perceptively that *Artist* closes with an 'image of the [narrative] present...transposed upon an image of the past':¹⁰ the forecourt where the three men stand

was once occupied by the city's pleasure haunts, and as such a figurative link is established with the three small boys encountered in a slum whom Ono once portrayed in a propagandist painting (*Artist*, 167-69). More problematically, however, McLeod contends that the young men represent 'businessmen', thus contributing to 'a sense in the novel that an industrialised, post-war Japan is not dissimilar from the pre-war militarist Japan', and hence that 'nationalist sentiment is preserved, perhaps, at the level of business'.¹¹ In language that recalls Germany's fear of the 'yellow peril'¹² at the turn of the century as well as more recent declamations about 'business warriors' McLeod warns that 'nationalism is residual in the ambitions of the younger, business-oriented Japanese, where it is continued by other means'.¹³

Given the quasi-Oedipal struggle outlined above, however, these claims can only be described as tendentious. For in contrast I would say the juxtaposing of images above amounts to an implicit recognition of failure. From the novel's perspective on Ono's lifelong antipathy to the 'fingering of coins' (48) the material development that Ono sees around him suggests that commerce is a palpably better way to alleviate the poverty that Ono had criticised when he turned his slum encounter into propaganda. To this end these 'young men', but not him, have 'another chance to make a better go of things' (206).¹⁴

That Ishiguro bends over backwards to make antipathy to the 'fingering of coins' the psychological mainstay of Ono's extremism¹⁵

suggest indeed an effort to thwart precisely the kind of connections McLeod makes. For through this arrangement it is then difficult to square Ono's anti-business libidinal investment with the idea that his collaborationist work is simultaneously a warning about Japan Inc. Within the contours of *this* novel the two are diametrically opposed and cannot unproblematically be conflated, and it is perhaps in anticipation of such connections that Ishiguro stresses the psychological damage wrought by the father's plans for Ono to take over the family business.

What needs to be kept in mind, I think, is not that 'nationalist sentiment' is absent at 'the level of business', but that this relationship betokens our imbrication in a system of competing capitals within a world system. The main economic-ideological cleavage in this regard is not Japan versus Britain or Japan versus the 'West', but the way in which structural inequalities between core capitalist states (inclusive of Britain and Japan) and periphery formations generate the combined and uneven development that further exacerbate income disparities.¹⁶

Teacher-pupil motifs

Most importantly, however, Ono's implicit refutation of past 'arrogance and possessiveness' (181) - what I read as an acknowledgement that he was both imitative *and* culpable in his treatment of Kuroda - comes only after the recounting of Matsuda's recruitment efforts in the following key passage:

Listen Ono, Japan is no longer a backward country of peasant farmers. We are now a mighty nation capable of matching any of the Western nations. In the Asian hemisphere, Japan stands like a giant amidst cripples and dwarf... It's time for us to forge an empire as powerful and wealthy as those of the British and the French. We must use our strength to expand abroad (173-74).

In the language of reception aesthetics Matsuda's words construct what we might say a textual 'gap' or 'blank' that invite reader participation.¹⁷ As established above *Artist* teems with the actual and residual hold of authority figures, and this prompts a 'concretization'¹⁸ or actualisation of the absent sensei or authority responsible for the aggressive aggrandisement promulgated by Matsuda here. To the extent that Japan's modern history can be described as 'a Faustian drive to outsmart the West at its own game' this passage offers, therefore, a frisson of recognition that is cognate with the episode where Ono tells Enchi that it is good to 'mimic' teachers and develop 'in good time' one's 'own ideas and techniques' (111).

For the metropolitan readers who form the bulk of Ishiguro's initial readership it is with this passage, I contend, that *Artist* turns from the story of the putative Other into the story of the Self: the implied reader it constructs changes from one who knows the city's landmarks(7, 27, 132) into one faced, so to speak, with a parable of modern imperialist

aggression. In Bakhtinian terms Matsuda's speech is double-voiced because embedded within it is not only the language of Japanese militarism but also the Social-Darwinist discourse or Whiggish universalism underwriting EuroAmerican expansionism, which is to say the triumphalist assignation of modernity that simultaneously designates the Other as the pre-history of the self through terms such as 'dwarfs' and 'cripples', hence legitimising colonialism as beneficent tutelage. What is telling in this respect is that it is only after registering through Matsuda this notion of a shared historical trajectory that Ishiguro moves on to the ransacking of Kuroda's home by the state security system (181-84).

Summer After the War

Perhaps because the short-story form requires greater metonymic focus, an intimation of this imitative-but-culpable motif can be gleaned in the Ishiguro story, 'The Summer After the War', which is also a precursor to *Artist*.¹⁹ Just as *A Family Supper* helps elucidate *Pale View*, 'Summer' incorporates, I suggest, the expanded historical perspective sought by *Artist*.

Told from the point of view of a grown-up recalling a childhood summer spent with his grandfather, 'Summer' presents a young Japanese boy delving into things the adults of the household would prefer to keep buried. At one point, for instance, he observes that, 'I thought Oji was a famous painter', and then asks pointedly, 'where are his paintings?' (123) One day the grandfather receives a visit from one of his

'most brilliant pupils' (127). In the manner of Shintaro asking Ono to dissimulate on his behalf, the visitor asks the grandfather to testify to an unspecified committee to help resuscitate his career. 'Don't you remember, Sensei?' he prompts in reference to their allegedly divergent views at the time of Japan's 'China campaign', 'I said that it was no business of ours to employ our talents like that' (128). Like Ono, however, the grandfather refuses to help, insisting that since the pupil 'benefited much' from his 'name' while it was 'revered' he should 'face up' to the ignominy 'now [that] the world has a different opinion of me' (129).

The young boy has been playing in a tellingly-labeled 'Western-style room' at the top of the house - the only one furnished in a non-Japanese manner - when something in the 'tone' of the discussion draws him out to the balcony where he overhears the heated exchange between teacher and ex-pupil (128). Later, he repeatedly presses a servant girl to comment on whether there was anything wrong with the 'China campaign'; the girl replies lamely that 'war was not a good thing, everyone knew that now' (131). And, significantly, it is in that 'Western room' (133) then that the two later discover by accident one of the grandfather's propaganda pieces, inscribed with the characters 'Japan must go forward' (*ibid.*). The grandfather thereafter suffers a stroke.

What I am suggesting then is that the proliferation of apprentice relations in *Artist* is no accident. Their proliferation allow Ishiguro to structure through Matsuda's words above a frisson of recognition that in

turn spotlights historical commonalities. This explains why it is not just Ono who is imbricated in a weave of pedagogical relationships but many of the other characters in the novel as well. Indeed teacher-pupil motifs saturate the text and run the gamut from: pupils who are charged at some stage with disloyalty (Shintaro, Sasaki, Ono, Kuroda); pupils who progress to become teachers (Ono, Kuroda, Shintaro, Nakahara); pupils who disturb Ono's conscience (Kuroda, Enchi, Mitsuo), to those whose vocational longevity challenge his sense of self-esteem (Shintaro, Nakahara, Kuroda). Other variations on the theme include Ono's attempts to teach Ichiro to draw and also to drink sake, both of which are notable failures (31-32, 187-89); his earlier success in teaching Kenji how to drink alcohol, with the implication that the son imbibes a martial spirit through the father (153), and also the idiot-boy who is socialised into singing patriotic songs to earn his keep (58-60).

Finally, the apprentice relation which acts as the archetype for others - what Mike Petry calls the novel's 'primary scene' (69) - is the failed attempts by Ono's father to initiate Ono into the world of business, an exercise which produces his enduring antipathy to commerce. An indication of the novel's concern with underscoring Japan's emulation of modern imperialist aggrandisement can be gleaned, therefore, from the extent to which apprenticeship or tutelage motifs saturate the novel. From this perspective we might add that Ono's so-called confession is positioned in the middle of the book so that it does not distract us from the rhetorical force of Matsuda's words.

Mori-san Revisited

If we return to Ono's Mori-san sojourn with the above in mind it emerges that this question of modeled behaviour is replicated in the aesthetic arena as well. Ono tells us that 'the modern Utamaro' was a sobriquet frequently applied to Mori-san because he was trying to 'modernise' the legacy associated with the Tokugawa painter and printmaker (140): although Mori-san uses 'traditional device(s)' his work is 'full of European influence' (141); he abandons the use of the 'traditional dark outline to define his shapes' in favour of the 'the Western use of blocks of colour, with light and shade, to create a three-dimensional appearance' (*ibid.*), and just to press the point home the text reiterates that Mori-san 'had taken his cue from the Europeans in what was his most central concern: the use of subdued colours (*ibid.*)'.

What Ono crucially retains *and* strengthens when he starts producing propagandist artworks is in fact this Europe-initiated use of 'colour'. The piece for which he retains a recidivist affection in the narrative present - and which he imagines an implied interlocutor as being possibly 'acquainted with' because 'as a print in the thirties [it] achieved a certain fame and influence' (168) - is titled 'Eyes to the Horizon', and this piece we are told had received fulsome praise precisely because of its 'powerful use of colour' (169).

In this respect the repetition and linking of the terms 'colour' and 'European', the image of Mori-san 'taking his cue' from a greater authority, the 'modern Utamaro' coinage, and, most suggestively, the progress from 'subdued' to 'powerful' colour-use urges we might say the drawing of a link between private and public. Given that that there is elsewhere an isomorphism between the two we can, therefore, read in Ono's artistic development an analogue of the aforementioned 'Faustian drive' - which is to say the way that Japan tried to make up for its late-developing status through the seizure of colonies in China and Korea. Behind that concatenation of art and aggrandisement lies Ono's dim recognition that he had been *both* imitative and culpable. And this is also how both planks of Benedict's double-metaphor are given a temporal dimension and denaturalised.

Paradise Lost

At the very least then the strong parallels between Ono's artistic development and Japan's attempt to improve on the expansionist projects of the Western metropolitan formations should radically problematise any depiction of his Mori-san sojourn as a kind of prelapsarian Eden or golden age unencumbered by worldly concerns. While such yearnings are understandable - as George Steiner notes 'the myth of the Fall [from paradise] runs stronger than any particular religion'²⁰ - they threaten to buttress the Orientalism excoriated by Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto when they criticise the way 'narrow

ethnocentric visions of Western industrial society in general and romantic notions of what has been lost to materialism in the process of industrialization interact to create in our minds images of something traditional we want Japanese society to have been in the past or to be now and in the future'.²¹ And, moreover, any prelapsarian reading of *Artist* is problematised by Ono's explicit disavowal of 'nostalgia' in the novel's ending (206).

Yet, and despite the explicit references to Mori-san's attempt to modernise his art form according to 'Western' precepts (141), prelapsarian claims feature in many commentaries on *Artist*. In a review of the novel, for example, Anne Chisholm states that:

One would like to think...that it is always the Floating World, the world of love, beauty and art, that endures, and that the 'real' world of action, of politics and war, turns out to be treacherous and temporary. But the Floating World, in Japan as elsewhere, is always under threat; the old man's longings for his past become a universal lament for lost worlds.²²

Brian Shaffer in turn describes the Mori-san establishment as an example of the 'stereotypically bohemian world of the postromantic artist cut off from an inhospitable, materialistic, aesthetically shallow, mainstream society'; in breaking from the school 'it is precisely the "real world" in

general, and Japanese economic and military aspirations in particular, that Ono hopes to shape and reflect' (52-3). Wendy Brandmark suggests that the 'central irony' of the work is that Ono 'rejected "the art of the floating world" as too ephemeral', only to discover after the war that the political ideals through which he sought intranscience 'were indeed transitory'.²³ And likewise Norman Page is struck by Ono's turn to 'the world of events' when he leaves Mori-san's patronage.²⁴

Art versus life

What these commentators overlook, however, is the social determinacy and contemporaneity of the paradigm they employ, namely the notion that art is an autonomous sphere divorced from the rest of daily lived experience and privileged over the last. Yet as Herbert Marcuse points out such an 'affirmative' conception of culture is actually a creation of the modern epoch, for culture so understood is the realm to which is assimilated 'men's longing for a happier life, for humanity, goodness, joy, truth and solidarity':

Only in art has bourgeois society tolerated its own ideals and taken them seriously as a general demand. What counts as utopia, phantasy, and rebellion in the world of fact is allowed in art. There affirmative culture has displayed the forgotten truths over which 'realism' triumphs

in daily life. The medium of beauty decontaminates truth and sets it apart from the present.²⁵

Marcuse argues, however, that this turn to art is also illusory and momentary: 'the truth of a higher world, of a higher good than material existence, conceals the truth that a better material existence can be created in which such happiness is realized' (121). Art, he adds, is affirmative in the double *and* contradictory sense of tending to affirm a status quo conservatism *while* registering emancipatory energies. And moreover its historical transformation into a sphere of human activity detached from the praxis of life - which was not the way, for example, that the classical and medieval life-worlds understood 'art' - is what engenders this duality:

Given the isolation of lone individuals, there is no one in whom one's own happiness can be preserved after the moment passes, no one who is not subject to the same isolation. Ephemerality which does not leave behind solidarity among the survivors must be externalized in order to become at all bearable...In the happiness it proffers, affirmative culture externalizes the beautiful moment; it immortalizes the ephemeral (118).

Something of this socially-conditioned *weltanschauung* is at work we might say when commentators focus uncritically on the exotic image

of Japanese culture celebrating the beauty of the ephemeral, for here it seems the Mori-san establishment exemplifies the 'forgotten truths' of community, solidarity, of work that does not alienate, and of sensuality. The fact that the sojourn is followed by war intensifies the bifurcation: on one side the idea that art is a higher truth, on the other the fallenness of the world. Yet as many have pointed out the separation of art from the life praxis of society is a historical and not a timeless phenomenon.

Attention to the novel demonstrates moreover that the libidinally-charged Japan rendered by commentators above has long been rent asunder. In chronological terms Ono's Takeda sojourn comes *before* Mori-san, but the former is chiefly notable for selling kitsch to foreigners. As such Ono's Takeda stint already signals, I would venture, Japan's incorporation into modern capitalist sociality with no values resisting commensurability with exchange value. Together with the 'European influences' saturating Mori-san's work, the Takeda 'stage' might be read, therefore, as the novel's problematisation - in temporal and logical terms - of any Eden-inflected affirmation of authenticity: they contest in the process the idea that Japan is the West's polar or metaphysical opposite. Such details suggest indeed an anticipation that readers will bring to the novel exoticist demands, as well as a textual desire to thwart them.

Japanese Modernity

But even if we stick to purely ‘aesthetic’ concerns the privileging of art as a special instantiation of *tradition* is also countermanaged by extant artistic developments, as Karatani Kojin’s work allows us to see. In the *specific* sphere of Japanese painting, for example, Karatani observes that the so-called ‘discovery’ of traditional landscape painting came only *after* Japan was introduced to Western landscape paintings.²⁶ He observes that the term ‘*sansuiga*’ (literally ‘mountain-water pictures’ or ‘landscape paintings’) was used during the Meiji era to denote painting of natural scenes done in traditional styles, but during the period in which they actually emerged they were called ‘*shiki-e*’ or ‘seasonal paintings’ (18). The new term was actually coined by one Ernest Fenollosa, a Spanish-American critic, ‘who played a leading role in Japan’s modernization during the Meiji period’, and thus the term itself develops from what Karatani considers a ‘disjuncture between Japanese culture and modern Western consciousness’ (*ibid.*). For Karatani the alienation of the exterior world (which is also an extreme interiorisation of the self) that enabled earlier works to be relabeled as *landscape* paintings was an imported and transcultured epistemic practice, for traditional *shiki-e* works were actually ‘not concerned with the relationship between the individual and “things”’ (20). According to Karatani they followed instead a ‘transcendental metaphysical “model”’ (*ibid.*) that had more in common with medieval European paintings: ‘in the former, the transcendental place is an ideal realm to which the enlightened sages awakened; in the latter, it is the realm of Scripture and the divine’ (21). ‘For a brush painter to depict a pine grove meant to depict the concept (that which is signified

by) "pine grove", not an existing pine grove' (27). And in fact, Karatani argues, this transcendental model had to be overturned and suppressed before landscape could be 'discovered'.

Karatani argues as such that the Japanese 'discovery' of landscape painting in the 1890s replicates the turn in Western culture from medieval to modern landscape painting. He follows the Dutch psychiatrist Jan Hendrik Van den Berg in interpreting Da Vinci's Mona Lisa as a nascent form of the latter. The celebrated scene in the picture's background is:

The first landscape to be depicted as such because it was a landscape. It is a pure landscape, not simply a backdrop for human action. Here we have a 'nature' unknown to the medieval mind, an external nature sufficient to itself, and from which human elements have been excluded as a matter of principle. It was the strangest landscape that could be seen from human eyes (28).

In this respect modern perspective emerges after - and is cognate with - what Karatani calls the 'perspectival inversion' of Cartesian dualism (27), in which the self is alienated from the world. "Landscape" was an inversion of consciousness before it became a representational convention' (23):

The subject of Descartes's 'cogito ergo sum' is confined, ineluctably, within the schema established by the conventions of perspective. It was in precisely the same period that the 'object' of thought came to be conceived of as a homogeneous, scientifically measurable entity - that is, as an extension of the principles of perspective. All of these developments paralleled the emergence of 'background' as a dehumanized 'landscape' in the Mona Lisa...[And thus this suggests that Meiji Japan] lived through the discovery of 'landscape'. We Japanese witnessed with our own eyes and within a limited period of time the occurrence in condensed form of a process which, because it had extended over many centuries, had been repressed from memory in the West (35-36).

I am not suggesting by these remarks that *Artist* takes pains to portray extant artistic developments. I make them rather to point out the depredations involved when its Utamaro or Floating World references are read for Utopian or timeless-Japan valences, for effectively what happens is that Japanese 'culture' becomes a windowless monad the better to stoke nostalgia.

Dialectical shock

If we return to my argument concerning the proliferation of teacher-pupil motifs, it would seem that the frisson of recognition sought by *Artist* parallels what Fredric Jameson makes of Karatani's arguments above, when he expresses in a foreword to his book what he feels is its 'claims on us':

It is not even an 'alternate history' which is offered us by this...analysis of the institutions of the modern self, writing, literature and scientific objectivity that were constructed and imposed by the Meiji Revolution. Rather, it is as though that great laboratory experiment which was the modernization of Japan allows us to see the features of our own development in slow motion.²⁷

This narrative move might be compared then with what Jameson in another context calls a 'dialectical self-consciousness' or 'shock' that enables us to hear the 'shifting of the world's gears'.²⁸ But this is precisely where a reading of *Artist* as a paean for 'lost worlds' forgets that Japan's modern history, as Jameson puts it, is not even an 'alternate history'. Following the direction of his argument I suggest, therefore, that *Artist* be read as a replication of the 'features' of advanced capitalist development in, as it were, 'slow motion'. It locates Japanese expansionism not in *sui generis* terms, but as an instance of modern imperialist aggression, for as Karatani implies above developments in the realm of art already betoken the adoption of modern forms of rationality, including the *instrumental*

*rationality*²⁹ constituting the disenchantment and alienation of the natural world.

Historical gaps

of
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So far I have argued that *Artist* directs the bulk of its connotative energies towards the Whiggish tone of Chishu Matsuda's efforts to persuade Ono to join his organisation: the proliferation and problematic of emulatory behaviour in *Artist* is designed to induce metropolitan readers into recognising that Japanese expansionism is at the same time the story of the Self. Again, it bears repeating, this narrative disposition does not appear to be aimed at excusing Japanese aggrandisement; rather it is designed to counter the allochrony in which the Japanese social formation is placed. Hence I argue, Ishiguro counters Manichean oppositions by emphasising historical commonalities.

A focus on apprenticeship motifs and emulatory behaviour is not, however, without its problems. Pointing to the depiction of Shintaro near the beginning of *Artist*, for example, Megumi Arai complaints that the book features 'bowing, smiling and giggling characters' whose 'excessive courtesy and modesty are almost a parody of the Japanese as seen through Western eyes'. In this respect 'the reader' is 'never certain whether he is looking at Ishiguro's picture of Japan itself or at his idea of Japan as seen through Westernized eyes'.³⁰

But given Arai's protestations a more scrupulous reading of *Artist* might hold it implicated in the insidiously essentialist tone of the following remarks, which come at the end of a *New York Times* book review:

True to a traditional Oriental delicacy and circumspection, the characters [in *Artist*] are forever emitting small laughs, saying 'indeed', while essentially disagreeing. As the author never fails to reveal their true intentions, they seem no more 'inscrutable' than any of us. The tensions stay tight. And this is what makes Mr. Ishiguro not only a good writer but also a wonderful novelist.³¹

The telling feature here is how a putative criticism of the commonplace 'inscrutable' appellation to things Oriental actually serves to sustain the notion of a thoroughgoing mendacity which Ishiguro, because of his insider status, helps uncover for us. Yet no reference is made in the review to any specific episode supporting the writer's claim that characters in *Artist* don't talk straight because they are trying to put one up over their interlocutors.

Nevertheless, I would contend, the critical nub we are facing is less the veracity of 'Japanese' portrayals undertaken in the novel - whether character or locale - than the question of how this turn to the motifs of apprenticeship and conformism arises. To propose a transcendental argument the more pertinent question, I think, is the

condition of possibility of this seemingly paradoxical recourse to what are arguably culturalist motifs in the service of revisionary-ethnographic ends. And here I would venture it is the gaps and lacunas in our dominant understanding of the post-war settlement that is at issue. Put in another way it is the lack of critical engagement in metropolitan culture with the era interpellated by the novel, a feeling that events and issues are basically settled, that forces the issue, explaining in turn the recourse to apprenticeship motifs to counter Manichean oppositions.

If we move on to the conditions of possibility delimiting such textual choices these might be said then to include what Carol Gluck rightly calls a ‘neat moral calculus’ in the way the second world war is customarily construed on both sides of the Pacific.³² More specifically, I would contend, the move incorporates what historians call the ‘reverse course’ in occupation policies - usually traced to 1st February 1947 when Douglas MacArthur knocked the wind out of the labour movement by banning the planned general strike³³ - when occupation authorities undertook ‘what the Japanese left regarded as a complete rollback of the earlier occupation reforms, from de-democratization to de-purging, all in the name of the economic reconstruction of Japan into a “bulwark against communism in East Asia”’.³⁴

In this regard a valuable indication of the strategic considerations underwriting that rollback, which is to say when the United States began ‘rearming’ Japan as ‘a subordinate Cold War partner in cooperation with

the less liberal elements of [its] society',³⁵ is provided by Bruce Cumings. In an article discussing 'Japan's Position in the World System' Cumings maintains that the 'reverse course' in Japan was initiated as part of 'global policy' undertaken during the Truman presidency.³⁶ He credits the development to George Kennan, one of the architects of the Cold War, highlighting in particular Kennan's 'realpolitik conception of *national industry*'. According to Cumings Kennan worked from the basis that 'an advanced industrial base was essential to war-making capacity', observed that 'we had four such economies to their one' and drew the conclusion, therefore, that 'things should be kept that way'. In other words 'containment [of international socialism] meant defending the United States, England, Western Europe, and Japan, but not worrying about every brushfire war or revolution in the pre-industrial underbelly' (Cumings, 39).

In a separate essay on the recent Asian financial crisis Cumings again throws important light on the matter when he notes that while South Korea and Japan were 'sheltered economies' that had been 'indulged in their neo-mercantilism and posted as engines of economic growth, because of the great value they had in the global struggle with communism', the issue of their 'fit' with 'a new era of free markets and neoliberalism [now] comes to the fore' because 'this struggle is over'. It is on this basis, therefore, that Cumings reads the events immediately preceding and succeeding the financial crisis as America's 'attempt to bring down the curtain on "late" development of the Japanese-Korean

type'.³⁷ But this means also that the our present historical juncture - the post-Cold War era in which the so-called First World (inclusive of mainstream Japan) claims victory; widespread support for a neoliberal orthodoxy and the mantra of free markets - is intimately imbricated with the events interpellated in *Artist*.

In the rest of the chapter as such I would like to set out how the textual choices enacted in *Artist* derive from the limitations set up by popular assumptions of the second world war settlement. I present some responses to *Artist* that I contend illustrate these obfuscatory dimensions. In a necessarily lengthy presentation of historical research on the period I show how these responses simplify or reduce complex developments, demonstrating a larger dispensation (discernible in both Japan and the metropolitan 'West') to avoid the matter or to consider it closed. I contrast such positions with incidents in *Artist* that implicitly target some of the gaps papered over by the foreclosure of critical engagement. And, finally, I suggest that the use of apprentice motifs in the novel is a textual solution accommodating these wider discursive restrictions.

First of all an indication of the assumptions underpinning many metropolitan conceptions of the Pacific conflagration can be seen in the following responses to *Artist*, which I present before discussing in detail. Perhaps the most egregiously questionable is the aside by Cynthia F. Wong, who writes in her study of Ishiguro's fiction that Ono's career

culminates in him ‘being awarded the prestigious Shigeta Foundation Award in 1938, some years before the Second World War [sic] and in the midst of rising nationalist feeling’.³⁸

Another response which raises the question of the post-war settlement in the public mind is that proffered by McLeod, some of whose claims I have already discussed above. What is pertinent here is that to buttress his business warrior thesis, McLeod claims, additionally, that *Artist* questions ‘the extent to which the *fundamental* changes to Japan during the American occupation really eradicated all elements of the Japanese nationalism at a height during the 1930s’.³⁹ ‘Although the older Japan of the 1930s was in one respect forced to finish by defeat, its aims’, he maintains, ‘are being achieved by other means and are far from finished’.⁴⁰

Yet another illuminating response comes from Petry, who garners support for his argument by citing Ishiguro’s unease, expressed in a television interview, with the way his so-called Japanese novels are often singled out as suppliers of cultural or historical insight. Petry contends as a result that critical analysis of *Artist* should ‘confidently leave out’ any consideration of ‘the social and political situation of post-war Japan,...for Ishiguro is plainly not interested in realistic historical representation’ (7).

Despite their obvious differences, however, what links the three responses above, I suggest, is an ossified conception of the Second

World War as well as the post-war settlement. Consciously or otherwise they foreclose engagement with important issues. Petry's stance is arguably the culmination of this line of thought, or an example of it taken to the extreme when he suggests that social reconstruction and contextualisation is entirely extraneous to a consideration of *Artist*, thus proffering it would seem a formalist or idealist alternative. His position intrinsically supports the aestheticist readings of the novel already criticised above.

Neat Moral Calculus

With regards to Wong's aside my point, however, is not just that periodising the start of the second world war in the same breath as Pearl Harbour is American-centric, but how in stark contrast to *Artist* this conceptualisation erases the continental dimensions of the conflict. The imbrication of the last with the whole question of the post-war settlement is no doubt a contested and complex matter. But nevertheless, I would suggest, an attentiveness to the parameters guiding historical research in the area is necessary if we are to do justice to *Artist*. Compare Wong's periodisation, for instance, with what Carol Gluck rightly emphasises when she complaints that 'the old, and still the main, view of the war' in Japan 'is its concern with the Pacific War coupled with an avoidance of the war in China'.⁴¹

This does not mean...that there was no mention of Manchuria, Shanghai, or even Nanking (though there was virtually none of Korea). It means rather that the focus of historical explanation and moral attention did not lie on the continent, where Japan began its Showa aggression in Manchuria in 1931 and was engaged in total war against China from 1937 to 1945. Japanese historians who write insistently of the 'Fifteen-Year War' do so to make precisely this point: that for Japan, World War II did not begin at Pearl Harbor. But the weight of national memory still falls heavily on the Pacific War.⁴²

Given that the allusion in *Artist* to a general 'executed as a war criminal' (22) situates the bulk of its events in the aftermath of the Toyko War Crimes Trial, hence providing the backdrop to Ono's own reflections on his complicitous behaviour, it is also illuminating to find that Gluck deems the tribunal to have constructed a view of history which, because it elided the war in China, helped served politically conservative ends on *both* sides of the Pacific. Thus she correctly contends that this 'so-called War Crimes Tribunal View of history'⁴³ was a *co-production* orchestrated by class elites on both sides. Again and again, 'though for independent reasons', this alliance 'produced the account of the war that became and remained authoritative'.⁴⁴ On the American side specifically Gluck points out that:

In 1945 the immediate resolution of villainy to the militarist leadership and victimhood to the Japanese people was also orchestrated to serve the needs of the Allied occupation. The Allies tried the villains as war criminals in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, purposely excluding the emperor at the behest of the United States, which based its case for postwar reform on the fable that the Japanese people (and their emperor) had been victims of the militarist and could now, with guidance, be turned to the true path of democracy...General Douglas MacArthur also altered the wartime past by changing the name of the conflict from the Greater East Asia War to the Pacific War, thereby eliminating the war in China, which had been the reason for Pearl Harbor in the first place. Japanese aggression in China and colonialism in Korea were replaced by a neat moral calculus where the attack on Pearl Harbor was balanced by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki...A remarkable amnesia of empire occurred immediately.⁴⁵

Reverse Course

But if Gluck is right, it is also important for us to apprehend how this co-production arose from and was coterminous with the above-mentioned reverse course. An appreciation of the main contours of that

reversal becomes necessary to a critical interpretation of *Artist*, firstly because it problematises the assumptions underwriting the claims made by McLeod, and secondly because it is germane to the textual choices *enacted* in the novel. And again to do justice to the complexity of the issues a lengthy preview is, I think, necessary. With regards to Gluck's co-production claim, for instance, John Dower points out helpfully that:

Once the Cold War intensified and U.S. Occupation priorities turned from reform to economic reconstruction, the Japanese technocrats and their American counterparts found common cause in antileftist activities such as the McCarthyist 'Red purges' of 1949 and 1950, which resulted in the firing of over 20,000 employees in the public and private sectors. Many of the former Home Ministry officials who were depurged near the end of the Occupation quickly rose to important and conspicuously reactionary 'social control' positions under the conservative Liberal Democratic Party.⁴⁶

While Rikki Kersten differs slightly in her conception of what the cited 'Red Purge' entailed, her remarks also allow an expanded understanding of the rollback, how 'instead of forcing change on to a reluctant government, the American authorities began to restrict changes they themselves had inaugurated':⁴⁷

Initiated by occupation authorities, [the reverse course] acquired momentum with the cooperation of successive conservative Japanese administrations...The landmarks of this Cold War-inspired reaction were: the denial of the right to strike to public servants; the Red Purge of 1950-52 when over 11,000 public servants were dismissed and labour unions were disbanded; the formation of the National Police Reserve in July 1950; the reversal of the Anti-Trust legislation in the previous year; and other legislation enacted by a newly independent Japan in the areas of education, defence and attempts at constitutional revision.⁴⁸

Pertinent to an understanding of this co-production as well is Dower's argument in a more recent book examining specifically the immediate postwar era. Discussing, in particular, the case of one Saeki Jinazaburo, a poet who expressed in his writing what appears to be genuine outrage at the war crimes unveiled at the Tokyo trials, Dower comments tellingly that:

His was one of the rare voices; and in the years that followed, as the Cold War intensified and the occupiers came to identify newly communist China as the archenemy, it became an integral part of American policy itself to discourage recollection of Japan's atrocities. These

sensitive responses to revelation of the hands-on horrors perpetuated by the emperor's men, fragile and fragmented to begin with, never developed into a truly widespread popular acknowledgement of Japan as victimizer rather than victim.⁴⁹

What I have summarised above is only a bare outline of an incompletely assessed and *contested* period.⁵⁰ But it should be enough to show that the critical responses cited above are not just in danger of simplifying complex developments but also of uncritically reproducing the official or dominant narratives that play a key part in the shaping of our current historical conjunction. Pace Petry, therefore, I would say the era interpellated by the novel is not divorced from ours but constituent to the entire way in which the world system is arranged. To construe a reductive historical framework without acknowledging the global reach of Cold War containment puts us in grave danger of eliding the convergence of interests between class elites that helped resuscitate a new conservative hegemony in Japan, in the process producing an account of the war that suited both sides and which has largely remained authoritative. It elides the way the 'past' is in some measure a discursive construct of the present, or rather, of dominant interests; it papers over the disjunction between official and progressive interpreters of the past, and also of the 'neat moral calculus' which Gluck inveighs against.

Moreover my point is not just that the developments outlined above fit better the consensus paradigm guiding historical research on Japan. As Ann Waswo tells us the last has now switched over to one emphasising the ‘continuities’ between 1920s and 1930s Japan, ‘and by extension the links between the 1930s and the post-war era’.⁵¹ In so doing it displaces an ‘older paradigm, crystallized in the early 1960s’, that has ‘come under fire in the past fifteen years or so, both in Japan and in the West’.⁵² To the extent that this new paradigm views the relation between 1930s and post-war Japan in evolutionary rather than aberrational terms, it, therefore, underpins the historical framework - the fact of a renewed conservative hegemony - deployed, I will argue, in *Artist.*

But more than that, I think, an enlarged historical perspective fits the entire direction of post-war developments. If mainstream Japan’s cognisance of its status as victimizer rather victim (as previously preserved by radical intellectuals) has diminished because of the veil thrown over the past by the middle-class prosperity attained in the seventies and eighties; if that enveloping fog also obscures the social upheavals concentrated in the yearly protests against security arrangements yoking Japan to the United States during the Cold War; and if that is what the progressive historians whom Gluck allude to try to redress with their talk of a ‘fifteen year war’, then it is also relevant that as Andrew Gordon observes ‘conservative political trends in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s [also] echoed developments in much of Western

Europe and North America'. For as Gordon correctly puts it this was a period when 'progressive movements declined and conservatism and traditionalism revived not just in [so to speak] a stubbornly traditionalistic Japan, but [also] all around the world'.⁵³ And in fact this development is related, as my next chapter will argue, with the critique of Thatcherite conservatism launched in *The Remains Of The Day* (1989).

Committee of Unpatriotic Activities

In this context it becomes significant, therefore, that there are scattered but telling allusions to the reverse course in *Artist*, and also to the institutional and political continuity between pre and post-war Japan, which an enlarged historical framework helps to sensitise us to. This is evident, for instance, when Suichi remonstrates bitterly about the 'plenty of men already back in positions they held during the war', some of whom are 'no better than war criminals' (56):

Those who sent the likes of Kenji to die...where are they today? They're carrying on with their lives, much the same as ever...Brave young men die for stupid causes, and the real culprits are still with us today (58).

Apart from Suichi's protestations, the question of institutional and political continuity is also raised when Shintaro expresses naive support for the aforementioned general. Shintaro causes consternation at the bar

he patronises with Ono when he proclaims his respect for the man and then asks about his whereabouts. He fails to comprehend the latter's 'fate' when it is explained to him, thinking that the proprietress is joking about the execution (22-23), and thus a link is established between Shintaro and an idiot-boy who, unappreciative of post-war changes, is beaten up for singing patriotic songs (59-61).

Ono's subsequent comments about the idiot-boy raises as such the question of institutional and political continuity, for as he observes those who beat the boy up were 'in all likelihood...the same people' whose praise had reinforced his [pro-militarist] behaviour in the past (61). True to Ono's self-exculpatory proclivity there is a hint here of an attempt to shift the blame to the wider community but that is precisely the point, for despite himself, Ono's language does raise the crucial question of moral complicity. And again this is underlined when Ono mentions that aside from those who praised the idiot-boy there were others as well who gave him food and money (*ibid*).

I mentioned earlier the episode where Enchi reproaches Ono, and it is significant also that he condemns what he calls 'real traitors' to the country, 'many' of whom 'are still walking free' (114). Given these allusions it is, therefore, relevant to observe that, as a dictionary on modern Japanese history tells us, of an estimated 200,000 persons active during the war who were purged in its immediate aftermath,

unspecified ‘thousands’ of them ‘rapidly returned to public activity’ following the ‘reverse course’.⁵⁴

What sustains our interpretive framework of a Cold War-inspired reaction is also the episode near the end of the novel where Kuroda’s arrest is recounted. In a sense the whole of Ono’s garrulous narration is the tracing of a continually diverted course towards this key episode. Yet tellingly when he reaches it his language recalls contemporaneous events in America. Ono’s proclamation that he is an ‘official adviser to the Committee of Unpatriotic Activities’ (182) recalls the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee as well as the witch hunts launched by Joseph McCarthy.⁵⁵ In so far as the reverse course was temporally and ideologically cognate with these developments they underpin Dower’s use of the adjective McCarthyite to describe the aforementioned Red Purges. And indeed, as Dower tells us, an effort was actually made under the aegis of Occupation authorities to initiate an ‘un-Japanese activities’ committee modeled after the ‘Un-American’ one.⁵⁶ Although eventually nothing came of that effort, they remind us again of the class alliance responsible for the renewed conservative hegemony.

In addition, an awareness of the retrograde nature of the latter part of the Occupation also sensitises us to the discussion at the *miai* about ‘demonstrations in the city centre’, for significantly it is the latter that actually triggers Ono’s confession (119). To an extent we could say *Artist* gently registers the heavy domestic opposition to political developments,

just as it registers the earlier achievements of the Occupation when a new found respect for 'individual rights' was inculcated (185).

Finally, I think, the novel's numerous references to combatant experiences in China also help to question the way dominant narratives efface the continental dimensions of the conflict. I have already mentioned Suichi's anger about the lives lost in Manchuria (56-8). But, additionally, we may cite the references to posters and manifestoes produced for the 'China crisis' campaign (102-04, 199). Like the 'China campaign' paintings discovered in the 'Western room' in 'Summer' (128,133), these references function we might say as the return of the repressed. They highlight the protracted nature of the fighting in Japan's continental theatre, and also the military morass it developed into, thence leading to Pearl Harbour.

Tokyo War Crimes Trial

In this context it is useful for us to consider for a moment the sole dissenting judgement tendered at the war crimes trial, which is to say the minority judgement put forward by Radhabinod Pal, the Indian judge on the tribunal. Again, Dower provides in his study certain illuminating background details, a lengthy citation from which is necessary:

The tribunal essentially resolved the contradiction between the world of colonialism and imperialism and the righteous

ideals of crimes against peace and humanity by ignoring it...It remained for Justice Pal, however, to highlight the double standards that underlay the trial. 'It would be pertinent to recall to our memory that the majority of the interests claimed by the Western Prosecuting Powers in the Eastern Hemisphere, including China,' he observed in speaking of Japan's takeover of Manchuria, 'were acquired by such aggressive methods' as the Japanese were accused of employing. He also commented, with no little sarcasm, on the ways in which the positive rhetoric of imperialism and colonialism of the Europeans and Americans became transmogrified when associated with Japan: 'As a program of aggrandizement of a nation we do not like, we may deny to it the terms like "manifest destiny", "the protection of vital interests", "national honour" or a term coined on the footing of "the white man's burden", and may give it the name of "aggressive aggrandizement" pure and simple'. The Indian justice took palpable pleasure in suggesting the hypocrisy of the victor's case. He quoted England's prestigious Royal Institute of International Affairs at some length, for example, on how the Japanese had followed the precedents of European imperialism, sometimes 'with almost pedantic exactitude'. Similarly, in discussing the 'Amau Doctrine' of 1934, in which Japan had enunciated its special rights and interests in China, Pal

observed that this definition of national interest ‘finds obvious precedent in the conduct of the United States in pursuance of the Monroe Doctrine’.⁵⁷

To the extent that Matsuda’s words in the passage quoted earlier represented Japan’s effort to put in place an East Asian version of the Monroe doctrine the reference to ‘pedantic exactitude’ at the policy level parallels what *Artist* seeks when it portrays a social space suffused with mimicry and doctrinaire authority. Without justifying Japan’s brute militarism the foregoing should make clear that an enlarged framework emphasising historical commonalities makes for a more nuanced account of the events interpellated by the novel.

Textual solution

My point, however, is not that *Artist* sets out to register *tout court* complex developments, except in so far as its allusions to ‘Manchuria’ and ‘China’ contest a general tendency to efface or downplay the continental dimensions of the conflagration. My contention rather is that Ishiguro starts from the lack of appreciation and/or engagement in metropolitan culture with the developments whose broad contours I have outlined, that is to say Japan’s attempt to improve on the Western design of domination and exploitation, the shared expansionist trajectories, the fact that the Occupation period was not an entirely unvarnished or benign operation in the initiation of a beneficent democratic revolution, and finally

the class alliance responsible for the return of the 'old guard' and a renewed conservative hegemony.

The proffered emulative-but-culpable thesis is, therefore, a *textual* solution accommodating this lack. Hampered by ossified positions Ishiguro creates instead a social space suffused with mimicry, oppression and rebellious students who go on to replicate oppression. By inviting readers to ponder the isomorphism between private and public the rhetorical structure of *Artist* challenges as such the commonplace culturalist tropes cathected around the referent 'Japan Inc'.

Such a reading allows us in turn to account for the radical indeterminacy introduced near the end of the novel, when the question whether Ono was involved in the first place in collaborationist work is surprisingly raised. The mystery can be traced to Setsuko's counsel that Ono should take some 'precautionary steps' (49) to ensure that her sister's nuptial arrangements go well, which Ono takes to mean that he should ask Matsuda to dissimulate on his behalf. But in a subsequent conversation near the end of the novel Setsuko tells Ono that everyone was surprised at his confession during the *miai*, the implication being that he had overstated his pre-war influence (191). She also denies having advised him to take any 'precautionary steps' over Noriko's marriage (*ibid.*). Charles Sarvan usefully puts the question thus:

Is Setsuko, in denying that her father had ever been well-known and influential, being honest or is she acting protectively, fearing Ono would feel obliged to follow Naguchi's example and also commit suicide by way of apology and atonement? [Naguchi being a writer of patriotic songs who taken his life in such a fashion] This, in turn, would suggest that Ono had indeed won recognition and respect. But did the [first] conversation, as reported, actually take place? Or is this all Ono's subtle way of claiming a past fame and importance which, in fact, he had never enjoyed?⁵⁸

Echoing Sarvan's bewilderment, Michael Wood also asks whether Ono's claims to [pre-war] influence and stature is 'a sort of folie de grandeur': 'Is he hiding from his past or inflating it?'⁵⁹

These questions are pertinent to a consideration of the novel. But rather than accept that Setsuko's remarks throw into doubt the entire course of events narrated so far I would point to the lack of metropolitan engagement with the post-war settlement. It is this lacuna, I think, that prevents a smoother narrative resolution. Because dominant conceptions of the conflagration and settlement lack an apprehension of Japanese aggrandisement along the lines of a shared historical trajectory, Ono's first-person narration is, therefore, necessarily aporetic: it betrays the gaps inherent in our constructions of the past. Put simply, external

conditions do not allow a clear cut textual resolution, and that is why the question of radical indeterminacy surfaces right at the end of the book.

In this respect it is important to stress as well that Setsuko's problematising of Ono's narrative comes only *after* the key passage where Chishu Matsuda makes his Social Darwinist proclamations. Radical indeterminacy arises we might say because Matsuda's words have just underscored Ono's role as a figure for Japan's emulative and culpable behaviour, which is what his career exemplifies. Such a function requires that Ono's self-recognition of his misdeeds be put in a limited or murky fashion so that the novel's rhetorical and revisionary-ethnographic ends are not overshadowed by a centripetal, protagonist-centred reading of the novel. For Setsuko to further complicate the issue raises in even starker fashion, therefore, the question of blame and responsibility.

Conclusion

Finally, what sustains my general argument, I suggest, is that the same problematic surfaces in a different form in *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and *The Remains of the Day* (1989). In my chapter on the former I will be arguing that the episode where the protagonist - an English boy - joins his Japanese neighbour to steal from the room of a Chinese manservant is an allegory of shared expansionist trajectories, of the common 'interests' in the 'Eastern hemisphere' which Pal alludes to above. The protagonist subsequently becomes a detective whose biggest

case is the mystery of his parents' disappearance. As such what gets transferred over from *Artist* it would appear is the social custom of hiring detectives to establish a prospective partner's family history in order to ensure a good match, an item which *When We Were Orphans* develops in much more considered fashion.

In addition, I will be arguing in the next chapter that the parallels between *Artist* and *The Remains of the Day* (1989) are on one level an attempt to counter stubborn binarisms, hence extending the anti-Manichean thrust of *Artist*. That Ishiguro returns to this problematic in subsequent work suggests that he comes up against the limits of the deflationary narrative strategy used in *A Family Supper, Pale View* and *Artist*. As mentioned earlier a drawback of this approach is that a deflationary deployment of culturalist tropes is potentially counter-productive. As the review from the *New York Times* above shows such a danger arises, I think, when readers cling tenaciously to exceptionalist or hermetic conceptions of the Japanese social formation, with Ishiguro tagged as native informant reaffirming their projective oppositions and biases. Nevertheless, the upshot of the bathetic narrative strategy deployed in *Artist* is that it challenges our received understanding of the era interpellated by the novel, which means that it also criticises the cultural and historical occlusions of the present.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as *Artist* and cited parenthetically in the text.

² Littlewood, p.101.

³ *The Japanese Tradition*, p. 42.

⁴ Quoted in Carol Gluck and Stephen R. Graubard, eds, *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito* (London: Norton, 1992), p.130.

⁵ See chapter two above.

⁶ James A. Michener, *The Floating World* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), p.30. Richard Lane adds that *ukiyo* later lost its connotations of the ‘transitory world of illusion, to take on hedonistic implications and denote the newly evolved, stylish world of [the Japanese] pleasure [quarter]’. By the time of Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), the Tokugawa painter and printmaker who famously popularised the genre, *ukiyo* had taken on the suffix *e* (meaning ‘pictures’) to form the new compound ‘floating-world pictures’. Richard Lane, *Masters of the Japanese Print* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), p.10.

⁷ Kelman, p.76 (italics added).

⁸ ‘The Historical-Political aspect’, p.187.

⁹ I assume Wood has in mind the idea that Ono should be addressing Kuroda, which he casts in a rhetorical mode: ‘If you say you have no reason to feel any guilt, you’re not bound to be guilty, but you’re not bound to be innocent either. And whom are you saying it to? Whom should you be saying it to?’. See ‘The Discourse of Others’, p.176.

¹⁰ ‘Rewriting History’, p.143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Lehmann, p.178.

¹³ ‘Rewriting History’, pp.143-44.

¹⁴ Such a reading dovetails with Ishiguro's comments in recent interview: 'I wanted *An Artist of the Floating World* to end on a note of Ono thinking, "My life's messed up because I happened along at a certain time in Japanese history." I wanted a certain poignancy to emerge from his sense that a man's life is only so long, while the life of a nation is much longer; that Japan as a nation could actually learn from its mistakes and try again even if Ono couldn't'. See Brian W. Shaffer, 'An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', *Contemporary Literature*, 42, 1 (2001), 1-14 (p.11).

¹⁵ The textual choice here echoes the way *A Family Supper* closes with the paterfamilias saying that 'there are other things beside work'. See chapter two.

¹⁶ In this regard, I follow David Coates in rejecting 'culturalist' explanations of Japan's economic performance and practice. See David Coates, *Models of Capitalism: Growth and Stagnation in the Modern Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp.121-35.

¹⁷ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), passim.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 21, 171-76, 178-79.

¹⁹ 'The Summer After the War', *Granta*, 7 (1983), 119-37. Hereafter abbreviated as 'Summer'. Further references to the story are given in the text.

²⁰ George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Re-definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p.13.

²¹ Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto, *Images of Japanese Society: A Study in the Social Construction of Reality* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1986), p.185.

²² Anne Chisholm, 'Lost Worlds of Pleasure', *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 February 1986, p.162.

²³ Wendy Brandmark, *Contemporary Writers: Kazuo Ishiguro* (London: British Council, 1988).

²⁴ Norman Page, 'Speech, Culture and History in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro', in *Asian Voices in English*, ed. by Mimi Chan and Roy Harris (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1991), pp.161-68 (p.167).

²⁵ Herbert Marcuse, 'The Affirmative Nature of Culture', in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: Allen Lane, 1968), pp.88-133 (p.114). Further references to the essay are given in the text.

²⁶ Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, pp.11-44 passim. Further references to the work are given in the text.

²⁷ Jameson, 'In the Mirror of Alternate Modernities', p.ix (italics added).

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.308, xiii.

²⁹ See Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

³⁰ Megumi Arai, 'Ishiguro's Floating Worlds: Observations on his Vision of Japan and England', *General Education Review*, 22 (1990), 29-34 (p.30). Arai is referring to the depiction of Shintaro on page twenty of *Artist*.

³¹ Kathryn Morton, 'After the War Was Lost', *New York Times Book Review*, 8 June 1986, p.19.

³² Carol Gluck, 'The "End" of the Postwar: Japan at the Turn of the Millennium', *Public Culture*, 10, 1 (1997), 1-23 (p.5).

³³ According to Rikki Kersten, 'this date was subsequently acknowledged by many in Japan as the beginning of the "reverse course". Initiated by the Occupation authorities, it acquired momentum with the cooperation of successive conservative Japanese administrations'. Rikki Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.154.

³⁴ Gluck, 'The "End" of the Postwar', p.6.

³⁵ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p.23.

³⁶ Bruce Cumings, 'Japan's Position in the World System', in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. by Andrew Gordon (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), pp.34-63 (p.37).

³⁷ Bruce Cumings, 'The Korean Crisis and the End of "Late" Development', *New Left Review*, 231 (1998), 43-72 (p.45).

³⁸ Cynthia F. Wong, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p.48.

³⁹ 'Rewriting History', p.144 (italics added).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Carol Gluck, 'The Idea of Showa', in *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, ed. by Carol Gluck and Stephen R. Graubard (London: Norton, 1992), pp.1-26 (p.13).

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.13-14. Showa is the reign name of emperor Hirohito and designates the Japan of 1926 to his death in 1989. A dictionary on modern Japanese history traces the start of 'Showa aggression' to the 1931 'Manchurian incident' when the Japanese field army in Manchuria engineered an explosion on a railway and used it as a pretext to occupy Mukden. Further seizures were followed by the establishment of the puppet 'independent' state of Manchukuo in 1932, China's appeal to the League of Nations and Japan's withdrawal from the League; 'Japan [also] continued to make small advances and clashed frequently with Chinese troops up until the outbreak of full-scale war in 1937'. See *A Concise Dictionary of Modern Japanese History*, ed. by Janet E. Hunter (London: University of California Press, 1984), pp.120-21. In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Ikuhiko Hata adds that: 'Recently it has become popular for Japanese historians to call the chain of aggression from the Manchurian incident onward 'the fifteen-year war' (although strictly speaking, it lasted only thirteen years and eleven months). In this sense, the Manchurian incident, the war in China, and the war in the Pacific should not be viewed separately but as one continuous war. The only occasion when war was formally declared in accordance with international law was in December 1941, but after 1931 not a

day passed without gunfire (including guerrilla action) in the areas where Japanese forces operated'. Ikuhiko Hata, 'Continental Expansion, 1905-1941', in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.6*, ed. by Peter Duus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 271-314 (p.302).

⁴³ 'The Idea of Showa', p.12. The trials lasted from May 1946 to November 1948.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 'The "End" of the Postwar', p.5. For a discussion of MacArthur's role in the imbroglio see Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 277-345. As regards the causes of the conflict Alvin D. Coox suggests that, 'the main proximate causes of [the Pacific War] have long been understood, although unevenly assessed: the China conflict, [Japan's] dependence on external sources of energy, and [its] ties with the Axis powers'. Alvin D. Coox 'The Pacific War', in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol.6*, ed. by Peter Duus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.315-382 (pp.376-77).

⁴⁶ John W. Dower, 'The Useful War', in *Showa: The Japan of Hirohito*, ed. by Carol Gluck and Stephen R. Graubard (London: Norton, 1992), pp.49-70 (p.64).

⁴⁷ *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, p.155.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.154. Andrew Gordon provides a useful general framework for the era when he states that: 'The immediate postwar began with an aggressive, radical push by unions and parties of the Left in favor of socialism and against the revival of a capitalist system. It ended with this opposition on the defensive. By the early 1950s surviving elements of the old-guard elites, especially the bureaucrats, dominated the political economy...Americans set the stage for Japan's domestic politics first by favoring the "peace and democracy" constituencies of the Left and then by promoting the revival of the "old guard" with the reverse course, [the setting up of] the Self-Defence Force, and the [promulgation of the] Security Treaty...Americans were agents of political

revolution in Japan between 1945 and 1947, and progressive intellectuals hailed them as such. When American policy changed, Japanese progressives condemned the Americans as a reactionary force, especially during the security treaty and Vietnam War protests'. See Andrew Gordon, 'Conclusion', in *Postwar Japan as History*, pp.449-64 (pp.449, 454).

⁴⁹ *Embracing Defeat*, p.508.

⁵⁰ Gordon adds, for instance, that 'Japanese historians have been sharply divided between those who see the history of the last forty-five years as a betrayal of the progressive promise of the immediate postwar and those who celebrate it as a vindication of the century-long trajectory of Japan's modernization'. See 'Conclusion', p.458.

⁵¹ Anne Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society: 1868-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.96.

⁵² Ibid., p.95. Identifying herself as a critic of this displaced paradigm Waswo adds that: 'In much of this [new] revisionist writing there is a tendency to see the war not as an aberration in Japan's development but as an outcome of that development. This does not amount to an attempt to justify the war, but is an effort to explain it in terms of evolutionary change, rather than of retrogression or breakdown' (p.96).

⁵³ 'Conclusion', pp.455-56.

⁵⁴ Hunter, *A Concise Dictionary*, pp.153-54.

⁵⁵ In a contemporaneous critique of the actions taken by the committee Robert K. Carr states, for instance, that it 'must be held responsible for having encouraged a widespread witch-hunting spirit both in government and in private life. This spirit has reached its peak in the shameful attacks made by Senator McCarthy upon federal employees and private persons. It may fairly be asserted that McCarthyism would never have been possible had not the Un-American Activities Committee and its predecessor, the Dies committee, paved the way

from 1938 on[wards]'. Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp.455-56.

⁵⁶ *Embracing Defeat*, p.424.

⁵⁷ *Embracing Defeat*, pp.470-71. Dower adds that during the early part of the trial Pal 'actually represented a still unliberated country' (p.470).

⁵⁸ Charles Sarvan, 'Floating Signifiers and *An Artist of the Floating World*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 32, 1 (1997), 93-101 (pp.96-97).

⁵⁹ 'The Discourse of Others', p.176.

Chapter Four. *The Remains of the Day*

Synopsis

The Remains of the Day (1989)¹ tells the story of a butler named Stevens who spends the bulk of his professional life in unquestioning service to Lord Darlington, who at the time of the Nazi rise to power during the nineteen thirties had been a fascist sympathiser. In the name of duty Stevens fires two young Jewish refugee girls hired as maids, spurns his dying father and fails to realize a relationship with Miss Kenton, the housekeeper. Like Ishiguro's other novels *Remains* deploys a recognition plot tracing Stevens's growing realisation that his life has been overwhelmed by self-deception. These hesitant apprehensions develop in the course of numerous flashbacks as he undertakes a motorcar journey from Darlington Hall to meet Miss Kenton (now Mrs Benn) in Cornwall, some twenty years after she left Darlington's service. In the frame story set in 1956 Darlington has died and the estate bought by an American businessman named Farraday. Ostensibly, Stevens undertakes the trip to ask Miss Kenton to rejoin the Hall to relieve a staff shortage. However, the novel suggests they had been in love and that Stevens hopes to rekindle their relationship.

Despite his stifled language riddled with special pleading, *Remains* secures the pathos of that loss as an instance of continuing pain,

intensified by his failure to attend to his father as he lays dying. Both events occurred because Stevens chose duty over personal feelings and responsibilities, the two key occasions coinciding with two diplomatic conferences held at the Hall, one in 1923 and another in 1936, when Darlington had tried to get Britain's political elites to pursue pro-Germany, and then pro-fascist policies. On his journey, however, Stevens re-examines his idolatry of Darlington. When he finally meets Miss Kenton and learns that her marriage had been unhappy, and that she too regrets their failure to make their feelings known to each other, Stevens's misguided investment in an ethos of self-abrogation becomes abundantly clear to him, at the same time as he realizes that the past cannot be retrieved. By the end of the novel Stevens appears to appreciate that in internalising a rationalisation of his role he had not only truncated his life but had achieved stability at the expense of conscience and principles. However, the novel's use of unreliable narration - the fact that his insights emerge tacitly and against the grain of a first person account - means that the depth of his self-understanding is not reliably established.

Introduction

As even a cursory perusal of my summary above suggests, two things are immediately striking about *Remains* and require clarification. There is, first of all, the change of locale or setting. After two novels which appear to carry substantial exilic charge and also to register the kind of exilic and/or immigrant self-fashioning that make them potential

exemplars of the literature of ‘fictional return’, no mention is made of things Japanese in *Remains*.²

Secondly, what heightens the impact of this change is the intriguing continuity of theme between *Artist* and *Remains*, a continuity that extends backward to encompass *Pale View* as well. Despite the change of locale Ono and Stevens (and indeed Ogata-San) share many features. Both have, in varying degree, been complicit with oppressive regimes; both need to come to terms with the fact that they have led self-deceiving lives; both men’s private experiences and conduct reflect and refract public events; both are ‘moulded by...hierarchical worlds whose disintegration they have survived to witness’;³ and both confront bewildering post-war changes. Like all of Ishiguro’s novels their narratives also raise questions about the unreliability of memory and the difficulty of self-knowledge.

In this context an answer to the question as to why so much is replicated in a trajectory linking Ogata-San to Ono and Stevens becomes possible if we recall the extent to which Ishiguro’s first two novels contest essentialist assignations. As my previous two chapters demonstrate, both *Pale View* and *Artist* contest stubborn, particularist nostrums about Japanese sociality; they challenge commonplace culturalist tropes, manifested, I argue, in their revisionary-ethnographic resonances: in one case in a rewriting of *Madama Butterfly*, in the other in an interrogation of Ruth Benedict’s still dominant double-metaphor, and also in the

highlighting of a shared historical trajectory. Moreover, the main narrative strategy deployed is a deflationary one: the works are space-clearing gestures aimed at overturning Orientalist formulations rather than the effort to proffer a ‘realist’ or ‘authentic’ Japan.

But, as Ishiguro puts it, such concerns were generally ignored in commentary which failed to engage with the ‘ideas’ articulated in the works and in the corresponding profusion of attention to ‘Japanese cliché phrase[s]’.⁴ Little heed was paid to metacritical injunctions to desist from the elaboration of ‘vague eastern echoes’.⁵ The archetypal reaction to Ishiguro’s early work in mainstream literary circles appears to have been the heaving of a collective sign of relief that here was finally one native informant ready to translate all that was impenetrable about the referent ‘Japan’. The implicit model applied was one of cultural voyeurism.

Thus, in the previously cited *New York Times* review the comments I quoted are prefaced by the extraordinary claim that:

Often with Japanese novels the Western reader may suspect he is missing the point and feel that important references may be getting by him. That is not a problem here. Mr. Ishiguro, though born in 1954 in Nagasaki, has lived in England since 1960. He writes in English and does not require that the reader know the Orient to understand his book.⁶

What such claims fail to consider is whether Ishiguro's writing may actually be targeting assumptions of inherent strangeness and the way such proto-Orientalist notions contribute to the semanticisation of the referent 'Western', and whether it is the recourse to stock descriptions that is at issue - including the reviewer's appeal to 'a traditional Oriental delicacy and circumspection'.⁷ In addition, Ishiguro's uniquely syncretic location within and between two social collectivities was given little attention.

Given these responses, and given also the prelapsarian cast of some of the responses to *Artist* discussed in the last chapter, it is perhaps not surprising to find Ishiguro complaining thus:

I found it disturbing that many of the reviews of my first two books were saying things like, 'Read this book if you want to understand how Japanese people think'. That was worrying to me because I didn't have that kind of authority...Before I knew anything about the [third] book, I knew that it wasn't going to have anything to do with Japan or Japanese people.⁸

My contention in this chapter, however, is that the switch of locale goes further than the question of professional or authorial typecasting. Or rather, what goes hand in glove with that declared determination to resist culturalist sequestration is a transference to *Remains* of the anti-

Manichean thrust of the previous books. Since contestatory articulations were generally ignored the duplication of storyline in *Remains* reiterates the same claims: it takes into consideration the popular response to *Artist* and rewrites it in order to drive the point home. Like the use of doppelgänger figuration in *Pale View* the replication in Stevens of the same moral perambulations besetting Ono foregrounds the similarities between the second and the third novels. In the process, exceptionalist conceptions of Japan are also problematised.

Put differently, the thematic and figurative parallels between *Artist* and *Remains* are an aesthetic development or corollary of Ishiguro's claim in an interview that Ono is 'a sort of metaphor':

I'm trying to suggest that this isn't something peculiar to Japan, the need to follow leaders and the need to exercise power over subordinates, as a sort of motor by which society operates. I'm inviting Western readers to look at this not as a Japanese phenomenon but as a human phenomenon.⁹

For my purposes the significant feature here is not so much the debatability or otherwise of Ishiguro's claim, but the apparent effort made to redress essentialist nostrums. It bears repeating in this regard that the only so-called Japanese *influence* Ishiguro ever readily acknowledges as impacting his writing is a genre of film called *shomin-geki*, whose defining

feature is its focus on ‘the life of ordinary people’ in ‘domestic’ settings, as exemplified by Yasujiro Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (1953).¹⁰ This suggests, firstly, its function in a filmic retrieval of natal culture and, secondly, that recourse to unremarkable domesticity sought as an antidote to the ferocity of the Manicheanism that Ishiguro has found it necessary to challenge in his work.

At one level the echoes and parallels between *Artist* and *Remains* might be read, therefore, as an extension of the earlier discursive challenges to essentialist visions of Japanese sociality. The fact that Ishiguro does not write another so-called ‘Japanese novel’ telling metropolitan readers a comforting tale about the culture of ‘Others’ is precisely the point: in switching the field of vision to the centre he counters culturalist sequestration by pursuing them to source and returning their proto-Orientalist gaze. And, indeed, I will argue below that *Remains* strongly challenges versions of metropolitan self-understanding that are implicitly predicated on such articulations. Implicit in that move is the refusal to strengthen the discursive boundaries between self and other. It is the contestation of enduring Manichean allegories, therefore, that explains the parallels - both figurative and thematic - between *Artist* and *Remains*.

More specifically, my contention is that these echoes and parallels help reinforce the *primary* critical move of *Remains*, which is to say its interrogation of certain forms of heritage consumption that contribute to,

or are imbricated with, exceptionalist visions of English (and British) sociality. In a lucid formulation of the novel's objectives Ishiguro states that:

The Remains of the Day is not an England that I believe ever existed...What I'm trying to do...is to actually rework a particular myth about a certain kind of England [consisting of]...sleepy, beautiful villages with very polite people and butlers and people taking tea on the lawn...The mythical landscape of this sort of England, to a large degree, is harmless nostalgia for a time that didn't exist. The other side of this, however, is that it is used as a political tool,...a way of bashing anybody who tries to spoil this Garden of Eden. This can be brought out by the left or right, but usually it is the political right who say England was this beautiful place before the trade unions tried to make it more egalitarian or before the immigrants started to come or before the promiscuous age of the '60s came and ruined everything.¹¹

Elsewhere, he usefully elaborates on the demystificatory thrust of the novel with regards to what he calls the 'shadowy' or pernicious side of the 'nostalgia industry':

I wished to set this book in a mythical landscape, which to a certain extent resembled that mythical version of England that is peddled in the nostalgia industry at the moment. This idea of England, this green, pleasant place of leafy lanes and grand country houses and butlers and tea on the lawn, cricket - this vision of England that actually does play a large role in the political imaginations of a lot of people, not just British people but people around the world...I felt it was a perfectly reasonable mission on my part to set out to slightly redefine that mythical, cozy England, to say that there is a shadowy side to it. In a way I wanted to rewrite P.G. Wodehouse with a serious political dimension.¹²

In the light of these comments *Remains* might be said to contest the way in which imagery of the stately-home milieu and arcadian landscape are used as floating metaphors for a certain kind of fundamental Englishness or Britishness. Ishiguro's aversion to rightist invocations of a prelapsarian, organicist England defiled by 'immigrants', organised-labour and counter-culture elements suggests that there are strong links between *Remains* and the socio-political background out of which it emerged, a feature that I want to examine because it has not been given due consideration. In this sense we might say a large part of the novel operates as a social or political parable and not as the novelistic-arcadian avatar it is sometimes taken to be.

As Patrick Wright explains, the vision of the ‘past’ proffered by the dominant conservative discourse of the period was one that ‘far from being somehow “behind” the present’ actually ‘exists as an accomplished presence in public understanding. In this sense it is written into present social reality, not just implicitly as residue, precedent or custom and practice, but explicitly as itself - as History, National Heritage and Tradition’.¹³ *Remains*, I claim, challenges these hypostatisations. It challenges a proclivity in the collective zeitgeist to draw escapist comfort from a mythic sense of the past reconstructed as historical memory in the present; it does not question heritage consumption or commemoration *tout court* but merely the way it can be yoked to socially exclusive ends, or, in other words, its recurrent co-optation by conservative political platforms.¹⁴

In my critical reading of *Remains* I will concentrate as such on its essentially anti-pastoral and demystificatory or de-mythologising thrust. Adopting a contextualist approach I show how it interrogates some new rightist exclusions and commonplaces that emerged in the seventies and eighties. Against the authoritarian-populist appeal of such dogmas *Remains* points out that they are often a disguised way of pandering to imperial nostalgia: it refuses to bestow on such romanticist evocations the glamour which its reality so grievously lacks.

In addition, I contend that *Remains* stages through Stevens’s narration some of the contradictions besetting exclusivist or hermetic

formulations: it registers what Stuart Hall calls ‘the outside history that is inside the history of the English’.¹⁵ Stevens has a habit of dwelling on stories of exemplary butlering, and it is through that practice that the novel establishes the imbrication of Empire in metropolitan social formation. There is a performative element here in that while Stevens strives to maintain a hermetic rendering of identity and social space his move is constantly undermined by the ironies that plague his narrative.

This ‘outside history’ is also underscored through the form of the work, by the fact that it takes the form of a *journal de voyage*. By glossing Stevens’s journey with intimations of the *topos* of the journey south Ishiguro foregrounds extra-metropolitan sociality for our consideration. In this way *Remains* demonstrates that Empire is already implicated in metropolitan social space, how its identity-formation has historically been predicated on more brutal forms of self-fashioning. I end by suggesting how, as a perspicuous ‘condition of England’ novel, *Remains* registers metacritical inflections that set it apart from the fictional modes from which it appears to descend.

Anatomy of greatness

To appreciate the anti-pastoral and demystificatory thrust of *Remains* we need to attend to the cathexis around the term ‘great’ of a resurgent, populist nationalism that surfaced during the period under discussion. Among the events it implicates we might cite Margaret

Thatcher's 1978-79 general election campaign, in which she vowed to restore the '*Great*' to Britain, the use of the same rhetorical trope in the 1987 election campaign, and also the conservative appeals to Britons throughout the eighties to return to 'Victorian' values.

Among commentators on the topic Paul Gilroy has been especially insightful. As he sees it the success of Thatcherite identity politics stemmed from its deployment of an authoritarian populism able to rewrite Britain's imagined political community along exclusivist lines. He pinpoints in this regard the 'rhetoric of order through which modern conservatism could voice populist protest against Britain's post-imperial plight and marshal its historic bloc'.¹⁶ Part of this move involved the extensive deployment of the 'analogy of war' to characterise 'black immigration and settlement' as 'the encroachment of aliens' and also around 'the politics of crime and domestic political dissent', such that 'industrial militants and black settlers' both came to share the designation, 'The Enemy Within'.¹⁷ Gilroy pinpoints, in other words, the appeal to citadel mentality in public discourse, in terms that echo forcefully Ishiguro's own criticism of the use of 'Garden of Eden' nostrums as a 'political tool' to demonise 'immigrants', 'trade unions' (organised-labour) and counter-culture elements. As Gilroy goes on to explain:

[A] brief consideration of the British general election of summer 1987 allows us to see these themes and conflicts played out with a special clarity. The theme of patriotism

was well to the fore and a tussle over the national flag was a major feature of the campaign. The Labour party pleaded for Britain to heal its deep internal divisions and become 'one nation again', whereas the Conservatives underlined their success in 'putting the Great back into Britain' by urging the electorate not to let the Socialists take this crucial adjective out again. Significantly, this language made no overt reference to race, but it acquired racial referents. Everyone knows what is at stake when patriotism and deference to the law are being spoken about.¹⁸

It is in this context then that the comments of Kobena Mercer help perspicuously to summarise some of the incipiently exclusionary articulations touched on above, insofar as she criticises in uncompromising terms the:

Combination of racism, nationalism and populism [that has become] the predominant framework of the imagined community in which the 'collective will' is constructed - 'its great to be Great again', as the 1987 Tory election slogan put it, [where] the Falklands War and Royal Weddings, Victorian values and Raj nostalgia movies are all recycled in the Great British heritage industry, and not just for the benefit of Japanese or American tourists either.¹⁹

But given the semantic loading of the term ‘Great’ what is striking is to find it doggedly anatomised in *Remains*. This occurs, I am suggesting, throughout the novel since its main story is precisely Stevens’s re-examination of his life-long commitment to a principle of (vocational) greatness. As in *Artist* the isomorphism between private and public has parabolic resonances. For our purposes, nevertheless, that commitment is most helpfully focalised in two key passages right at the start of Stevens’s motorcar journey. For me these two passages contain in embryonic form the novel’s essentially anti-pastoral and demystificatory project, so a lengthy citation will be required. The first passage conjoins toponym and topography and prompts a resonant association with the allusions in conservative discourse to Victorian and imperial greatness. It comes during the evening of Stevens’s first day of travel when he muses on the view of the ‘rolling English countryside’ (28) espied earlier from the top of a knoll (26):

Now I am quite prepared to believe that other countries can offer more obviously spectacular scenery...but I will nevertheless hazard this with some confidence: the English landscape at its finest...possesses a quality that the landscape of other nations, however more superficially dramatic, inevitably fail to possess. It is, I believe, a quality that will mark out the English landscape to any objective observer as the most deeply satisfying in the world, and this quality is probably best summed up by the term ‘greatness’.

For it is true, when I stood on that high ledge this morning, and viewed the land before me, I distinctly felt that rare, yet unmistakable feeling - the feeling that one is in the presence of greatness. We call this land of ours Great Britain, and there may be those who believe this a somewhat immodest practice. Yet I would venture that the landscape of our country alone would justify the use of this lofty adjective. And yet, what precisely is this 'greatness'. Just where, or in what, does it lie? I am quite aware it would take a far wiser head than mine to answer such a question, but if I were forced to hazard a guess, I would say that it is the very *lack* of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness and feels no need to shout it. In comparison, the sorts of sights offered in such places as Africa and America, though undoubtedly very exciting, would I am sure strike the objective observer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness (28-29, italics original).

A little later, however, Stevens's suspiciously overwrought praising of the English landscape - the appeal to an 'objective observer', the quotation marks around 'greatness' - is shown to be a projection of a need to shore up a crumbling self-image; and this need to bolster that self-ascribed

'greatness' is tellingly shown to require insularist posturing predicated on the allocation of hermetic cultural vectors. Crucially for Stevens, that is, 'the whole question' of what makes Britain 'Great' is 'akin' to that of what makes a butler 'great' (28-29). He adds:

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England.

Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of. Continentals – and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree – are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion, and are thus unable to maintain a professional demeanour other than in the least challenging of situations. In a word, 'dignity' is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman (43).

In my chapter on *Pale View* I argued that Etsuko's encounter with Suzie-San at Inasa implicates the wider question of inter-cultural relations, and Stevens's hill-top musings possess, we could say, similar allegorical significance. Given the link between private and public conceptions of 'greatness' over the two passages, what is striking is the

way Stevens yokes the national landscape and an unvoiced but implicitly rendered 'ethno'-national character as an indissoluble dyad pitted against other 'breed[s] incapable of...emotional restraint' (43). It is in this way, therefore, that *Remains* exposes the conceptual grammar of the pastoralism espoused by Stevens, so that his hill-top deliberations become a dramatic diagnosis of the citadel mentality fostered by conservative identity-politics. Inasmuch as Stevens's pastoralism fuels the little-Englandism bemoaned by Mercer and many social commentators, *Remains* might be said, therefore, to underline the following: it asks whether those ideologies and political processes that seek to put the 'Great' back in 'Britain' entail just the kind of rabid Othering ^{that Stevens} v. undertakes here; whether this ushers out of its imagined community other emergent ethnicities or 'new' identities', and it asks whether support for these processes puts individuals on a slippery slope aligning them with new rightist exclusions and stereotypes, thus endorsing a residual animus against officially designated Others.

This is to say, I suggest, that the juxtaposing of Stevens's seemingly innocent panoramic vista with his exceptionalist proclamation is no accident. The arrangement undermines the supposedly innocent appeal of pastoralism through the manifest violence of the latter. More specifically, the idea of the English landscape attaining 'greatness' from a simultaneous 'lack' (28) and surplus when compared to African and American topography echoes in preternatural fashion what Simon Gikandi considers to be a distinguishing feature of the legacy that Enoch

Powell established for mainstream conservatism. For Gikandi it is not just that Powell's notorious 1968 'rivers of blood' speech needs to demonise a 'black critical mass'²⁰ as the main 'ethical threat' to the 'metaphysics of English national belonging' (44), but that this must be done 'without directly associating its presence with England's imperial past' (71). Powellism needs to emplot a powerful 'strategic forgetfulness' (86) so that Britain's imagined community can be scripted in comfortingly immanent and autonomous fashion outside the complications of history. And in this context the italicised 'lack' that underwrites Stevens's promontory rumination registers we might say the 'strategic forgetfulness' described by Gikandi.

As easily the most intriguing trope of *Remains*, the paradoxical notion of an absence that is *also* a presence accurately renders, I suggest, the psychological kinks of post-war imperial nostalgia. It demonstrates how contemporaneous appeals to 'greatness' seek to interpellate Britons as illustrious epigones of empire-builders, a move that excludes emergent ethnicities and new identities. Gikandi maintains that in the demonisation of a 'black critical mass' post-war conservative discourse in effect mobilised 'blackness' as a mediator between 'an English identity that is split between an imperial positivity (which thrives on nostalgia) and a postimperial negativity projected onto immigrants' (70), and in this respect the reference to a 'lack' that is also a surplus gestures we could say at that deployment.

Stevens's promontory musings dramatise as such contemporaneous efforts to proclaim 'national' identity in quasi-mythical terms outside the complications of history - as something immanent, organic and literally self-grounding. For it is this particularistic England in which belonging is mystical and intuitive that works in conservative identity-politics to set apart those 'Others' whose belonging is merely juridical. In this way the analysis conducted in *Remains* echoes we might say what other social commentators also caution against. For instance, the writer Mike Phillips criticises a tendency in public discourse to portray the countryside as a 'last refuge of English nationality, a protection against people who really ought to be foreigners but who somehow seem to have captured part of the island'.²¹ Julian Agyeman complaints that 'the countryside, changed out of all recognition as it is by the ravages of agriculture, is still portrayed by advertising and the media as the true keeper of Anglo-Saxon culture. It is seen as a timeless, unchanging place...It harbours a whole host of patriotic reactions in the collective psyche'.²² Echoing these views as well David Lowenthal claims that compared to Britain, 'nowhere else is landscape so freighted as legacy', one that includes a proclivity to fuel 'exclusivity' and 'xenophobia'.²³

In an illuminating discussion of various tropes of English national identity (island, locality, village, cottage, garden) that he catalogues as variations on the theme of a 'hidden valley', Peter Bishop has argued that 'each of these images of place, the hidden valleys of Englishness - island, locality, village, cottage, garden - offered a gradient down which

sentiment could slide into reveries about racial origins, nostalgic longings, and primal renewal. But from another perspective, each of these places similarly opened up to the wider global vistas of imagined English greatness'.²⁴ What is striking in this regard is that Stevens's discovery of a 'hidden valley' at the outset of his trip is accompanied by the evocation of a quasi-genetic link between land and 'national' being, one that faintly registers fantasies of blood and belonging, and one that excludes other "breed[s] incapable of...emotional restraint" (43). To the extent that Stevens's language reflects the proto-Powellian imagery of an 'island untouched by the landscape and subjects it dominated',²⁵ he illustrates, we could say, Ishiguro's interrogation of the 'shadowy' side of our image of a 'mythical cosy England'. The potential that certain kinds of heritage consumerism and pastoralism possess to fuel social exclusion is, therefore, underscored.

Anti-fascism

More generally, I am suggesting, this effort to discredit pernicious discourses in public life also underwrites the novel's thematisation of pre-war fascism and anti-Semitism, including the main story of Stevens's unwitting pact with fascism, of visits to Darlington Hall by Oswald Mosley and those of his ilk (137, 145-46), of the sacking of two Jewish maids by Stevens on order from Darlington (147-54), and of Darlington's dalliance with fascist ideology (136-37, 145-51). And here again there is another echo of *Artist's* Ono in that Darlington's flirtation develops, it is suggested,

out of an initial concern for the poverty he witnessed when he visited the slums in London's East End.²⁶ Commenting on Powell's exceptionalism, Wright has argued that it 'stands close to pre-war anti-Semitism in its assertion of threatened tradition, valued geography and other incomunicable "great simplicities" (Powell's phrase) of nationhood'.²⁷ He wonders whether 'this connection with an earlier and not always explicitly recognised anti-Semitism may be a major principle of its elevation' in public life, and thence whether that development accounts for its use 'as a resource for the racisms which in the post-war years have accompanied immigration from the fragments of [the] disintegrating empire'.²⁸

The performative contradiction that, I think, *Remains* seeks to exploit with its fascist and anti-Semitic thematisations, therefore, is whether the pseudo-*Gemeinschaft* component of conservative identity-politics echoes uncritically the Nazi mass movement that is itself anathematised by Anglo-American popular culture. There is a sense in which through the thematisation of Darlington's fascist dalliance and subsequent disgrace *Remains* seeks to enlist the help of the *popular* anti-fascist attitudes accompanying Britain's entry into the second world war, and more pertinently the enduring strength of that campaign in collective memory to challenge *populist* *Gemeinschaft* allures centred around nostalgic invocations of the stately-home order. In this regard the portrayal and implied criticism of anti-Semitism in *Remains* becomes a figure for other kinds of exclusions operating in public life. There is a

parabolic dimension to its thematisation in *Remains*, for in so doing the novel highlights the insidiously harmful nature of other kinds of pseudo-*Gemeinschaft* appeals.

Patrician privileges

In line with this objective of demystifying countryhouse England's claim to embody 'national' life *Remains* could be said then to follow Stuart Tannock in designating heritage consumerism an 'elitist, escapist perspective that palliates present inequities and sanctifies traditional privileges'.²⁹ I have been arguing that one example of that potential to palliate or actually worsen 'present inequities' would be in the fuelling of new rightist exclusions. Likewise, the thematisation of class snobbery through Darlington could be said to censure the paradoxical sanctification of patrician privileges, a phenomenon that mystifies historian David Cannadine as well. Writing in 1983 Cannadine wonders how is it that 'country-house nostalgia' can rage with such 'ferocious, uncritical and seemingly incurable vigour' in national life when that milieu had obviously excluded its lower orders. He bemoans the 'mysterious process of non-reasoning' by which 'the stately-home world that most of us never knew...become[s] the world we ourselves have lost, and thus the world we desperately want to find once more: the only paradise we seek to regain is the one which was never ours to lose in the first place'.³⁰ In more acerbic language the novelist Nigel Dennis also satirises the

resilient appeal of the stately-home cult. His sardonic epitaph is worth quoting in full:

This sort of house was once a heart and centre of the national identity. A whole world lived in relation to it. Millions knew who they were by reference to it. Hundreds of thousands look back to it, and not only to grieve for its passing but still depend on it, non-existent though it is, to tell them who they are. Thousands who never knew it are taught every day to cherish its memory and to believe that without it no man will be able to tell his whereabouts again. It hangs on men's neck like a millstone of memory; carrying it, and looking back on its associations, they stumble indignantly backwards into the future, confident that man's self-knowledge is gone forever.³¹

In this regard the faux-romanticism underpinning such 'non-reasoning' practices and mythologisation has probably been best analysed by Raymond Williams. Pointing out that 'few titles to property could bear humane investigation in the long process of conquest, theft, political intrigue, courtiership, extortion and the power of money', Williams observes that 'it is a deep and persistent illusion to suppose that time confers on these familiar processes of acquisition an innocence which can be contrasted with the ruthlessness of subsequent stages of the same essential drives'.³² Thus the problem with citing 'country-house

'England' as a distillate of national or communal life is that it comfortingly obscures a more unpalatable history of rack-renting, enclosures and class oppression; it creates a false totality, 'a class England in which only certain histories matter'.³³ In his words:

It is fashionable to admire these extraordinarily numerous houses: the extended manors, the neo-classical mansions, that lie so close in rural Britain...But stand at any point and look at that land. Look at what those fields, those streams, those woods even today produce. Think it through as labour and see how long and systematic the exploitation and seizure must have been, to rear that many houses, on that scale. See by contrast what any ancient isolated farm, in uncounted generations of labour, has managed to become, by the efforts of any single real family, however prolonged. And then turn and look at what these other 'families', these systematic owners, have accumulated and arrogantly declared.³⁴

What helps to personalise and update the arguments above also are the comments of Mike Phillips, who observes that:

So much of the English past speaks with a very triumphal rhetoric of empire and nationalism. I remember going as a boy to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, and

finding all these monumental sculptures and paintings very oppressive. You go to a stately home, then, and you're either looking at the insolent display of a nabob who's whipped the ass off all his slaves, or an innocent display of domestic magnificence which by its nature excludes your history...This heritage is for us not the same innocent heritage it is for an English person. As history it is deeply compromised.³⁵

In this context Darlington's betrayal of Stevens might be said, therefore, to enjoin an apprehension similar to what the commentators above raise when they criticise the paradoxical propensity in certain kinds of heritage consumption to sanctify patrician privileges. Despite Stevens's professionalism Darlington colludes through inaction in his ritual humiliation by a house guest (194-97), and thus his advocacy of decency to Germans (73) is shown to be merely part of that confraternity of diplomatic and governing classes still drawn in Europe in the 1920s and 30s from the old aristocracy. Inasmuch as plot and character development in *Remains* is basically the movement towards Stevens's painful acknowledgement of the magnitude of this betrayal, the intellectual background of the novel is, therefore, consonant with the trenchant criticism of the stately-home cult delineated above, and more generally with numerous studies - Lowenthal (1985), Hewison (1987), and also the Wright study quoted above³⁶ - that cogently criticise the commodification of the past through such agencies as the nostalgia

industry. Stevens's ritual humiliation underscores the harsh realities of class division and prejudice and thus works to undermine the suburban, middle-class fantasies that account for a large part of the appeal of stately-home nostalgia.

We Victorians

In the above sense of probing historical (mis-)representations in public life, Stevens's adherence to putatively 'Victorian' standards in the conduct of his life also raises the question of the reductionism implicit in the conservative call to Britons throughout the eighties to emulate the Victorians.³⁷ If for Peter Riddell the ruling political vision in Britain in the early eighties was 'a world of Victorian values and Samuel Smiles',³⁸ Stevens obviously adheres to the tenets of Smiles's Victorian bestseller *Self Help*³⁹ when he tries to improve his English (167-68) and when he pledges to learn how to banter (15-17, 245). When Stevens chooses duty over personal well-being at the two diplomatic conferences that change the direction of his life, he adheres to the Victorian tenet of self-denial. And indeed his entire demeanour, bearing and language is almost a caricature of the culture of the stiff upper lip.

In an illuminating clarification of the hegemonic articulations pertinent to our discussion Gordon Marsden points out that 'the political purpose underlying the propagation of Victorian values in the 1980s [was]

in most cases transparent'. Marsden casts his analysis in rhetorical mold:

If self-help, self-reliance, entrepreneurship, individual charity (rather than a state dole), law and order, family discipline, and a stricter sexual morality were the principles...responsible in Britain's case for a 'golden age' of power and influence, are they not an endorsement for a similar philosophy of Mrs Thatcher's Britain in the 1980s and 1990s? And if the values that made Britain great in the second half of the nineteenth century were essentially those of an imperialist ethos, is it not perhaps time for more confidence and less guilt about the latter's legacy?⁴⁰

But if the entire movement of *Remains* underscores that formality, repression and self-effacement have truncated Stevens's life, then his story is also a forceful interrogation of the formulations above. The direction of Stevens's life, including his regret at losing Miss Kenton becomes a *reductio ad absurdum* of these clarion calls to return to 'Victorian values'. For through him Ishiguro illustrates the less appealing dimensions of the last, which is to say those facets that conservative political discourse in general elides. Ishiguro's declared intention to probe the way counter-cultural elements are made scapegoats for the distempers of the time inheres as such in Stevens's super-'Victorian' configuration, the objective being to highlight the partial and skewed

nature of public representations, to underscore that there is indeed a 'shadowy' side to them.

In this respect, the fact that Stevens takes up policing responsibilities for the corporatist household - in addition to firing Jewish maids he also eavesdrops on Darlington's conference guests (94-96) - parallels we could say the way in which the rhetoric of law and order became main planks of contemporaneous conservative discourse. Martin Kettle has argued that the phrase 'law and order' became in the early eighties part of a matrix of attitudes 'under which society is "toned up and groomed" for the "routinisation" of control'.⁴¹ But since Stevens ultimately fails to benefit from his policing duties his participation is, therefore, queried, as well as his acquiescence in the class function accorded to him.

If for Raymond Williams 'the crucial distinguishing element in English life since the Industrial Revolution' has been the competition between 'alternative' visions of 'the nature of social relationship[s]'⁴² represented, on the one hand, by the 'idea of service' - what he calls 'the great achievement of the Victorian middle class' (313) - and, on the other hand, by the 'idea of solidarity' (315); and if, additionally, 'the idea of service breaks down because while the upper servants have been able to identify themselves with the establishment, the lower servants have not' (317), Stevens might be said to dramatise that claim in operation. Conversely, the maid and second footmen who run away from Darlington

Hall in order to live together (*Remains*, 157) would represent those 'lower servants' lacking an identification with the dominant social order. It is with such narrative patterns, therefore, that *Remains* interrogates contemporaneous rhetoric enjoining more confidence and less doubt about so-called 'Victorian' values and legacy.

Contesting strategic forgetfulness

So far I have drawn on what might be called internalist or domestic developments to explicate events in *Remains*. However, it is important to note that non-domestic inflections and developments also have a crucial role to play. Despite Stevens's attempts to script 'national' belonging as immanent, autonomous and literally self-grounding, *Remains* actually stages the impossibility of that effort, so that the hermetic vision he embodies or articulates is problematised. While Stevens tries to enact that 'strategic forgetfulness' of Empire described by Gikandi above, the last keeps popping up like some powerful version of the return of the repressed: strategic forgetfulness is needed to de-link the presence of immigrant settlers from an imperial history but *Remains* keeps repudiating that move. Moreover, and despite the efforts of conservative polemics to romanticise 'a "golden age" of power and influence',⁴³ the numerous extra-metropolitan references in Stevens's narrative keep thwarting that operation. *Remains* refuses, in other words, to glamourise or prettify an enterprise whose reality so grievously lacked these features. In the process it contests insularist and particularist proclivities by

presenting the ‘national’ culture as a historical experience that is *already* constituted by Empire, as something that does not arise from an internal dynamic.

These assertions can be illustrated if we examine in closer detail the stories of exemplary dignity and greatness in butlers upon which Stevens broods. In one instance Stevens recalls his father’s favourite story of an English butler in India who dispatches with astonishing unflappability a tiger that had crept into the dining room, thus ensuring that the dinner service would not be disrupted (36). The import of the story is that Stevens apparently adheres to his father’s implied mandate at the two diplomatic conferences mentioned earlier. His determination to provide unimpeachable service means, ironically, that he fails to attend to his father as he is dying in an upstairs bedroom (103-06); the same professional mania during a second conference means that he fails to stop Miss Kenton from accepting a proposal of marriage (218-19).

However, this also draws attention to the non-autochthonous source of his father’s lesson, it being a tale derived from colonial adventures abroad. In a way Stevens’s own narrative undermines his efforts to align ‘emotional restraint’ with a quasi-mythical notion of belonging arising indelibly from the national landscape (43). The self-abrogation principle that Stevens cleaves to can certainly be considered a culmination of the emotional restraint that he valorises, but the implied ground of that putative wisdom has, so to speak, been shifted overseas

to India. The 'strategic forgetting' that is needed to paint designated aliens as destroyers of an Edenic arcadia is, therefore, brought up starkly against the complications of history.

Much the same thematic move is replicated in a second cited paradigm of butlering 'greatness', this time involving Stevens's father, who is himself a butler. Stevens recalls that despite the death of his elder brother - a soldier - during an 'Un-British attack on civilian Boer settlements' in the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), his father offers to act as replacement valet for the man who led the attack when he comes to visit his employer (40). The ex-general was nearly court-martialed for his conduct yet Stevens senior volunteers because his employer hopes to start a 'lucrative' business venture with him (40-41). But since this amounts to glossing over 'civilian' attacks those contemporaneous efforts to amass political capital by stoking imperial nostalgia is brought face to face with the fact of ignominious violence. In addition, Gilroy's observation that new rightist discourse often employed the analogy of war to buttress authoritarian populism is purposively echoed, I suggest, by the ex-general whom Stevens senior serves, for the former is described as having a 'conspicuous...eagerness to apply military similes to a wide variety of matters' (*Remains*, 41).

If, as Marsden implies above, conservative calls for a return to Victorian values sought to take advantage of a vestigial desire for imperial 'greatness' then the reference to the Boer war helps, I think, to

derail such concatenations. In a hard-hitting essay published on the fiftieth anniversary of the conflict historian A.J.P. Taylor insists that 'no war has been so unanimously condemned by enlightened European opinion. Even forty years afterwards, every European, though few Englishmen, recognized the taunt in the Nazi "concentration camps", which deliberately parodied in name and nature the British "methods of barbarism".⁴⁴ Taylor is arguably exaggerating for effect but *Remains* might be said to articulate in gentler fashion his uncompromising stance, in that it labels as 'Un-British' the attacks led by the general. And again, I think, there is a parabolic dimension directed here at the rise of conservative ideologies.

Exploration narratives

What further complicates particularist or exceptionalist discourses, I contend, is the way Stevens's hill-top ruminations carry inflections of Victorian exploration narratives, thus raising the issue of the interpenetration of metropole and empire, and the extent to which metropolitan identity is predicated on its Others. Mary Louise Pratt has argued that it was heavily-aestheticised 'promontory descriptions' made at the climax of exploration trips that helped 'produce...the peak moments at which geographical "discoveries" were "won" for England'.⁴⁵ For Pratt, such descriptions have key semiotic significance because they helped 'encode and legitimate the aspirations of economic expansion and empire' (5). Despite the tribulations encountered on exploration trips,

Pratt maintains that so-called discoveries were 'from a narrative point of view, practically a non-event', since they basically involved making one's way to the region, asking the 'local inhabitants' for directions to the nearest noteworthy topographical feature and 'hiring them to take you there, whereupon with their guidance and support, you proceeded to discover what they already knew': in this way 'local knowledges' or 'discourses' were converted into 'European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of power' (202). But this meant also that promontory descriptions of a heavily-aestheticised variety were needed in order to imbue exploration trips with transcendent meaning.

Illustrating her arguments from Richard Burton's 1860 account of his discovery of Lake Tanganyika, Pratt adds that such descriptions typically entailed the estheticisation of the landscape in the manner of a 'verbal painter' (202): 'the sight is seen as a painting and the description is ordered in terms of background, foreground, [and] symmetries between [parts]'; a 'density of meaning' is posited to the vista and a 'relation of mastery predicated between the seer and the seen'. In addition, a transcendent 'esthetic pleasure' was oftentimes deemed to constitute 'singlehandedly...the value and significance of the journey', for 'as the explorers found out, lots of money and prestige rode on what you could convince others to give you credit for' (204).

In this respect, I suggest, the panoramic description that Stevens proffers in the long indented passage discussed above might be said to replicate in bathetic fashion the processes described by Pratt. Like Pratt's paradigmatic exploration-trip Stevens's discovery of an edifying 'hidden valley' vision⁴⁶ is aided by the 'local fellow' (*Remains*, 24) who directs him to the hill top. The view from the summit fills him with a 'healthy flush of anticipation' (26); it gives him great esthetic pleasure but the rest of his journey basically undermines the value and significance that he confers on his promontory description.⁴⁷ Likewise, the verbal-pictorial features identified by Pratt are discernible in Stevens's description but they do not provide the succour that he seeks. Instead his search for 'greatness' is continually undermined, and it is in this way then that Stevens complicates the efforts of those who couch metropolitan sociality in essentialist terms.

Voyage South

But my point is that this juxtaposing of the putatively foreign and the local is what occurs throughout the novel, not just in Stevens's promontory proclamations or his efforts to bolster his self-esteem through stories of exemplary butlerhood. This is to say that despite his effort to configure an immanent conception of self and social space *Remains* keeps registering external inflections that undermine these moves. The question of how metropolitan identity 'derive[s] its values and ideality in relation to figures of alterity'⁴⁸ is constantly underscored, because the

novel continually gestures at the ‘outside history’ that contributed to its social formation.

This emerges most clearly in Stevens’s vertiginous unease during the beginning of his journey as he passes beyond familiar landmarks: he fears that he is ‘not on the correct road at all but speeding off in totally the wrong direction into a wilderness’ (24); his surroundings grow ‘unrecognisable’ and ‘strange’ as if he has ‘gone beyond all previous boundaries’, and most significantly he compares the experience to ‘setting sail in a ship’ and losing ‘sight of land’ (23-24). On the way to a local beauty spot in Dorset he gets lost down narrow lanes where the foliage becomes ‘so thick as practically to blot out the sun altogether’ (120). When he reaches Devon there is again a suggestion of movement beyond known environs in his impression that he ‘appeared to have left behind all signs of community’ (160). He doubles back to try another ‘turning’, but the ‘new road’ proves even ‘more desolate’ (161). Despite his attempt to script the English landscape-cum-identity as a familiar and known entity, therefore, *Remains* constantly scuppers his efforts.

But most importantly, I think, we need to attend to the allusion above to the motif of sailing-out employed so regularly as a device for thematic closure in nineteenth-century novels. What *Remains* does with its stories of India and South Africa and its echoes of Victorian travel-writing I would contend is to confute that closure, to write back that

'outside history' shoved to the margins of metropolitan consciousness and historiography.

This argument can be illustrated if we turn to an essay on *Remains* written by Waddick Doyle, in which he argues that otherness or a sense of alterity emerges in the novel because of its use of defamiliarising points-of-views.⁴⁹ Proffering a narratological reading of the novel, Doyle argues that Stevens's initial point-of-view when he makes his hill-top proclamations is straightforward and stable. However, *Remains* quickly complicates this perspective using, among other things, multiply embedded stories - where Stevens is both narrator and protagonist - so that like an 'infinite regression of observation' (72) these increasingly problematise his earlier opinions. Ultimately they allow him (and the implied reader shadowing him) to be 'an Other' to himself, as the title of Doyle's essay suggests, which is to say that he gains an external perspective on his beliefs and starts to question their initial clarity. Echoing some of the details I itemised above, Doyle observes that:

Each of the following five chapters [following the one where Stevens makes his hill-top deliberations] is named after points of narration, and at each his vision becomes more and more obscured by the climatic elements. At Mortimer's Pond in Dorset, his vision is hindered by branches and shadows (121). In Taunton, Somerset, he is unable to discern figures because of excessive sunlight (133). In

Moscombe, Devon, it is twilight and fog that makes his way unclear (162). By the time he reaches Little Compton where he will meet Miss Kenton, visibility disappears altogether due to heavy rain (206). As he moves further from Darlington Hall the formerly all-seeing, self-effacing butler, becomes less and less able to observe and more and more observed (by villagers, passers-by, people he meets on his way). From the high position from whence he started his journey with the best view in the whole of England he has descended into the fog-bound valley of Moscombe (74).

Nevertheless, I think, Doyle's observations need to be formulated in the obverse: otherness does not accrue from any subject-centred perspective, however disjunctive or defamiliarised. It is rather the structure, the multiply-embedded stories and obfuscatory imagery identified above that allow other narratives, including historical ones, to intertextually undermine Stevens's organicist and internalist formulations. Doyle observes that Stevens's construction of a primordial, ostensibly organicist mode of national-belonging is almost immediately countermanded by the episode where his father mournfully searches a piece of Darlington lawn trying to determine how he had dropped a fully-laden tray (Doyle, 71-73). He points out that Miss Kenton's description of the father's actions looms large in Stevens's recollection: his father looks like a man searching for a missing 'jewel' (72). And, as a result, Doyle argues, 'that complete identification with butlerhood and Englishness'

which was previously ‘indistinguishable from the whole of the landscape as far one could see had become but a jewel lost in the garden’; defined earlier as an epitome of greatness, Stevens senior now unsettles that figurative integrity (73).

But that is precisely the point, for while Doyle stops there, I would contend that the ‘precious jewel’ (*Remains*, 50, 67) framed so prominently in Stevens’s recollection alludes to the Raj, the fabled jewel in the crown that Salman Rushdie writing in 1984 finds featuring increasingly in British popular culture after the hiatus of a few decades. It is, I suggest, Rushdie’s deployment of an outsider’s perspective that allows him to accurately identify and criticise ‘the rise of Raj revisionism’ as the ‘artistic counterpart of the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain’.⁵⁰ Only if we move beyond the textualist and idealist biases of the narratological approach deployed by Doyle can we do justice to the perspicuity of his observations. For, in this regard, the father’s search for a ‘precious jewel’ glosses ironically his beloved tale of tiger-shooting during the Raj. To the extent that the deflation of this story questions Stevens’s valorisation of emotional restraint and, in turn, the exceptionalist vision of England upon which it rests, *Remains*, therefore, challenges those ideologies and practices associated with ‘Raj revisionism’.

In this regard, those defamiliarising points-of-views privileged by Doyle should rather be seen as features of narrative setting that allow a

registration of that 'outside history' customarily denied thematic development by the foreclosure initiated by the sailing-out motif. But because in this case the sailing-out motif is deployed metaphorically, so to speak, right at the outset of Stevens's trip (23-24) what comes after, namely the 'overseas' events that would customarily be denied thematic development, can now be registered in the interstices of the events narrated in *Remains*. Put in another way, it is the deployment of the sailing-out motif at the outset of Stevens's trip that sets the scene for the subsequent allusions to India, South Africa and Victorian travel-writing. For in registering the links between domestic spaces and the global spaces of empire *Remains* again problematises particularist and insularist visions of England.

Travel guide

Since these defamiliarising and extra-metropolitan inflections help to dismantle essentialist articulations, they might be said, in turn, to undermine the inter-war travel guide - written by a certain Jane Symons - that Stevens uses to plan his journey. As a 'frequent visitor' (11) to Darlington Hall Symons is a member of that lordly order occupying he believes the 'hub' of the world and tasked as such with world-historical responsibilities (126, 115). In using her guide Stevens tries, it would appear, to frame his journey under the spiritual patronage of that order. With its singular construction of England the title of the guide - *The Wonder of England* (11) - echoes suggestively as well the notion of

national-belonging (the yoking together of national and vocational 'greatness') that Stevens tries in effect to buttress.

But if the trope of travel usually generates narratives that are acutely concerned with self-realisation in geographical space those defamiliarising and extra-metropolitan inflections identified above also block any attainment of these discursive objectives. If as Pratt argues travel writing helped 'produce' (5) the rest of the world for a Western audience, Stevens's journey might be said to challenge that process in that it refuses to write the home country according to the countervailing paradigms of order and sanity. Symbolically and morphologically entrusted with the task of engendering more geographical epiphanies of the kind that Stevens garners from his hill-top musings, Symons's guide merely gets him lost.

Of note, in particular, are two incidents that together sound the death knell of Stevens's self-abrogation principles, and, in turn, the essentialist visions examined by the novel. These occur when his radiator boils over (118) and when he runs out of gasoline (160), so that together they imbue his journey with a distinctively anti-heroic gloss. The first occurs just after he enters Dorset so that again the idea of border-crossing into unfamiliar territory is foregrounded. Seeking help with his vehicle Stevens ends up at an estate where a chauffeur's curiosity about his service history leads him to lie about his ties to Darlington (120), who after the war had been vilified for his pro-appeasement stance. This

prompts in turn a recollection of an earlier encounter with an American couple - the Wakefields - where Stevens similarly denies having served Darlington as butler (123). Stevens recalls that when the news of this encounter filters back to Farraday his anxious queries duplicate the Wakefield's more dogged probing about the supposed *authenticity* of Darlington Hall: 'I mean to say Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you' (124).

But beyond the humour of new money's anxiety to arrogate to itself the social cachet of old money Farraday's incipient objectification of Stevens also contains an object lesson for readers. For I would venture that *Remains* seeks here to parlay modern Britain's bemusement at the proverbial foreign tourist's antediluvian image of its society - that mirage of bowler hats and umbrella-toting gents - into an appreciation of the insidious nature of the stately-home cult. It encourages readers to ask whether in acceding to country-house England's claims to embody national life they risk sanctioning the kind of behaviour that they might elsewhere belittle or disparage, which is to say the kind of shallow posturing that the Wakefields and Farraday epitomise. And this is where *Remains* echoes in gentler fashion Mercer's more caustic observation that the products of the heritage industry are aimed not only at 'Japanese or American tourists'.

It is with the second encounter, however, that the conceptual climax of the novel occurs. After running out of gas Stevens again gets lost. He winds up at a village (Moscombe), at the home of the Taylors who offer him hospitality (159-64), and here he meets a villager named Harry Smith who delivers a broadside aimed at his reverence for the entire stately home order. Mistaking Stevens to be a gentleman Smith proclaims that dignity is not a preserve of the upper classes. It is something that 'every man and woman in this country can strive for and get' (185-186), and as far as he is concerned:

That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now. The whole world would be a few masters and millions upon millions of slaves. And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to being a slave...It's one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free, and you're born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me, sir (186).

This is a key moment because it is in mulling over the encounter that Stevens finally recognises the true magnitude of Darlington's betrayal in the above-mentioned ritual-humiliation episode. Together with the pain generated by his meeting with Miss Kenton (231-240), the

encounter brings home to him what he lost in adhering to his professional codes: how despite his adherence to a ‘class England in which only certain histories matter’ he was merely an auxiliary figure. With this recognition the scene is thus set for the Sartrean moment on a bench on the Weymouth pier where Stevens finally gives in to tears, acknowledging that for all his faults Darlington at least ‘made his own mistakes’ (243). In contrast, he had foolishly ‘trusted’ his employer, leaving him to make the decisions he abrogated. ‘Really’, he wonders, ‘what dignity is there in that?’ (*ibid.*)

Suez Crisis

Inasmuch as the novel builds up to the Moscombe encounter as a watershed Harry Smith obviously utters important truths. Yet what is more intriguing is the dialectical reversal almost immediately staged when he tries to elicit from Stevens what he assumes would be authoritative corroboration for his opinion that Britain’s remaining colonies should be denied self-determination. Smith recounts that Carlisle, the village doctor, supports the idea of those ‘little countries going independent’, but that whereas he does not ‘have the learning’ to ‘prove’ Carlisle ‘wrong’, he would like to know (addressing Stevens), ‘what the likes of yourself would have to say to him on the subject, sir’ (192).

Commentary on *Remains* has tended to (correctly) cite Smith’s defence of natural autonomy in the indented passage above as a fatal

dismantling of Stevens's code of service while maintaining an unhealthy silence on his imperialist leanings.⁵¹ But it is this issue of 'little countries going independent' that, I think, warrants close attention, for the question, I contend, is another extra-metropolitan inflection challenging essentialist ideologies. Smith's query stems, it would appear, from the deference of the uneducated but I would venture that the staging of a dialectical reversal here is not accidental.

This can be appreciated if we recall that it is Stevens's injudicious boasting about Eden being more of a 'key figure' than Churchill in *his* time, and also his claim to have concerned himself more with 'international affairs' than 'domestic' issues that stirs up curiosity among the Moscombe crowd (187), which in turn prompts Smith to ask Stevens his opinion about self-determination for the colonies (192). Given that it is in mulling over the whole embarrassing affair that Stevens acknowledges (through his flashback) the abject humiliation of the *earlier* foreign policy quiz conducted by Darlington's guests and designed to prove the error of expanding the electoral franchise; and given that one of the questions asked then was whether a speech made by a certain political personage on 'the situation in North Africa' was merely a ruse to 'scupper the nationalist fringe' of his party (196), that reference to 'North Africa' would seem to prefigure the Suez Crisis that would eventually confront Anthony Eden, and this concatenation, I suggest, foregrounds the episode for critical attention. Even though the two events are separated by some two decades, the fact that *Remains* yokes together the franchise-expansion

issue and the Suez crisis suggests that Ishiguro tries to channel our sympathy for Stevens (arising from the ritual humiliation) to a consideration of what the nationalist groundswell which followed Suez meant as exercises in collective self-determination. In a sense *Remains* tries to reconfigure Suez so that it is inflected not so much with the loss of the grandeur of Empire, but with a sense that as political event and as symbol it is morally equivalent to the decreased grip of class-domination in modern-day Britain.

Despite what appears to be a gathering consensus that *Remains* fails curiously to mention the Suez crisis even though it is set amid its critical months,⁵² Suez is, therefore, there lurking in the background: in the fringes of the novel's consciousness, as it were. Smith is Stevens's alter ego because it is his foreign policy query (192) that allows Stevens to see *himself* investing authority foolishly in class distinctions. Ironically, Smith's query substantiates Stevens's putative upper class status: because of his apparel and elocution the villagers mistake him for a gentleman; Stevens has not had the opportunity to disabuse them of that notion, and the novel suggests, moreover, that he takes a certain illicit pleasure in their false identification. But any social prestige he enjoys is abruptly shattered because Smith's question prompts a recall of the earlier 'North African' question and, more pertinently, Darlington's collusion in his ritual humiliation: the recollection arises, I suggest, because Eden's handling of the Suez crisis was the topic hogging the airwaves at that time. It is Smith's query, therefore, that drives home the

reality of class snobbery, of the pernicious nature of the principles Stevens had hitherto upheld.

John Sutherland suggests that if Eden had been less belligerent the Suez adventure would not have become a debacle and that, ironically, 'the world of Darlington Hall might have survived a decade or two longer'.⁵³ But I think the more pertinent conclusion in the light of the above is that Suez represents Eden's failed attempt to roll back the retreat from empire. Stevens's attainment of a modicum of self-understanding is threaded through Smith's query (and the veiled allusion to Suez) because his private illumination has a more public dimension. Just as Stevens attains a modicum of self-understanding from the encounter *Remains* suggests that nostalgic invocations of Victorian 'greatness' in contemporaneous discourse needs to engage with the watershed represented by Suez. In a book interrogating those new rightist discourses Tom Nairn quotes from *The Times* editorial of 27 August 1956 commenting on the crisis in order to draw a historical parallel, and his citation is just as relevant, I think, to the object lesson contained therein:

Doubtless it is good to have a flourishing tourist trade, to win Test matches and to be regaled by photographs of Diana Dors being pushed into a swimming pool. But nations do not live by circuses alone. The people, in their silent way,

know this better than the critics. They still want Britain to be great.⁵⁴

Post-war consensus

The discussion above suggests that Carlisle more than Smith is the ethical touchstone of the novel. For instance, he tells Stevens that there is ‘plenty of nice [motoring] country’ around Moscombe (192) and that Smith’s opinions are ‘all in a muddle’ (209), and thus is textually prompted as an alternative position on the question of self-determination for those ‘little countries’ (192). In spotting that Stevens is a ‘manservant’ (207) he corrects the exceptionalism of his earlier declaration that other countries only produce ‘manservants’ (43) while England produces butlers. And, furthermore, he is glossed as the textual opposite of that Dr Meredith who grudgingly visits Stevens’s father and then fails to appear as he lays dying (63, 94, 106, 109).

But if, as I have been arguing, *Remains* challenges a host of new rightist dogmas then the main reason why Carlisle is glossed as the voice of insight on these matters is that it furthers Ishiguro’s stated aim of contesting the tendency to lay the distempers of the time at the feet of those who tried to make Britain ‘more egalitarian’.⁵⁵ Given that the repertoire of modern conservatism included as part of its anti-statist and anti-Keynesian outlook a programmatic attack on Britain’s post-war welfarist consensus, it is significant that the novel tells us Carlisle came

to Moscombe in 1949 in what he allows was a fit of idealistic commitment to ‘socialism’ (210) to build, it is intimated, the ‘National Health [Service]’ (209) set up that year. That Carlisle is made the ethical touchstone of the novel rather than Smith with his restrictive political universalism is, therefore, in keeping with the novel’s general contestation of those new rightist developments that have contributed to the neo-liberal orthodoxy of our current historical moment.

Sentiment of Otherness

To sum up so far, I have argued that *Remains* interrogates populist invocations of an arcadian, ruralist England defiled by immigrants, organised-labour and counter-cultural trends. Stuart Tannock maintains that ‘contemporary media and political life are saturated by a number of dominant nostalgic narratives (of the Family, of the Nation, of Empire, of the Frontier) that are deeply alienating to large groups of people’ and, in this respect, *Remains* might be said to contest the dominance of some of those narratives.⁵⁶ If, furthermore, as Melanie Griffiths argues, the English countryhouse represents a still ‘powerful social myth of harmony and order in the “Edenic” garden of the English countryside’,⁵⁷ *Remains* mounts, we could add, a two-pronged assault on that social myth and that freighted landscape. In foregrounding the ‘outside history that is inside the history of the English’ the novel stages the untenability of a restrictive imagining of national belonging: it helps disabuse us of the bewitching appeal of the stately-home world.

In variously embodying the sentiment of otherness *Remains* also strongly collaborates the influential thesis proffered by historian Linda Colley, a lengthy summation of which is necessary for my argument.⁵⁸ Against an established, insular model concentrating on socio-political and economic intercourse between its component polities, Colley maintains that Britain and Britishness is the quintessential case of identity constituted in difference. She stresses the more brutal aspects of metropolitan self-fashioning, namely that it was ‘regular and violent contact with peoples’ that helped defined Britain’s imaginary contours (18). As Colley uncompromisingly puts it ‘this is a culture that is used to fighting and has largely defined itself through fighting’ (9).

As a figure of shared desire especially, Colley argues that Empire was the cultural and political entity that sustained the core of a common British identity against the pressures of nationalism on the fringe: it fuelled, for instance, the formation of a domestic-imperium ruling elite comprising English, Scottish, Welsh and to a lesser extent Anglo-Irish elements. Thus for Colley ‘the sense of a common identity here did not come into being because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead, Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and in response to conflict with the Other’ (6). Colley argues that British patriotism in particular became an important category of identity when there was a need to counter local experiences and notions of self against the Other. As such, ‘Great Britain’ is an ‘invented nation that was not

founded on the suppression of older loyalties so much as superimposed on them': it was 'heavily dependent for its *raison d'être* on a broadly Protestant culture, on the threat and tonic of recurrent war, especially war with France, and on the triumphs, profits, and Otherness represented by a massive overseas empire'.⁵⁹ Citing Edward Said's thesis that: 'the Orient...helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality [and] experience', Colley also adds that it was Britain's 'eastern and African empire' especially that came to embody 'an essential quality of *difference* against which Britishness could emerge with far greater clarity'.⁶⁰

I argued earlier that *Remains'* anatomisation of exceptionalist ideologies is sustained by the acuity of its vision. It tellingly instantiates Simon Gikandi's description of the use of 'blackness' as a mediator in the fashioning of metropolitan identity through the reference to 'African' topography during Stevens's hill-top ruminations, and, in this respect, Colley's thesis about the 'African empire' embodying an 'essential quality of difference' helps, I believe, to reinforce that argument. Again, in this regard, the significance I accorded to the 'North Africa' question in Stevens's achievement of a modicum of self-understanding dovetails as well with Colley's thesis.

Just as relevant for our purposes Colley maintains that 'understanding Britishness in this way helps to explain its late twentieth-century difficulties'. Since 'the Other in the shape of Catholicism, or a

militant France or Germany, or an exotic empire is no longer available,...the natural result has been a renewed sensitivity to internal differences'.⁶¹ For *Remains* as such this 'renewed sensitivity to internal differences' might be said to surface in Stevens's declaration that 'Celts, as you will no doubt agree', do not make good butlers (*Remains* 43). In a perceptive narratological reading of *Remains* Kathleen Wall observes that Stevens has a tendency to use certain verbal markers - in particular the appellation 'you' - whenever he makes unreliable or problematic judgements, and I think Stevens's address of the implied reader here qualifies as an instance.⁶² It is through such features, therefore, that *Remains'* perspicuity as a condition of England (and Britain) novel is sustained.⁶³

Extravagant strangers

As it happens, what I assert about *Remains* - its general contestation of new rightist exclusions - has been trenchantly underscored by its recent anthologisation in Caryl Phillips's *Extravagant Strangers: A Literature of Belonging*.⁶⁴ Drawing together poetry, fiction and non-fiction by thirty-nine British writers born outside Britain, Phillips's collection offers a fascinating view of the range of concerns and worldviews drawn into the field of knowledge termed *English Literature*. But, basically, it is a call to identity beyond essentialism. Thus in his preface Phillips states that:

The once great colonial power that is Britain has always sought to define her people, and by extension the nation itself, by identifying those who don't belong. As a result, Britain has developed a vision of herself as a nation that is both culturally and ethnically homogeneous, and this vision has made it difficult for some Britons to feel that they have the right to participate fully in the main narrative of British life...For many British people, to accept the idea that their country has a long and complex history of immigration would be to undermine their basic understanding of what it means to be British. One of my hopes in compiling and editing this anthology is that by engaging with the following writers and their work, readers will come to accept that as soon as one defines oneself as 'British' one is participating in a centuries-old tradition of cultural exchange (pp.xiii, xv-xvi).

More specifically, Phillips adds that T.S. Eliot, George Szirtes and Ishiguro are included on the grounds that 'although [their]...lives are unencumbered by the trappings of empire' their work 'exhibits an often microscopic concern with the nature of Britishness' (p.xv).

Given that *Extravagant Strangers* mobilises *Remains* to tackle exceptionalist nostrums what is telling, therefore, is that the section selected by Phillips for insertion includes the key passage discussed

above where Stevens draws links between private and public conceptions of 'greatness', which is to say when he mulls over what makes Britain 'great'.⁶⁵ My claims regarding the demystificatory and counter-idyllic or anti-pastoral design of the novel is sustained as such by that 'microscopic' examination of Britishness discerned by Phillips.

Metacriticism

I have focused so far on *Remains'* parabolic dimensions, or more specifically, its diagnostic dramatisation of dominant nostalgic narratives which work to perpetuate social exclusion. What has yet to be considered, and what I think is crucial to any critical reading of the novel, is a more difficult sense in which these demystificatory objectives are served by a quality of knowingness in *Remains* about the material and institutional conditions of its own reception and production. Put in another way, its demystificatory objectives are reinforced, I contend, by metacritical inflections that set it apart from its own discursive 'tradition', that of the countryhouse novel. If *Remains*, as I have been arguing, questions the way in which a narrow sliver of culture comes to be designated 'national heritage' par excellence, it would seem that a corresponding wariness about the literary genre or tradition from which it itself descends is needed. My position is that these metacritical inflections play a crucial role in Ishiguro's general demystificatory project, and, furthermore, that they articulate concerns which come very much to the

fore in *The Unconsoled* (1995). For the rest of the chapter I would like to delineate as such those inflections I consider significant.

The lineaments of that metacritical wariness can best be approached, I suggest, if we begin by taking the measure of two readings - the one by Melanie Griffiths cited above and another proffered by Rosemary Marangoly George⁶⁶ - which tackle *Remains* from different but related directions. For George, *Remains* is an exemplar of what she calls 'global English', which is to say an alternative canon or counter-canonical (1). Focusing on the parallels between *Remains* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), George argues that Conrad's novel provides 'a strategic fault line', a 'fictional originary for a whole genre of *international* twentieth-century writing in the English language', in which she emplaces Ishiguro's fiction (90, italics in original).⁶⁷ She takes 'strategic fault line' from Fredric Jameson, for whom the phrase refers to that aspect of Conrad's writing marking what he considers the historical *emergence* of both high modernism and mass culture, the way it floats 'uncertainly somewhere in between Proust and Robert Louis Stevenson' (89). Instead of being a 'second-class modernist' (98), however, George maintains that the specifics of Conrad's 'personal location' and 'the terrain covered by his fiction' mean that his writing is more usefully conceived as a 'generative' site for global English (89). Thus for her, 'Conrad best serves the genre of fiction in English...as a site for global writers and readers to enter, experience and exit the western world' (98).

Like George, Griffiths also undertakes a comparative reading of *Remains* but not with the objective of tracing or reworking literary lineages. Instead, *Remains* is ranged against another novel - V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) - which also devotes considerable space to an examination of the stately-home order. As previously mentioned, Griffiths observes that the homes provide a 'powerful social myth of harmony and order in the "Edenic" garden of the English countryside'. They have, as a result, an 'iconic' function: they are 'ground[s] over which different constructs of "English values"' can be contested, and, in this regard, both novels may be said to address the 'postcolonial condition of England' question.⁶⁸ For Griffiths, however, Naipaul's novel is ultimately damaged by its patrician affectations. Although Naipaul's semi-autobiographic narrator makes 'implicit judgements on the social order' represented by the stately-home milieu Griffiths argues, correctly I believe, that he over-identifies with the 'malaise it symbolizes' and fails to 'separate himself from a fascination with the power it once represented' (502). In contrast, Stevens in *Remains* 'takes us directly into a particular social order and system of values, exposing their contradictions despite his limited consciousness' (*ibid.*).

One example of that limitation, according to Griffiths, is that *Remains* does not address what Rushdie calls the 'empire within' England or, in other words, the question of post-war immigration (490). Additionally, Stevens's Moscombe mis-adventures broach without

examination the question posed by Harry Smith, that of self-determination for the colonies (493). For Griffiths, such lacunas arise because Ishiguro's 'choice of narrator precludes his direct engagement in the heat and passion of the questions raised': his 'method' is to 'suggest important issues and the debate around them' (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, Griffiths is struck by the incisiveness of the novel's examination of the 'restricted notion of "Englishness" fixed by Darlington Hall' (*ibid.*), for it is such incisiveness which makes *Remains* 'a muted example of the kind of tactics needed to allow the maneuvering subversive right into the house of fiction' (502).

But if, as I delineated above, *Remains* threads Stevens's attainment of a modicum of self-knowledge through a semi-epiphanic engagement with Suez, and if, moreover, its interrogation of new rightist exclusions targeting settlers is backed by Caryl Phillips's anthologisation, then perhaps the novel is not as 'muted' in its contestation of dominant canonic articulations as Griffiths assumes. And contra George as well that contestation might be seen to inhere not merely in its potential arrogation in a counter-canonical of 'global English'. In less circuitous fashion, we could say, *Remains* also mounts an interrogation of those invocations of a 'Great Tradition' of literature - 'here viewed as an evocation of society's inner worthiness and cumulative wisdom'⁶⁹ - where again a narrow sliver of culture works to marginalise alternative narratives.

If we move on to the metacritical inflections sustaining that move these can be discerned, I suggest, in the way *Remains* highlights Stevens's role in the reproduction of social relations. Stevens's role in policing and perpetuating the dominant social hierarchy is already underscored in the episode cited earlier where he eavesdrops on Darlington's conference guests. Nevertheless, that function is most forcefully established in the humorous episode where Darlington entrusts Stevens with the task of conveying to his godson, Reginald Cardinal, information about the birds and the bees - of what he calls 'the facts of life' (82). The telling detail here is that Darlington does this while clutching a copy of '*Who's Who*' (81), for in linking Stevens's mission with a text that quintessentially represents class snobbery *Remains* foregrounds his role in the perpetuation of privilege: literal human reproduction is used to accentuate Stevens's participation in the social reproduction of the relations of production.

But in the process, I would argue, the copy of *Who's Who* also takes on *mise-en-abyme* features. In its entirety the episode becomes a self-reflexive cautionary moment setting *Remains* apart from the type of genre it may, on first acquaintance, appear to emulate or to emanate from: one that arguably participates in hegemonic processes whereby the life-world of the stately-home milieu becomes naturalised as 'our' heritage, as, for instance, in the 1970s hit television series based on Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945).⁷⁰ Darlington's copy of *Who's Who* becomes, in other words, a metacritical inflection whereby

Remains draws attention to itself and to the conditions of its production and reception in order to forestall that naturalisation process.

In this respect, the choice of Reginald's surname is arguably another means by which that naturalisation is hindered, since we might say it points to the 'cardinal' driving force of modern capitalist sociality: the social reproduction of relations. Significantly as well, I suggest, the fact that Stevens fails to tell Cardinal 'the facts of life' is more than just a humorous play on Stevens's deficiencies in the subject, for through that failure *Remains* also establishes its thematic opposition to his social-reproductive functions. This aversion is in turn underscored by the lack of feminine or life-sustaining presence in the novel. We never get to hear of Stevens's mother and of Darlington's own family, and Reginald himself is killed during the second world war (234), all of which ties in with the main story of Stevens's failed romance with Miss Kenton to establish the novel's contestation of hegemonic articulations.

I argued above that Ishiguro reworks the sailing-out motif featured in many nineteenth century novels so that it takes place, as it were, near the *beginning* of *Remains*. That configuration means that Stevens's sailing-out from Darlington Hall acts as a curtain raiser for numerous inflections of non-metropolitan sociality. And these in turn probe hermetic or essentialist dogmas. To the extent that such an examination furthers the novel's general demystificatory project that reworking of the sailing-out motif is arguably, therefore, another indication of a certain self-

consciousness in *Remains* about its literary lineage, and about the threats posed by thematic and representational foreclosure. Indeed, as it turns out, this reworking is fundamental to the narrative structure of Ishiguro's latest novel, *When We Were Orphans*, which I will examine in a later chapter.

Finally, however, the most significant metacritical inflection in *Remains* is its anticipatory registration of critical astonishment over the shifting of narrative vision away from Japan. A certain knowingness about the likelihood of metropolitan (over)-reaction to this act of geographical-and-thematic displacement is registered, I suggest, in the humourous episode where Stevens and Miss Kenton squabble over the significance of a *misplaced* porcelain figurine. In a book which has nothing ostensibly *oriental* about it, this misplaced 'Chinaman' figurine (57-59) comes as a complete red herring. And the point, I think, is that it operates as a *mise-en-abyme* echoing Ishiguro's remarks in an interview that he hoped through the discrepancy presented by the sight of a 'super-English' novel with a 'Japanese name' on the cover to initiate a kind of critical doubletake in readers: the comments were made in an interview where Ishiguro was asked about the similarities between *Remains* and the work of 'traditional' (*sic*) writers such as Somerset Maugham, Waugh, E.M. Forster and Joyce Cary:

Sometimes it looks like or has the tone of a very English book, but actually I'm using that as a kind of shock tactic:

this relatively young person with a Japanese name and a Japanese face who produces this extra-English novel or, perhaps I should say, a super-English novel. *It's more English than English.* Yet I think there's a big difference from the tones of the world in *The Remains of the Day* and the worlds created by those writers you mentioned because in my case there is an ironic distance.⁷¹

If we return to my claim at the beginning of this chapter that the structural and figurative similarities between *Artist* and *Remains* challenge culturalist sequestration by probing the seamless quality of cultural descriptions, then that misplaced figurine works, I suggest, to sardonically reinforce Ishiguro's insistence on the performative nature of *Remains* - of how the whole point is that it is a 'super-English' novel.

By transferring notional 'Japanese' qualities of formality, repression and mania for duty onto an allegedly quintessential 'English' figure Ishiguro at one level questions the way those traits are aligned in an ethnographic fashion in the case of Japan, as well as their exorbitation in the popular-critical reception of his earlier two novels. The parallels between *Artists* and *Remains* are, therefore, also a metacommentary on the reception of the earlier works, suggesting their misconstrual when read as exposés on the 'Japanese' ethno-national character. Finding himself interpellated in stubbornly held conceptions of 'Oriental' style and manners, Ishiguro in a sense suspends the question of culture to stress

over the course of the trajectory linking Ogata-San, Ono and Stevens the notion that they have all been complicit with oppressive regimes.

But if shifting the field of vision to the western metropolis allows Ishiguro to contest culturalist sequestration by probing its binary or structural complement, which is to say the sham essentialism of the heritage industry, then the squabble over the misplaced figurine also wryly anticipates that the metropolitan literary discussion of the novel will expend considerable energy on the shift of narrative vision represented by *Remains*. The squabbling establishes the figurine as a symbol of disorder and discrepancy: when Miss Kenton tries to tell Stevens that other 'Chinamen' figurines in the house have also not been cleaned properly 'for some time' and, worse, that they are now 'in incorrect positions' (59) she is trying to get him to realise that his father has been entrusted with far more duties than he can cope. But as a wry anticipation of metropolitan over-reaction to the shift of narrative vision - a prescient move as it turns out - the episode also becomes a diagnostic dramatisation, an interrogation of the Manichean allegories that continue to insist on the necessarily particularist cast of Ishiguro's earlier novels, that they satisfy cultural voyeurism needs and nothing else. In this way the squabbling over the figurine becomes another metacritical inflection that sets an 'ironic distance', as Ishiguro puts it, between *Remains* and the conditions of its own production and consumption.

Ishiguro's claim that *Remains* is more 'ironic' or critical about status quo conservatism than the authors cited by the interviewer above is certainly open to debate. But I think enough has been delineated above to establish that the novel's general demystificatory project is sustained not only by pointed allusions to the socio-political background from which it emerged, but also by a metacritical distancing from its own literary heritage.⁷² In this respect, Rushdie's assertion in a review that *Remains* is 'a brilliant subversion of the fictional modes from which it at first seems to descend' may seem overblown.⁷³ But his comments also helpfully direct us to a consideration of that 'ironic distance' set between the novel and its ostensible forebears, as well as the performative nature of its articulation of Englishness.

World fiction industry

In this regard, a consideration of the criticism made about *Remains* by Susie O'Brien also becomes germane to our discussion. For given the metacritical inflections identified above, O'Brien's contention that *Remains* concurs in its own incipient commodification becomes highly questionable. To do justice to the importance of the issues raised by O'Brien, however, a lengthy presentation of her views will be required.

O'Brien observes, correctly, that *Remains* probes trenchantly 'the notion of benevolent paternalism which was invoked to legitimate the deployment of power by the British ruling class, both at home and

abroad'.⁷⁴ But, more problematically, she also holds that the novel is ultimately compromised by an over-amplified thematic opposition between Stevens's 'Victorian' deportment and commonplace conceptions of 'America' - 'freedom, nature, and individualism' (788) - as exemplified by Farraday's more informal demeanour and especially his love of bantering (792-94). O'Brien argues that this thematic opposition contributes to readings of *Remains* - she examines, in particular, those proffered by Pico Iyer and Bruce King⁷⁵ - which nonchalantly marshal it under the upbeat rubric of 'polycultural[ity]' and multiculturalism, but which in effect fuel a 'world fiction industry' working to neutralise or domesticate difference (788). Although superficially appealing she maintains that such evocations are suspect because they reflect and sustain a newly regnant transnational capitalism operating through a manipulative exorbitation of the affirmative values - 'freedom', 'nature', and 'individualism' - cited above. What these readings share, O'Brien insists, is their 'invocation of a monolithic colonial Britain against which visions of a "noisy and polyglot and many-hued" global village have powerful graphic and...political appeal' (800).

For O'Brien the gravamen of such views, however, is that they echo problematically Homi Bhabha's thesis about the constitutive ambivalence of colonial discourse.⁷⁶ In showing that 'the ideal of colonial power is heterogeneous with its operation', O'Brien believes that Bhabha has 'contributed significantly to the deconstruction of [its] founding principles' (801). However, she finds that:

Ironically, the critical acceptance of Bhabha's arguments has been accompanied by the reification of its central precepts of ambivalence and heterogeneity to the point that, rather than being understood in terms of a fundamental crisis within colonial authority - and, by extension, within post-colonial authority - they have been taken up as slogans for the new multiculturalism, symbolizing the positive diversity of what Pico Iyer giddily describes as 'our increasingly small, increasingly mongrel, increasingly mobile global village'. Conveniently ignored in the celebration is the effective dominance of the ambivalently constituted force of capitalism, whose 'increasingly mongrel, increasingly mobile' operation ensures its increasingly powerful hold over the global village (801-02, italics in original).

It should be clear from my discussion of Iyer, King and Todd in my introduction chapter that I support O'Brien's conclusion regarding the need for oppositional discourses to attend to the emasculatory valencies of international capital. However, I believe her location of the problem within Ishiguro's fiction is debatable. As it is, the metafictional inflections outlined above and in earlier chapters suggest that *Remains* is less sanguine about the 'world fiction industry' and its manipulative exorbitation of plurality than O'Brien makes out. Because she does not give due consideration to Ishiguro's pursuit of thematic concerns across

national borders she misses, I contend, one of the factors explaining Stevens's ultra-'Victorian' deportment, which is to say Ishiguro's wider objective of contesting exceptionalist paradigms by transferring ostensibly 'Japanese' traits onto an 'English' figure. More damagingly, the absence of detailed attention to British cultural politics in O'Brien's analysis means that she also fails to register the novel's contestation of new rightist exclusions centred around invocations of Victorian and imperial 'greatness'.

Instead of a thematic opposition between 'monolithic colonial Britain' and ostensibly emancipatory articulations, I would point out further that the book ends with Stevens pledging a vow of service to Farraday. Inasmuch as Farraday's name echoes the 'day' in the novel's title this suggests a certain discernment about contemporaneous socio-political arrangements. For here we might say *Remains* actually traces the passing of the hegemonic mantle to the United States, hence underscoring the emergence of a differently-configured, but still regnant, neocolonial formation. Nevertheless, the question posed helpfully by O'Brien - how the emergent socio-economic order marked by the dominance of multinational capital might be imbricated with metropolitan literary reception - will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.⁷⁷

Conclusion

I argued above that *Remains* is marked by an aversion to new rightist dogmas laying the distempers of the times at the feet of more progressive developments in English and British sociality. More specifically, the novel contests prelapsarian invocations of a mythical organicist England. Exceptionalist and hermetic invocations are problematised by the variously embodied sentiment of otherness that pervades the novel: these range from criticism of sentiments cathected around questions of national 'greatness' to more subtle engagement with the symbolic economies that underpin metropolitan identity-formation. In drawing attention to the 'outside history' implicated in the last, *Remains* stages the untenability of restrictive notions of belonging. At one level, therefore, it enjoins an expansion of the cultural and semantic perimeters of Britishness.⁷⁸

Additionally, there is an organic progression between the interrogation of culturalist paradigms in the early novels and the probing of metropolitan self-understanding in *Remains*. That progression suggests that the popular reception to the earlier works failed to give due cognisance to their revisionary-ethnographic impetus. *Remains*, therefore, tackles the same problem from the opposite side of the symbolic economy set up by enduring Manichean allegories.

It is with *Remains*, moreover, that a key feature of Ishiguro's writing comes into its own, namely the proclivity to refine the substance of previous work, to take their popular-critical reception as the occasion for

a self-reflexive reworking and reiteration of contestatory themes. That textual patterning operates as part of Ishiguro's effort to inscribe a viable space for a cosmopolitan, exilic and/or diasporic voice which brings to metropolitan culture an outsider's perspective. In the evocative terms suggested by the title and subtitle of Caryl Phillips's collection *Remains* registers, we might say, a finely-tensioned balance between 'extravagant stranger' and a 'literature of belonging'; it marks Ishiguro's positioning within and between two social formations. Finally, the novel's reflexivity about the conditions of its own production and reception anticipates some of the concerns tackled in subsequent work.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as *Remains* and cited parenthetically in the text.

² The quoted phrase is from Boehmer, p.199. The fact that we notice this putative lacuna is itself an indication of Ishiguro's overdetermination by the native informant tag, a question which I examine below.

³ Page, 'Speech, Culture and History', p.167.

⁴ See chapter three.

⁵ See chapter two.

⁶ Morton, 'After the War Was Lost', p.19.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bill Bryson, 'Between Two Worlds', *New York Times Magazine*, 29 April 1990, pp.38, 40, 44, and 80 (p.44).

⁹ Mason, 'An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', p.342.

¹⁰ Mason, 'Inspiring Images', p.45.

¹¹ Vorda and Herzinger, pp.14-15.

¹² Kelman, pp.73 -74.

¹³ Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985), p.142.

¹⁴ As an example of a differently articulated relationship to the past Raymond Williams observes, for instance, that 'through the seventeenth-century Diggers to the Land Chartist and the radical labourers of our own time' the 'happier past was almost desperately insisted upon, but as an impulse to change rather than to ratify the actual inheritance'. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.43.

¹⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, ed. by Anthony D. King (Basingstoke:

Macmillan, 1991), pp.41-68 (p.49). The quote refers to Hall's summation of his colonial heritage as well as that of others, namely that 'symbolically' they have been 'there [in England] for centuries'. He adds: 'I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. Because they don't grow it in Lancashire...Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolization of English identity - I mean, what does anybody in the world know about an English person except that they can't get through the day without a cup of tea? Where does it come from? Ceylon - Sri Lanka, India' (pp.48-49).

¹⁶ Paul Gilroy, '*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*' (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), p.48.

¹⁷ Paul Gilroy, 'One Nation Under a Groove: The Cultural Politics of "Race" and Racism in Britain', in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. by David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 263-82 (p.266).

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.268-69.

¹⁹ Kobena Mercer, 'Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp.43-71 (p.53).

²⁰ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York Columbia University Press, 1996), p.71. Further references to the study will be given where possible in the text.

²¹ Quoted in Graham Coster, 'Another Country', *Weekend Guardian*, 1-2 June 1991, pp.4-6 (p.6).

²² Julian Agyeman, 'Black people, white landscape', *Town and Country Planning*, 58, 12 (1989), 336-38 (p.336).

²³ David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', *Rural History*, 2, 2 (1991), 205-230 (pp.213, 207).

²⁴ Peter Bishop, *An Archetypal Constable: National Identity and the Geography of Nostalgia* (London: Athlone Press, 1995), p.134.

²⁵ Gikandi, p.86.

²⁶ See *Remains*, pp.145-46, and *Artist*, pp. 167-73.

²⁷ *On Living in an Old Country*, p.127.

²⁸ Ibid., pp.127, 126.

²⁹ Stuart Tannock, 'Nostalgia Critique', *Cultural Studies*, 9, 3 (1995), 453-64 (p.455).

³⁰ Quoted in Petry, p.105.

³¹ Quoted in Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1988), pp.109-110.

³² *The Country and the City*, p.50.

³³ Ibid., p.180.

³⁴ Ibid., p.105.

³⁵ Quoted in Coster, p.6.

³⁶ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987).

³⁷ According to Peter Jenkins, 'Victorian values made their first appearance in the repertoire of Thatcherism' in 1976. See Peter Jenkins, *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution* (London: Cape, 1987), p.66. See also Peter Riddell, *The Thatcher Government* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp.7-8.

³⁸ *The Thatcher Government*, p.231.

³⁹ Jenkins adds that Smiles's book sold 55,000 copies when it came out in 1859 (p.38). Nevertheless, opposition to the conservative appropriation of Smiles's

nostrums has been registered by Asa Briggs, who argues that 'Smiles emerged not from a conservative but from a radical background, the background of Chartism, and the Anti-Corn Law League. He was not encouraging...working men to be quiescent or deferential but to be active and informed'. See Asa Briggs, 'Samuel Smiles: The Gospel of Self-Help', in *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. by Gordon Marsden (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp.85-96 (p.87).

⁴⁰ Gordon Marsden, 'Introduction' to *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. by Gordon Marsden (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp.1-12 (p.2).

⁴¹ Martin Kettle, 'The Drift to Law and Order', in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), pp. 216-234 (p.218).

⁴² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p.312. Further references to the work are given in the text.

⁴³ See quote from Marsden above.

⁴⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, 'The Boer War', in *From the Boer War to the Cold War: Essays on Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. with an introduction by Chris Wrigley (London: Hamilton, 1995), pp.36-38 (pp.37-38).

⁴⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.202, 201. Further references to the study are given in the text.

⁴⁶ See quote from Bishop above.

⁴⁷ Pratt's citations from Burton's travelogue echo interestingly the sentiment expressed by Stevens: 'Truly it was a revel for soul and sight! Forgetting toils, dangers, and the doubtfulness of return, I felt willing to endure double what I had endured; and all the party seemed to join with me in joy' (p.204).

⁴⁸ Gikandi, p.86.

⁴⁹ Waddick Doyle, 'Being an Other to Oneself: First Person Narration in Kasuo [sic] Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*', *L'Alterite dans la litterature et la culture du monde anglophone* (Le Mans: University of Maine, 1993), pp.70-76. Further references to the essay are given after quotations in the text.

⁵⁰ Salman Rushdie, 'Outside the Whale', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books, 1991), pp.87-101 (p.92).

⁵¹ See, for example, the readings by Rocio G. Davis (1994, p.151), Deborah Guth (1999, pp.129-30), Laura Hall (1995, pp.107-08), Barry Lewis (2000, pp.88-89), Andrew Teverson (1999, p.253), Peter Wain (1992, pp.200-201), Kathleen Wall (1994, pp.34-35), and Ben Winsworth (1999, p.262). The exception is Melanie Griffiths (1993, p.493), whose reading of *Remains* is discussed below.

⁵² See in this regard Barry Lewis (2000, p.99), Salman Rushdie (1991, p.246), and John Sutherland (1999, pp.185-89).

⁵³ John Sutherland, 'Why Hasn't Mr Stevens Heard of the Suez Crisis?', in *Where Was Rebecca Shot?: Curiosities, Puzzles, and Conundrums in Modern Fiction* (London: Phoenix, 1999), pp.185-89 (p.189).

⁵⁴ *The Enchanted Glass*, p.255.

⁵⁵ See quote from interview with Ishiguro above.

⁵⁶ 'Nostalgia Critique', p.456.

⁵⁷ Melanie Griffiths, 'Great English Houses/New Homes in England?: Memory and Identity in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*', *Span*, 36 (1993), 488-503 (p.489).

⁵⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Further references to the study are given in the text.

⁵⁹ Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (October 1992), 309-29 (p.327).

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.324-25 (italics added).

⁶¹ Ibid., p.328.

⁶² Kathleen Wall, 'The *Remains of the Day* and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 24, 1 (1994), 18-42 (p.24).

⁶³ Cf. the selective quotation of Stevens's pronouncements minus the reference to 'Celts' in Barry Lewis (2000, p.81) and Peter J. Mallett (1996, p.10).

⁶⁴ Caryl Phillips, ed., *Extravagant Strangers: A Literature of Belonging* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997). Further references to the collection will be given after quotations in the text.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.280-288. Phillips extracts from pages twenty-three to thirty-one in the Faber edition of *Remains*, ending on page thirty-one at the line, 'what is a great butler?' (italics in original) Aside from the three authors cited earlier Phillips includes, among others, excerpts from the work of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano, Thackeray, Conrad, Kipling, Jean Rhys, C.L.R. James, Orwell, E.R. Braithwaite, Doris Lessing, Wilson Harris, Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Shiva Naipaul, Rushdie, Timothy Mo, Romesh Gunesekera and William Boyd.

⁶⁶ Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Further references to the study are given in the text.

⁶⁷ George argues that, among the parallels between the two novels, Miss Kenton 'serves the function that Kurtz does in *Heart of Darkness* even as she occupies the structural position that the Intended does in Conrad's novel'. In

addition, 'the "emotional restraint" that Stevens identifies as exclusively English is the very quality that Marlow sees Kurtz as lacking' (p.96).

⁶⁸ 'Great English Houses', pp.489, 502. Further references to the essay are given in the text.

⁶⁹ Such views are normally associated with the work of the critic F.R. Leavis. The definition - and implied criticism - of Leavis's position here comes from Tom Nairn (*The Enchanted Glass*, p.273). Nairn also criticises Leavis for conceptualising literary criticism as, 'a priestly calling rather like commentary on the Constitution', as 'exalted tutelage of the national community-soul', and also as 'the very essence of civilization'. See *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ For a critique of the Granada television series referenced here see Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*, pp.51-52.

⁷¹ Vorda and Herzinger, pp.13-14 (italics in original).

⁷² For clarity of presentation's sake I have separated these two areas although they are, of course, intimately related.

⁷³ *Imaginary Homelands*, p.244.

⁷⁴ 'Serving a New World Order', p.789. Further references to the essay are given in the text.

⁷⁵ O'Brien comments specifically on Pico Iyer's article, 'The Empire Writes Back', and Bruce King's essay, 'The New Internationalism', both of which I discussed in chapter one. She also comments on Iyer's review of *Remains*. See 'Waiting upon History', *Partisan Review*, 58, 3 (1991), 585-89.

⁷⁶ The two Bhabha essays O'Brien cites as contributing to this position, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', and 'Of Mimicry and Men: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', are reprinted in *The Location of Culture*, pp. 66-92.

⁷⁷ For a contrasting opinion to O'Brien see Cynthia F. Wong's study mentioned in the last chapter. In the course of an account that describes Edward Said's *Orientalism* as 'polemical' (p.10), Wong argues that O'Brien 'takes postcolonial politics to some extreme levels' (p.56). She adds, nevertheless, that 'perhaps unconsciously, Ishiguro has indeed created a "post-colonial novel" without intending to do so in either direct or subtle fashion' (p.91, n.13). Even then, *Remains* is more concerned, in her opinion, with the 'personal implications' of 'historical forces' (*ibid.*, italics in original), and especially with 'how people simultaneously deceive and protect themselves in the language they use' (p.65).

⁷⁸ My contention in this chapter that *Remains* enjoins an expansion of the cultural and semantic perimeters of Englishness and/or Britishness has been touched on in the preliminary secondary literature on the novel. Most notable are the separate readings proffered by, respectively, Laura Hall and Steven Connor. What is missing from these accounts, however, is a consideration of the new rightist exclusions identified above. And thus, while I agree with their general conclusions, I feel that the novel has been insufficiently contextualised in these readings. What is absent as well is an appreciation of the way that the enjoinder to expansion of cultural perimeters grows out of (and its complicated by) the revisionary-ethnographic concerns of the earlier novels. In my opinion, the continuity of theme between *Remains* and these earlier works as well as the metacritical inflections of the former has not been sufficiently addressed in the readings of the two critics. See Laura Hall, 'New Nations, New Selves: The Novels of Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro', in *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction*, ed. by A. Robert Lee (London: Pluto Press, 1995), pp.90-110, and Steven Connor, 'Outside In', in *The English Novel in History: 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.83-127.

He over whom Kafka's wheels have passed, has lost forever both any peace with the world and any chance of consoling himself with the judgement that the way of the world is bad; the element of ratification which lurks in resigned admission of the dominance of evil is burnt away (Theodor W. Adorno).¹

Chapter Five. *The Unconsoled*

Introduction

A key challenge in any critical reading of Ishiguro's fiction is the stylistic departure represented by *The Unconsoled* (1995). While his first three novels exhibit a large measure of social realism, *The Unconsoled* is strikingly fabulist in construction and content.² The former share certain structural features in that they all take place against a backdrop of sweeping historical change, and it is as a result of some crisis in their lives their ageing Japanese or English narrators start to reassess key moments in their pasts. The immediate pre and post world war two periods loom large in their flashbacks. And as the previous chapters demonstrated their narratives also probe forcefully some enduring exceptionalist formulations of Japanese and British sociality.

The Unconsoled, however, is strikingly different. Like the earlier novels it utilises a first person narrator who is radically unreliable. There is a shared tone of regret and melancholia. But that is where the similarity ends. Long, opaque and disorientating, *The Unconsoled* appears to be set in an Eastern European town whose ontological templates are unclear or bracketed. Odd slippages in time, place and person occur. Its narrator, a feted English pianist named Ryder, arrives to give a classical concert but keeps stumbling across acquaintances from his youth or childhood. Wandering around in a house in the countryside he suddenly finds himself back in a hotel left behind in town, and a woman and her son who are ostensibly strangers turn out to be his wife and child.

With its lack of toponymic references, its teutonic character-names, its oddly indeterminate spatial co-ordinates and curtailment of agency, *The Unconsoled* also recalls the unsettling allegorical worlds of Kafka's *Trial*, and *The Castle*. It signals loudly a break with the social realism typifying Ishiguro's first three novels. And all the while the reader is apparently expected to extend his or her suspension of disbelief to encompass the features above, as well as Ryder's extraordinary ability to access the thoughts of some of the characters he meets.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, reviewers have been left nonplussed by the change. The apparent elision of the socio-political, compared to the rest of Ishiguro's oeuvre, leads Amit Chaudhuri to criticise the book for its 'refusal' to engage the 'social shape of our age': the novel displays

'artistic vision and talent' but is overall, she insists, 'a failure'.³ A reviewer in *The Daily Telegraph* tells us that 'for months now, there have been rumours that [Ishiguro] has followed up *The Remains of the Day* - 1989 Booker Prize-winner, international bestseller, major motion picture - with a "stinker".'⁴ Another reviewer declares that *The Unconsoled* 'invents its own category of badness'.⁵ Philosopher Richard Rorty is convinced that Ishiguro has 'expanded the frontiers of the novel' but finds the work itself obscure: 'Sometimes all a reviewer can do is express appreciative puzzlement', he remarks.⁶ *The Cambridge Guide to Fiction in English* does not help matters when it labels *The Unconsoled* a 'moral quest'.⁷ And American composer Ned Rorem finds its nonsense evocation of classical music argot 'aimless', and its lengthy dream sequences 'boring'.⁸

Given its formal experimentation and unenthusiastic reception the nature of the aesthetic or authorial departure represented by *The Unconsoled* will be, therefore, the guiding exegetical paradigm of this chapter. This is necessarily a large question encompassing as well the nature of the stylistic configuration of Ishiguro's latest novel *When We Were Orphans* (2000). Nevertheless, a useful way to begin our discussion is, I suggest, to consider Ishiguro's previous use of an *unspecified* city setting in *Artist*. If we follow this up by examining the popular-critical reception accorded to *Remains* and the critical aims underwriting Ishiguro's first three novels this should set us on our way.

Unspecified setting

I cited in an earlier chapter Ishiguro's complaint about the typecasting of *Pale View* as an exemplar of an embryonic nuclear holocaust genre. The rise of that genre, Ishiguro implies, stemmed from anxiety over the Cold War deployment of American nuclear missiles in Western Europe; it was the Nagasaki setting of *Pale View* that had triggered that constraining label.⁹ What is pertinent here is his comment in a subsequent interview that although he considered using Nagasaki again as a setting for *Artist*, he finally decided on 'an imaginary city' because the former option might have led readers to misconstrue the work as 'another bomb book': 'By setting it in an unspecified venue, I could suggest that I'm offering this as a novel about people and their lives, and that this isn't some piece of documentary writing about a real city', Ishiguro remarks.¹⁰

If we recall the strength of the challenge to Japanese and English exceptionalism in Ishiguro's writing, the textual choice enacted fits, therefore, that ongoing contestation of particularist nostrums. There is an insistence that Ono's story should be framed in cross-cultural terms as something pertinent to other 'people and their lives'. And this was apparently expanded in *Remains* into an interrogation of interpretive and cultural practices that tended to reinforce Manichean allegories.

Responding to *Remains*

If those were the aims much of the popular-critical response to *Remains* was, however, disconcertingly one-track. Despite the effort to redress particularism the reception of the novel continued to replicate the tenor of earlier commentary. Thus for some critics the novel's apparent Englishness was merely a dissimulation of Ishiguro's continuing interest in the question of Japanese identity. Others homed in on the wonderment of the Japanese man's penetrating reading of English culture. Yet others concentrated on the registration in *Remains* of some ineluctable, dyed-in-the-wool Japaneseness. Taken as a whole, such commentary merely affirmed the prescience of the metacritical episode in *Remains* where Stevens and Miss Kenton squabble over the significance of a *misplaced* Oriental figurine, their argument wittily prefiguring the novel's analogous reception in metropolitan literary circles. In fine, the reception of *Remains* revealed a continuing proclivity to make the Other strange in order for the Self to be familiar.

Rather disingenuously, for instance, and despite the absence of a single reference to things Japanese, Pico Iyer labels *Remains* 'the most revealing' among the genre of books 'purporting to explain Japan to the West'.¹¹ The novel achieves this distinction because its portrayal of an obedient, self-effacing English butler 'lights up the Japanese mind from within'.¹² To Gabriele Annan, Ishiguro's first three novels are all basically 'explanations, even indictments, of Japanese-ness'.¹³ On the road, each of the 'specimens of ordinary, warm-hearted, decent humanity' encountered by Stevens are 'an argument for spontaneity, openness, and

democracy, and against Japaneseness', and thus for Annan the 'message' of *Remains* is the address of national identity: 'Be less Japanese, less bent on dignity, less false to yourself and others, less restrained and controlled'.¹⁴ In similar terms David Gurewich is struck by Stevens's love of 'ritual', his 'stoicism in performing his duties' and his 'loyalty to his master that conflicts with his humanity'. To him these qualities are 'prominent aspects of the Japanese collective psyche'.¹⁵

Because such critics deny Ishiguro the opportunity to comment on the social arrangement he grew up in, Steven Connor has correctly termed such commentary 'a form of cultural repatriation'.¹⁶ But we could well extend Connor's appellation to those responses so preoccupied with Ishiguro's mastery or otherwise of the English material that they completely elide its contestation of New Right articulations. For example, Gurewich confesses that 'one would never suspect' had Ishiguro published *Remains* under 'an assumed Anglo name'.¹⁷ Paul Gray is astonished at *Remains*' 'uncanny' verisimilitude given that England's culture has been 'notoriously impervious to outsiders and immigrants'.¹⁸ I cited in chapter two Francis King's smug appeal to readers to show understanding when Ishiguro 'gets things wrong' in his attempt to 'impersonate an English butler', and in a similar manner a reviewer in *The Atlantic* remarks that 'unquestioning devotion to duty is hardly an unlikely theme for a Japanese novelist [sic], but that Mr. Ishiguro should embody it in an English butler comes as a piquant surprise'.¹⁹

The Manichean distinctions underwriting such remarks were echoed in turn by a parallel preoccupation with the Japaneness of *Remains*. From Rocio Davis, for example, we get the inanity of the following claim that 'it is in *The Remains of the Day* that the writer reveals his own Japanese subtlety as he revisions Japan in a novel that is not even set in Japan but has as its theme six unexceptional days in the life of that most English of characters, a butler'.²⁰ Peter J. Mallett is struck by the 'gradual revelation' of character in the recognition plots of *Artist* and *Remains*. The practice is 'influenced', he maintains, by 'the gentle restraint of Japanese culture' and is an 'integral feature' of Ishiguro's art.²¹ On his part, I think John Rothfork is correct when he argues that research into the birth culture of cosmopolitan authors is an important requirement of the critical elaboration of their fiction.²² However, I feel he applies the principle wrongly when he claims that *Pale View*, *Artist* and *Remains* 'need to be read as related in order to see that *The Remains of the Day* expresses a Buddhist criticism of Confucian ethics'.²³

Supplying authenticity

Taken together, what unites the responses above seems to be an unflagging assumption of the cosmopolitan writer's responsibility as cultural informant, or in other words as a supplier of authenticity. Even the ballyhoo over Ishiguro's expatriate status carries an inflection of these nostrums, for we could well imagine a sense in which *both* acclaim and doubt over the verisimilitude of the English material reflect prelapsarian

suppositions. Precisely what Connor warned against seems to have gained ground, which is to say a propensity to see *Remains* as a novel where ‘the alien eye of the Japanese immigrant writer discloses a once-present but now lost essential Englishness’.²⁴ In so doing, however, such responses miss what I argued earlier regarding Ishiguro’s contestation of English and Japanese exceptionalism: they occlude the reaction in *Remains* against the demand that the cosmopolitan writer render for the benefit of metropolitan audiences *authentic* accounts of exotic locales and cultures; they neglect its criticism of the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain, and they neglect as well the novel’s negotiation between Ishiguro’s British and Japanese patrimony.

Realm of metaphor

Given such a reception, and given that the critical moves I outlined above were elided by reviewers’ preoccupation with Ishiguro’s expatriate status, it is perhaps not surprising to find him lamenting in exasperation: ‘I sometimes feel that if I had written a book like Kafka’s “*Trial*,” people would say to me, “What a strange judicial system the Japanese have”’.²⁵ Just as revealing is Ishiguro’s claim that commentators overlook the allegoric or parabolic dimensions of his novels when they read them as historical fiction and nothing else. In Ishiguro’s words:

If there is something I really struggle with as a writer,...it is this whole question about how to make a particular setting

actually take off into the realm of metaphor so that people don't think it is just about Japan or Britain...You have to create the setting in your novel that feels firm enough, concrete enough, for people to be able to find their way around it. On the other hand, if you make it too concrete,...people start saying, 'Oh, that's what it was like in Japan at a certain time,' or, 'He's saying something about Britain in the 1930s...It is something that I feel I haven't quite come to terms with yet, but I'm trying to find some territory, somewhere between straight realism and that kind of out-and-out fabulism, where I can create a world that isn't going to alienate or baffle readers,...but a world, which, at the same time, can actually prompt readers to say that this isn't documentary or this isn't history or this isn't journalism. I'm asking you to look at this world that I've created as a reflection of a world that all kinds of people live in.²⁶

Since *The Unconsoled* is replete with Kafkaesque touches - one of the most prominent of which is its departure from 'straight realism' - an initial observation we can make is its attempt to circumvent the literal-mindedness that plagued the reception of Ishiguro's earlier works. Because of their identifiable settings these works were read as historical Japan or Britain with their contestatory resonances largely effaced. The elision of geography in *The Unconsoled* is, therefore, an attempt to

accentuate allegorical dimensions so that it can ‘take off into the realm of metaphor’. And just as *Artist* had sought access to the universal, to the realm of ‘people and their lives’, so does *The Unconsoled* insist on being a (stylised) rendition of a world that ‘all kinds of people live in’.

The use of an unnamed city in *Artist* is thus arguably a precursor to the more ambitious move in *The Unconsoled* to dissolve locality altogether. The move bespeaks the strength of the culturalist nostrums bedeviling Ishiguro and a corresponding determination to elude them. And this would seem to dovetail with what I argued earlier concerning an authorial proclivity to rework the substance of earlier work in order^{to} re-state contestatory positions. Each of Ishiguro’s novels appears to take into account the reception accorded previous work in order to counter their incipient domestication or neutralisation. For as we have already seen an attentiveness to the accepted wisdom on minority writing is a recurring feature: *Pale View* rejects the heroic-migration template; in my account, *Artist* responds to exoticist sequestration by registering shared historical trajectories, and *Remains* offers itself for comparative juxtaposition alongside *Artist* in order to unsettle Manichean presuppositions.

But once alerted to this essentially metacritical dynamic two things about *The Unconsoled* appear strikingly salient. They suggest, in fact, a way past its seemingly opaque and disorientating construction, a way to account for some recurring tropes and concerns. These are, firstly, the

novel's rewriting or pastiche of *Remains*, and, secondly, that it narrates an artist repeatedly failing in what he sets out to do.

Aesthetic failure, aesthetic curtailment

The latter is the most memorable feature of *The Unconsoled*. As mentioned earlier the protagonist, Ryder, is supposed to give a recital. But from the start he is hampered by a host of absurdist obstacles underscoring the *curtailment* of agency. He loses his itinerary on the flight and it never gets replaced. He is waylaid by a succession of townspeople with inane demands that prevent him from rehearsing for his concert. In surrealist fashion he lurches from one outlandish errand to another. Over the course of three days - and accompanied by the odd slippages mentioned earlier - Ryder judges musical rehearsals, tries to reconcile estranged families, pleads the cause of a disgraced former conductor, causes a public scandal when he accidentally intervenes in local politics, and even serves as the guest of honour at the funeral of a stranger. Behind all these requests is the omnipresent expectation that he will transform the cultural life of the city and restore the morale of a community gripped by a profound despair. Yet the reason for that despair and that exorbitation of the foreign artist's role is never reliably established.

In any event, Ryder never gets round to giving his performance. He fails to dissipate the mysterious gloom hanging over the town, to

mend its many broken relationships, and also his own as well. Throughout the sojourn he indulges in blame displacement, projecting onto his wife responsibility for various family problems. Despite repeated attempts their efforts at reconciliation come to naught. As the novel ends Ryder is on his way to Helsinki, apparently choosing a nomadic existence over meaningful affective attachments.

Reworking *The Remains of the Day*

Just as revealing is the way the novel takes a special delight in deflating those expecting, so to speak, a second helping of *Remains*. Ryder's first significant encounter is with Gustav, a hotel porter who in Stevenesque fashion launches into a lengthy declamation on his luggage-handling policy, speaking with the same seriousness with which Stevens discusses butlering (5-10). The pastiche extends to Gustav's account of his actions following the death of a pet hamster belonging to his daughter, Sophie. His inability to express solicitude as she lies crying in her bedroom, the rationalisation of this incapacity as a mark of concern for her welfare rather than a shortcoming, and even his perambulations outside her door while he wrestles with his natural inclinations recalls Stevens's actions following the death of Miss Kenton's aunt, so that he becomes a caricature of the character flaws manifested in Stevens.²⁷

In turn the masochistic inflections of such deep-set affective ineptitude culminates in an extraordinary set piece in which, together with

other members of an association of hotel porters, Gustav stages a dance-cum-weight-lifting display that eventually kills him.²⁸ Gustav's death recalls the death of Stevens's father, apparently from overwork, and even his porters' association appears to be a send-up of the 'Hayes Society' of butlers eulogised in *Remains*.²⁹ Moreover, it is not just Gustav who resembles Stevens and his father. With his exaggerated sense of public duty and stifled self-deluding voice Ryder too appears to be a parody of the two. All of which leaves us wondering whether the rewriting or pastiche of *Remains* in *The Unconsoled* is an attempt to redress popular misconstructions of the earlier work.

Thesis

Given this pastiche and the aesthetic curtailment motif, my contention, therefore, is that *The Unconsoled* should be read meta-critically as an ironic troping on the existential pressures and acquisitive agendas besetting its predecessors. Tom Wilhelmus has suggested that *The Unconsoled* is 'a striking moral commentary on the conditions under which art must be created and consumed',³⁰ and likewise Brian Shaffer claims that the novel explores 'the problematic position of the artist in society', that it 'interrogates "professionalism" as well as the myriad shortcomings that often hide behind professionalism' (91-2). But what I am proposing is both more situated and more politically-grounded than the anodyne, universal art worker alluded to by Wilhelmus and Shaffer. Indeed, my proposal also goes beyond a reading of *The Unconsoled* as

merely the apogee of earlier efforts to *evade* culturalist sequestration through elision of geography.

My argument, rather, is that the novel goes one step further to probe the conditions of possibility of such interpretative shortcomings. Ishiguro has remarked that *The Unconsoled* ‘could be seen to be about the third week of an American [book] tour’,³¹ and despite the apparent frivolity of that remark it, nevertheless, helps point us forward. For I would contend that *The Unconsoled* mounts a dramatic diagnosis of Ishiguro’s own reception in the broader metropolitan literary-critical discussion. It represents the apotheosis of the attentiveness to popular reception mentioned above in that the novel tackles the domesticatory articulations responsible for the emasculation of his earlier works, which means that Ishiguro also clarifies what is at stake in the satisfaction of metropolitan literary taste. In this sense *The Unconsoled* is a parodic rendition of aesthetic emasculation resulting from domestication; it is a self-burlesque of Ishiguro’s commodification in metropolitan culture as a supplier of English and Japanese *authenticity*.

If the oppositional impetus of *Artist* and *Remains* were effaced by the exorbitation, respectively, of their supposed ‘high-brow art’ and ‘countryhouse England’ subject matter, *The Unconsoled* brings together these two modes of domestication for dramatisation. That is why the townspeople in the novel link their search for a cultural luminary with the recuperation of some redemptive, organicist collectivity. And not

surprisingly, both endeavours end in notable failure. A metacritical rendition of that wider literary reception is, therefore, a way to recover the oppositional resonances of both *Artist* and *Remains*, since *The Unconsoled* satirises the popular reception of these novels in order to counteract their co-optation by, respectively, the tropes of Art and Arcadia. It insists that instead of being read as sources of authenticity attention should be paid to the novels' counter-hegemonic themes.

Since a common misconception of *Remains* as a disclosure of a 'lost essential Englishness' allowed the novel to be co-opted by the heritage consumerism it sought to interrogate, a metacritical examination of the production and reception of *Remains* allows Ishiguro to portray and fend off the incipient emasculation of his earlier work. He needs, that is, to reiterate themes raised in *Remains* because of co-optation; the pastiche of the novel becomes a way for Ishiguro to distance himself from such a development. Hence the pastiche is metacritical in its ambit as well; the two key features of the novel - its rewriting of *Remains* and the motifs of artistic failure cum curtailment - are related, because in tandem they highlight for discussion and critique important features of metropolitan literary discussion.

Most importantly, this self-burlesque makes *The Unconsoled* a commentary on the *general* reception of cosmopolitan authors as well: it highlights powerful acquisitive processes that threaten domestication. In my account it is the entire trajectory of Ishiguro's work culminating in the

need under the force of circumstances to adopt the techniques of self-irony and fabulism in *The Unconsoled* that is telling. For seen in its proper dimensions that trajectory becomes a revealing indictment of some of the falsely celebratory rhetoric surrounding the reception of cosmopolitan cultural production that I sketched out in my introduction chapter.

Kafka's wheels

Put in a different way, Ishiguro turns to Kafka for the same reasons adduced by Theodor Adorno for the significance of high-modernist art, or what he calls 'autonomous' art. For Adorno, autonomous art is art that resists appropriation by a reified social order which has succumbed to the logic of consumerist capitalism: it refuses even the option of loudly proclaiming its opposition, as in the case of the so-called 'committed' writings of Bertolt Brecht, because in making meaning accessible it risks co-optation by the instrumental rationality responsible in the first place for a reified social order. But as a result, as with Kafka's writings, it is, therefore, able to arouse fears which the existential philosophers 'merely' talk about. As Adorno sees it, it is the 'inescapability' of such literature that 'compels the change of attitude which committed works merely demand'.³² And as the chapter epigraph above suggests, autonomous art is then able to combat a tendency in bourgeois culture to turn to art for 'consolation', because that in effect ratifies the socio-economic order itself responsible for decoupling the symbolic and the social.

But whereas Adorno juxtaposes autonomous art to a 'culture industry' that he blamed for the weakness of insurgent projects in First World social formations,³³ Ishiguro writes in a historical moment where that industry circles the globe: it promotes the cultural production of minority citizens and also assimilable products from non-metropolitan sites. While all artists face the threat of co-optation and commodification what is illustrative about Ishiguro's contestation of appropriation, therefore, is the way it illuminates the reception and discussion of minority and/or cosmopolitan writers. The curtailment of agency characterising Kafka's work is yoked to the service of an ironic commentary on metropolitan literary-critical discussion, which is to say that Ishiguro courts incomprehensibility in order to challenge the proclivity to paint cosmopolitan authorship in objectifying terms as a category thoroughly irradiated by culture and-or biology.

Authorial development

Just as importantly, a metacritical optic helps, I think, to situate the stylistic experiments undertaken in *The Unconsoled*. To the extent that experimentation with novelistic form signals an insistence on access to the universal it repeats - in a different key - the move Ishiguro made when he switched the field of vision to the western metropolis in *Remains*. For if the earlier textual move was based on curiosity whether 'people could appreciate me purely as a novelist as opposed to a Japanese novelist',³⁴

the clichéd responses to *Remains* would have suggested that he still had much work to do in this arena.

But at the same time it needs to be stressed that experimentation is more than a question of responding to stereotyping. Beyond that it also maps out new ways to address abiding concerns, as well as new avenues for authorial development. This can be appreciated if we examine Ishiguro's argument that he is experimenting in *The Unconsoled* with an alternative manner of writing a person's life which obviates the need for flashbacks. His comments are worth quoting at length:

It's a biography of a person, but instead of using memory and flashback, he bumps into other versions of himself - projections of how he fears he might end up;³⁵

This way of telling a story was something I've been wanting to do for some time...I wanted to have someone just turn up in some landscape where he would meet people who are not literally parts of himself but are echoes of his past, harbingers of his future and projections of his fears about what he might become;³⁶

This character appropriates people, the people he runs into stand for various parts of his life. They exist in their own right but they are also being used to tell the narrator's

story...It's just a different way of telling someone's life and if people don't grasp it the book will seem to be directionless or disparate,³⁷

A character wanders into a situation where the people he meets in some way illustrate him and his relationships in the past, or in the possible future. They aren't literally him as a child or whatever, but he appropriates them. This has always appealed to me, partly because it's an exaggeration of the way people relate anyway. We use others to orchestrate the things we're talking to ourselves about.³⁸

In the light of the above, the nature of Ryder's interaction with the townspeople, therefore, becomes clearer, for in doppelgänger-inflected fashion it would seem they are *telling* the story of his life. It appears that Stephan, a young musician, is a 'version' of the young Ryder. Brodsky, the disgraced conductor whom the town's denizens try to rehabilitate, is a projection of Ryder's deepest insecurities. Sophie and Boris, the daughter and grandson of Gustav, are Ryder's wife and son, and, additionally, Boris's experiences also illuminate various aspects of Ryder's own unhappy childhood.

Just as Sachiko's story in *Pale View* illuminates Etsuko's dilemma, the various 'echoes', 'harbingers' and 'projections' of Ryder in *The Unconsoled* help weave in, therefore, the background to his story. The

way doppelgängers obviate the need for flashbacks underscores the continually regnant hold of the past on the present, and this preoccupation with the workings of memory suggests that the exilic and/or immigrant self-fashioning so prominent in Ishiguro's earlier novels continues to feature in an important way in *The Unconsoled*.

Ishiguro has stated that he sought without success in *Pale View* to capture the 'murkiness of someone trying to wade through their memories, [of someone] trying to manipulate memories'.³⁹ In the same interview he implies that those objectives were not met then because *Pale View* was not defamiliarising enough, and thus the proliferation of doppelgängers in *The Unconsoled* suggests that he takes up again the project of articulating that 'murkiness'. In this respect, *The Unconsoled* is, therefore, less of a departure than might seem on first glance. Similarly, cognisance of the subject matter of Ishiguro's earlier television play *The Gourmet* - a black comedy about the plight of the homeless which ends with the protagonist 'catching' and eating the 'flesh' of a ghost - suggests that his push into the fabulist realm is not as atypical as the reviewers cited above suggest.

That Ishiguro returns to *Pale View* to develop recurrent concerns suggests a rethinking of the trajectory that his first three novels mapped out, a turn away from their 'realistic' configuration in order to explore the possibilities opened up by fabulist narration and devices. In this sense the attempt to capture the 'murkiness' of memory fits the metacritical

framework I am proposing. The examination through doppelgänger figuration of how we ‘use others to orchestrate the things we talk to ourselves about’ dovetails with the framework as well, and thus we might say the form of the novel mirrors its content: the use of alter-egos that obviates the need for flashbacks helps to further the novel’s investigation of aesthetic appropriation and curtailment.

Metacommentary

Several recurrent motifs in the novel fit a metacritical framework, as I intend to demonstrate. For instance, the apocalyptic mind-set of the townspeople; the way they constantly refer to ‘crisis’ (12, 99, 101, 128, 200); to the town being ‘hopelessly lost’ (126); to putative ‘turning point(s)’ (107, 232, 347), and ungrasped opportunities or ‘what if(s)’ (374) in the town’s civic life can be read as a pastiche of the idiom of interminable decline that fuels heritage consumerism. To the extent that such a mindset accounts for the emasculation of *Remains*, Ishiguro responds, that is, with the *reductio ad absurdum* of a world thoroughly suffused by melancholia and an exaggerated monumentalisation of the past. That is why these attitudes are the main affective states of the novel, why they find expression in its title, and also in the host of characters compulsively fixated on some past injury or trauma. As in *Remains*, that is, *The Unconsoled* criticises prelapsarian invocations, and this is reinforced by self-parodic pronouncements such as ‘things were

good here in the good old days' (103), and 'this was a happy community once' (97).

But just as heritage consumerism and appeals to Victorian values obscure the inequities of Victorian class society, the townspeople's laments seem to lack any discernible foundation. Instead, the theme of the past being *disproportionately* memorialised is underscored by the exorbitant nature of their obsessions: for some reason Gustav is unable to breach a putative '*understanding*' that, he believes, prevents him from expressing affection for Sophie (82, italics original); an ex-schoolmate of Ryder's is weighed down by memories of his university days: because his friends consider him to be merely a comic he needs to go for counseling (302); Stephan's father, Hoffman, is oppressed by the idea that he is not the social and artistic equal of his wife, insisting that his situation is 'desperate' (353), and, finally, a town official's eulogy for a seemingly lost, more wholesome way of life peters out in a bathetic description of children gathering leaves in a park (97).

The unwarranted mummification of the past is most revealingly parodied, however, in the hullabaloo over Ryder's accidental intervention in local politics. The incident arises when he is manipulated into taking publicity photographs that feature as their backdrop a monument dedicated to a long dead but controversial personage named Sattler, with the upshot that these photographs are then touted as expression of support for the man (267). However, the exact nature of Sattler's legacy is

irritatingly vague. We are told that he has ‘a [profound] place in the *imagination*’ of the town’s denizens and a ‘role’ that has become ‘mythical’, that he is sometimes ‘feared’, sometimes ‘abhorred’, and that at other times ‘his memory is worshipped’. Yet the exact substance of his legacy is frustratingly elusive (374, italics in original).

But that is precisely the point, for as a town official, Pedersen, tells us Sattler’s appeal stems from that vagueness. He ‘holds an attraction for certain people *precisely because* he’s so distant’. For in fact anyone proposing to ‘reintroduce him as a serious prospect’ would actually cause ‘panic’ (375, italics in original). Echoing the criticism of heritage consumerism in *Remains, The Unconsoled* underscores, in other words, the self-deception needed for a selective monumentalisation of the past to serve the existential pressures of the present.

Likewise, the novel’s parody of the idiom of interminable decline continues in the episode where Ryder stumbles across a group of mourners making ‘full-throated cries such as might emerge from a victim of prolonged torture’ (365-66). The suggestion by some townspeople that a statue be erected to honour Brodsky’s pet dog, Bruno, also comes across as a travesty of heritage mania and its propensity to promote mawkish sentimentality (142).

A metacritical interpretation illuminates in turn the demands made of artists such as Ryder, Brodsky, and another musician named Christoff,

which is to say those artists tasked with transforming the cultural life of the town. In my account, the townspeople's exaggerated search for cultural luminaries is an ironic comment on the demands made of cosmopolitan writers, and that is why the three are all outsiders who have fetched up in the community. Their figuration trace Ishiguro's commodification as a supplier of Japanese and English authenticity, and this is sustained, I believe, by the authorial allusion that Ryder makes when he tells Sophie that 'I still have more trouble with French than I do with Japanese. Really, I get by in Tokyo better than I do in Paris' (249). Despite the acclaim they initially enjoy, however, Ishiguro underscores their essential fungibility, for when Ryder asks Stephan what will happen after the failure of the project to rehabilitate Brodsky his answer is illuminating. What the townspeople want will be someone '*a little different*', Stephan says, '*a new name at least*' (522, italics original).

Vocational failure

Viewed this way, what saves the novel from the self-indulgence that can impair metafictional approaches is its autopsy on metropolitan literary taste. This comes across most forcefully in the figuration of Brodsky. If, as Ishiguro suggests, Brodsky is a projection of 'how Ryder fears he might end up', and if, additionally, Ryder's travails are a metonym for aesthetic curtailment, then the figuration of Brodsky appears to articulate authorial anxieties as well. Pedersen acknowledges that what the town wants is an artist who 'share[s] our values' (113), and thus

Brodsky's figuration might be said to protest against the way in which the exilic resonances of Ishiguro's earlier works were yoked to the evocation of some past civic or civilisational grandeur. The nature of that nostalgia is then suggestively alluded to in the townspeople's apocalyptic warnings about their inability to measure up to the likes of 'Stuttgart' (128, 374) and 'Antwerp' (374). This is also where the novel's parody of *Remains* comes into its own, for it is in this way that Ishiguro distances himself from his commodification as a supplier of 'lost' authenticity and grandeur - he proffers a diagnostic dramatisation of that entire imbroglio.

Brodsky's potential in this regard is already demonstrated by the lachrymosity that occasionally overcomes him when, entranced by memories of the 'old country', he peruses 'turgid-looking volumes of history' in the town library (110). During Ryder's encounter with the mourners at the cemetery mentioned earlier, his status as a projection of Ryder's deepest vocational fears is underscored in deictic terms when he stands 'directly over' Ryder on a tombstone (371): his role in the fuelling of nostalgia and exaggerated lament is intimated in the depiction of him marshalling with 'a strange authority' (371) the emotions of the gathered mourners, almost as though he is a conductor playing on their emotions. And likewise his role in fuelling mawkish sentiment and exaggerated grieving is underscored when he advises the mourners to 'caress' their 'wound' while it is 'raw and bleeding', or in other words to stoke their grief in order to prolong it (372).

Brodsky in concert

However, it is Brodsky's performance at the concert near the end of the novel that most strikingly establishes Ishiguro's use of a metacritical framework to criticise aesthetic sequestration. As prefigured by the cemetery encounter Brodsky is valued because of his ability to stoke the townspeople's interminable lament, and thus that assignment is elaborated in absurdist fashion through dumb spectacle. Before the performance Brodsky suffers what appears to be a horrific car crash, and until just before his appearance the pace of narrative revelation keeps us in a kind of horrified awe. Having undergone an apparent on-site amputation Brodsky appears to be maintaining a mock-heroic insistence on performing despite the accident. The surrealist construction of the novel make us unsure whether to continue suspending our disbelief over the amputation. And then in one of the comic highlights of the novel Brodsky performs, as it were, by hobbling around on stage with a freshly amputated stump and an ironing board as a crutch (488-89).

These misconceptions are quickly overturned because we learn that in that phantasmatic car crash Brodsky had merely dislodged a prosthesis and incurred some superficial bleeding. Brodsky *is* disabled, but the accident responsible for the missing limb occurred long ago in childhood (464). But that is precisely the point, because Ishiguro suggests through the episode that the nostalgic longing which elided the critical inflections that, for instance, Caryl Phillips saw in *Remains* is akin

to Brodsky's dumb-spectacle performance. As his former paramour, Miss Collins, puts it, Brodsky is obsessed by the 'wound' (498) he received during his childhood accident and that is why he cannot form meaningful affective attachments.

In classical Freudian terms, Brodsky's obsession betokens that melancholia which issues when the *work of mourning* is uncompleted, when the survivor is unable to withdraw libidinal attachment from the lost object-of-love,⁴⁰ and which, as John Bowlby explains, can manifest itself in a clinical variant he terms 'chronic mourning'.⁴¹ Interestingly, the psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok are struck by the 'recurrent image of an open wound' in the Freud essay advancing these categories,⁴² so Brodsky's obsession with his childhood 'wound' is a fitting rendition of that chronic mourning underwriting the idiom of interminable decline and heritage consumerism. Yet by making the car 'accident' a phantasmatic one *The Unconsoled* also indicts the town's propensity to indulge in this chronic mourning; it criticises the fact that migrant encounters are used to buttress neoconservative objectives in public discourse.

Such nostalgic invocations are then wickedly burlesqued when Ryder peruses at one point a 'Lost Property' inventory and spots a hyperbolic entry for 'Genghis Khan' losing 'the Asian continent' (471), the suggestion being that these places were never his to 'lose' in the first place. That the townspeople are wedded to some palliative form of

mourning has already been suggested by the mob violence which threatens to erupt when the death of Brodsky's pet dog jeopardises his performance (127). But, additionally, the appeal of chronic mourning is underscored when Ryder tries again after the concert to give his speech. Ryder means to outline in this speech his analysis of the local 'crisis' that he has apparently 'come to assess' (289). Yet as Stephan perspicuously warns him, 'it's not worth it...They won't listen even to you now. Not after that performance from Mr Brodsky' (522-23). And it is through such episodes then that *The Unconsoled* trains a spotlight on the townspeople's interminable lament, hence encouraging the metacritical interpretative framework proposed above.

Pursuant to Brodsky's role as a projection of Ryder's vocational insecurities it is, therefore, entirely congruent that before the concert Ryder himself accidentally gives permission for the putative amputation: he mumbles an absentminded 'yes' while talking to the doctor who is ruminating on the subject, and this is comically construed as permission for the amputation (439). Ryder has the *potential*, in other words, to become a Brodsky, and hence the absurdist manifestation of this capacity is the 'hacksaw' he gives the doctor from the boot of a car (442-43); he furnishes, as it were, the tools for his own vocational abasement.

In this respect, a suggestive indication of the insidious function accorded to Brodsky comes in the description of the recital following his dumb spectacle performance. In the words of the text Brodsky ignores:

the outer structure of the music...to focus, instead, on the peculiar life-forms hiding just under the shell. There was a *slightly sordid quality* about it all, something close to *exhibitionism*, that suggested Brodsky was himself profoundly embarrassed by the nature of what he was uncovering, but could not resist the compulsion to go yet further (492, italics added).

That Ishiguro stages Brodsky's recital as a moment of *exhibitionism* appears to be another allusion to the imbrication of cosmopolitan cultural production with metropolitan existential demands. He stages, in other words, a hyperbolic rendition of chronic mourning. Brodsky is fixated on some trauma suggestive of geographical dislocation which he keeps feeding and exploring through his art; the townspeople are drawn to just this feature of his work, and this in turn gestures at the authorial anxieties underwriting that figuration.

Aesthetic propitiation

If we return to Pedersen's statement concerning the town's search for artists who 'share' its 'values' (113) the nature of that search can now be elaborated. For here, I would contend, *The Unconsoled* shows in the figuration of Brodsky that both artist and audience can share an emotional and cognitive investment in the notion of lost geographical space. The experiences native to the life of the cosmopolitan or exilic

writer - separation as desire - prepares him in his creative work to nourish the cognate obsessions and fixations of the townspeople. In scrutinising the domestication of *Remains* Ishiguro unearths, that is, a libidinal economy in which the exilic resonances of the novel was arrogated to a kind of palliative nostalgia, to mourning that has become melancholia.

Ryder wonders at one point, for example, whether the taking of the earlier mentioned publicity photographs could have led to the fact that he was being 'ignored' by some of the town's inhabitants (270). He chastises himself for not proceeding 'with greater caution over the matter of the Sattler monument', protests that the decision had seemed the 'wisest' possible then, but that now he realised it had been a mistake to skip a scheduled meeting with the 'Mutual Citizens Support Group' (377). The name of this body appears to be a sardonic reference to the insidious appeal of prelapsarian discourses and heritage consumerism, so that, again, Ishiguro appears to be alluding to a lack of foresight over the populist (mis)appropriation of *Remains*.

If we consider that in its broad lineaments *The Unconsoled* tells the story of an artist whose placation of childhood trauma becomes co-extensive with the interminable mourning of a community, Ishiguro appears to be questioning, that is, whether the application of his favoured modus operandi to the writing of *Remains* was partly the reason for that emasculation. This pertains to his avowal that 'the best writing' comes from addressing a 'wound' or a 'lack of equilibrium', and from the

'consolation' attendant on the creation of fictional 'world[s]' that make up for that wounding.⁴³ In this context the chronic mourning or inconsolability registered in the title of *The Unconsoled* alludes we might say to both that libidinal economy and this writerly modus operandi, and this is sustained in turn by Miss Collins's chastisement of Brodsky for his obsession with his 'wound', for seeking merely 'consolation' from his art and his relationships (498).

The parody of *Remains* in *The Unconsoled* is in one sense, therefore, a gesture of propitiation to critical anxieties, with Brodsky's figuration acting as a kind of exorcisation of Ishiguro's branding as a purveyor of authenticity in metropolitan literary-critical circles. Brodsky's figuration as a projection of Ryder's vocational fears is in a sense an authorial apologia for the way *Remains* became transformed on some accounts into its diametrical opposite, which is to say into a lament for lost grandeur that shades potentially into imperial nostalgia. And, in my opinion, the imbroglio is accurately if unwittingly registered also in the headline of the previously mentioned Daily Telegraph article - 'The Artist Formerly Known as Populist' - which appeared after the publication of *The Unconsoled*.⁴⁴ Perhaps more than the sub-editor responsible realised, the headline captures, I am suggesting, *The Unconsoled*'s contestation of authorial circumscription under the rubric of faux-romanticism and retrograde nostalgia. It goes about setting a distance between itself and (the 'populist' misconception of) *Remains*. Hence Ishiguro's pronouncement that, unlike its predecessor, *The Unconsoled*

could not possibly make a transition to the big screen as 'a Merchant-Ivory production or a big hit...It would have to be an art movie'.⁴⁵

This is also perhaps why the name of the novel's central protagonist echoes Charles Ryder, the narrator of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. While it may not be possible for modern sensibilities to read Waugh's apologia for the stately-home order and remain sanguine about its retrograde sympathies, it is perhaps possible to read *Remains* as an eulogy for that order, elide its trenchant criticism of New Right articulations and then indulge in the idea that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. By naming Ryder after Waugh's protagonist *The Unconsoled* signals its discomfiture we might say with such aesthetic co-optation, for here 'Ryder's' encounters are couched in such surrealist fashion that - unlike Waugh's novel - it cannot be used to promote status quo conservatism.

Ishiguro has described Ryder's perambulations as an allegory for our deep-seated adherence, often without realisation, to 'other people's agendas'.⁴⁶ This is a recurrent theme in Ishiguro's work and suggests that the gesture of propitiation also stems from the stated realisation of a lack of 'control' in the professional arena.⁴⁷ That Ishiguro elsewhere calls *The Unconsoled* 'a balance between an articulate statement and a tentative exploration of the self'⁴⁸ sustains, again, our metacritical framework viz. the novel's interrogation of the culture industry. And it is in this context, moreover, that some of Ishiguro's less flattering comments about

Remains - 'it wasn't such a satisfying book to write'⁴⁹ - also become more explicable.

In addition, my contention that the concert near the end of the novel is a metaphor for metropolitan literary-critical discussion is also sustained by the question-and-answer-session that Hoffman plans for Ryder, in what appears to be a thinly veiled allusion to the accoutrement of book promotion. That Hoffman wants to use an 'electronic scoreboard' (381) for the session glosses it with the mantle of a sports event, and this also reinforces the novel's criticism of commodificatory articulations.

Ryder in concert

Nevertheless, the acerbity of Ishiguro's criticism of aesthetic sequestration is maintained if we consider that, aside from Brodsky, Stephan also gets to perform. Leaving aside for the moment the interregnum performance by Ziegler, the town librarian (483-87), this means that only 'versions' of Ryder's life story get a public airing. Ryder's artistic competence or otherwise is not established and for some reason no one expresses surprise about it. But this is also the point. For, as a result, this arrangement mimes the specific limits of inclusion for cosmopolitan authors, the fact that they can only enter the dominant culture, as Rasheed Araeen puts it, by 'showing their cultural identity card'.⁵⁰

These limits of inclusion can be quickly indexed if we consider Timothy Brennan's criticism that cosmopolitan writers 'are unable to enter the scene of letters as innovators in the way, for example, that a talented North American novelist without ethnic baggage might be packaged as the rude boy or girl of a new generation'.⁵¹ Brennan is commenting specifically about the North American arena, but given that the last is the dominant market for anglophone writing, his assessment holds weight here as well. As stated in an earlier chapter Brennan argues that such aesthetic circumscription arises because of the propensity in metropolitan literary reception to fetishise migranthood, and in this regard Brodsky's obsession with his wound might be deemed a sardonic rendition of those readerly pressures.

Echoing Brennan, Tomo Hattori has criticised what he calls an 'ethnic autobiography'⁵² paradigm operating in the field of Asian-American letters, as a result of which minority authors are assumed to have a natural impulse to write 'in character' (217) about their 'ethnic-national selfhood' (219), and I think a similar aversion is registered in *The Unconsoled* as well. The concert mimes in sardonic fashion it would seem the culturalist labels that have haunted Ishiguro's career: the fact that only *versions* of Ryder's life - in the way of Stephan and Brodsky - get an airing illustrates the Orientalist and exoticist pressures besetting the reception of his work. Hence it is not just Brodsky's performance that reflects the discursive constraints affecting cosmopolitan cultural production but the entire concert proper.

What most strongly commends a metacritical optic as such is the explanatory elegance it gives to the narrative progression, with the concert operating as the logical development to the constraints generated by aesthetic circumscription. In this sense we might say *The Unconsoled* is a troping, parody, and supervention of these discursive constraints: Ryder fails to give his recital because his expected task, so to speak, is to tell the story of his ‘life’ through Brodsky and Stephan, who do get to perform at the scheduled concert. Yet the use of fabulist narration also allows us to gain a metacritical optic on this arrangement.

The wit and ingenuity of Ishiguro’s reply and narrative solution lie, that is, in his observation of the letter but not the spirit of such aesthetic-discursive sequestration. Since there are specific limits of inclusion for cosmopolitan writers, as a result of which they can only enter the dominant culture ‘by showing their cultural identity cards’, and since commentary on metropolitan sociality tends to be disregarded or to go unnoticed, Ryder’s non-performance at the concert conforms, as it were, to this restriction. Since what Hattori calls a ‘regime of ethnicity’ (221) restricts the minority author to writing ‘in character’ about his ethnic being, Ryder can only recount his ‘life story’ through the performances of alter egos such as Brodsky and Stephan. The deictic configuration of the concert in turn maps these discursive constraints, with Ryder peering down on Brodsky and Stephan from the high vantage point of his cupboard cubby-hole, which appears to be a literalised rendition of how memory and sentiency operate (476-77). Nevertheless, Ishiguro also

infringes these decrees by putatively adhering to them, since the fabulist construction of the novel actually encourages us to read the action in terms of larger parabolic categories: it helps the novel ‘take off’, as Ishiguro puts it, into the ‘realm of metaphor’.

If we turn to Ziegler’s performance his poetry recital might then be termed a sardonic dramatisation of what such restrictive paradigms imply, namely that writers stick to confessional testimonials. This explains why his poetic output is merely the most mawkish and inane reiteration of his *life* experiences: he writes bathetically about ‘fish in the city park, snowstorms, broken windows remembered from childhood’ (483), and about ‘different cats owned by his mother’ (484); his artistic development apparently undergoes a seismic change after he discovers his wife’s infidelity (485). When he starts to eulogise Brodsky his poetry again strikes a farcical note on the theme of confessional celebritisation, with images of ‘Brodsky hurling spears from a hilltop at an invading army, Brodsky grappling with a sea serpent, [and] Brodsky chained to a rock’, followed by bathetic depictions of his ‘bus-shelter tragedy’ and his ‘glittering show of valour on a school outing’ (486-87). In this way as such Ishiguro directs attention at the discursive constraints which elided the oppositional concerns of his earlier works.

Failed agency, failed communication

So argued, Ryder's non-performance at the concert is indeed an appropriate culmination to the fact that he keeps failing in what he sets out to do. That he is constantly thwarted in his concert preparation efforts and in his errands tropes the persistent domestication of Ishiguro's earlier writing. But this means that the theme of discursive circumscription is also raised in those instances where agency spectacularly fails him just as he assumes his status as an artist of alleged aesthetic worth. Most painfully at a reception arranged by a childhood friend, for example, Ryder can only make 'strangled grunt(s)' when called upon to announce his professional status (239); as he struggles without success he also sees his features reflected 'pig-like' in a mirror (240).

At a banquet in honour of Brodsky, Ryder is, again, tongue-tied when called to act in his professional capacity. He has spent time working on an official speech,⁵³ but when he stands up to deliver it his gown suddenly gapes open to reveal his naked body (143); he regains his bearings and clammers onto a chair to speak again but finds this time that 'over half the guests have left their tables (145). Yet it is in this way then that his actions prefigure Brodsky's subsequent 'exhibitionism' during his performance (492). That Ryder can only *exhibit* his body is a stylised cum absurdist rendition of the fact that confessionalist or 'ethnic autobiographical' testimony is the primary and approved means of entry into the dominant culture, for it is precisely the horizon of expectations formed by these prescriptions that led to Ishiguro's objectification as a supplier of Japanese and English authenticity.

As a figure for artistic muzzling or sequestration such motifs dovetail, additionally, with Ryder's encounter with a group of townspeople playing cards in a cinema, heedless of the movie being screened (103); at the concert proper the same group of card players get together to harass the hapless Ziegler, hence replicating the theme of aesthetic inconsequence or irrelevance (484-85). And continuous with these articulations are thus those situations where, although Ryder can hear the townspeople, what he says is studiously ignored or goes unregistered. At the reception for Brodsky, for example, Ryder's relative anonymity contradicts his supposed importance to the town's cultural life (124-48). When he meets up with a journalist and a photographer they discuss their plans to manipulate him into a public scandal - the Sattler incident mentioned above - as if he isn't there (166-67, 182). And at an art gallery Ryder loses his temper at the guests' unwillingness to listen to him, at their provincial preoccupation with their 'closed little world' (271). In a similar manner the mystifying pronouncements about modern music in the novel also add to the emphasis on the lack of meaningful communication or exchange (185, 197-98, 201-02).

As metaphors for discursive straitjacketing, Ryder's travails finally reach their apogee in his encounter with a stretch of brick wall covering the entire breadth of a street blocking his progress to the concert venue (387). The wall is, appropriately enough, a tourist attraction. Ryder points out that it is an unjustly-preserved relic and proceeds to harangue the owner of a nearby 'gift shop' selling 'postcards' of the attraction, so that,

again, the practice of heritage consumerism and the nostalgic monumentalisation of the past is suggestively raised:

You put up with it for the best part of a century, you make postcards of it and believe its charming. This brick wall charming? What a monstrosity! I may well use this wall as a symbol, I've a good mind to, in my speech tonight (388).

It is through such motifs and metacritical intimations, therefore, that the theme of discursive curtailment is kept foregrounded throughout the book.

Gourmands

In addition to the motifs of failed agency and communication the larger theme of aesthetic commodification is also troped by the novel's suggestive use of the food motif. At various times Ryder is offered food by the townspeople, and in the closing scene his failed reconciliation with Sophie and Boris is followed by him taking victuals from a buffet at the back of a tram (206-7, 367, 533). The tram itself plies a circuitous route so that the episode reinforces the lack of emotional growth on Ryder's part (534). The novel ends with him forsaking Sophie and Boris and apparently embarking on a path that will lead to him *becoming* a Brodsky, and thus we might say his partaking of food bespeaks that potential.

Ryder opts, that is, for non-affective sustenance, and hence his partaking of food at various times in the novel acts as a metonym for this decision.

What needs to be stressed, however, is that Ryder is not the only one who turns to food. In fact the entire town troops off for a sumptuous communal meal after the concert (523-24). Surprisingly as well no one questions his absence at the concert. Yet this should not be surprising because, after all, Ryder *has* performed when in the guise of Brodsky he provided the mawkish sentimentality expected of him. Thus the communal meal might be deemed a literalised rendition or concretisation of what the concert amounts to: it mimics the expropriation of cosmopolitan cultural production already troped by the concert.

This narrative strategy can be traced, I believe, to Ishiguro's television play, *The Gourmet*. Just as the protagonist's obsession with exotic foods in the play mocks conspicuous consumption by literalising the vehicle of the metaphor - jaded palate - customarily used to express gratuitous consumption, the townspeople's communal meal concretises we might say the notion of aesthetic co-optation and appropriation. In this sense the meal is an apt corollary to the concert's absurdist rendition of aesthetic circumscription. To the extent that it calls to mind the protagonist's obsession in *The Gourmet* it reinforces the proposed metacritical framework viz. the exoticist emasculation of cosmopolitan cultural production. Likewise, the 'peppermints' and 'cellophane'-wrapped cake offered to Ryder when he stumbles onto the cemetery mourners

appear to trope the notion of the past being conceived in a romanticised, rose-tinted, manner (367). And in a more speculative vein we might even say that the venue for the meal - a 'conservatory' (522) - alludes to the potentially retrograde nature of such a move.

Dreamwork

This concretising strategy participates, furthermore, in the oneiric logic which drives forward the plot of the novel. It is a recurring narrative device and is important because it constitutes, I would contend, what Fredric Jameson calls the 'symbolic enactment of the social within the formal and the aesthetic'.⁵⁴ The last can be appreciated if we look to what yokes together several apparently enigmatic incidents. For example, at one point Ryder expresses a fear that he might publicly embarrass himself by walking into a broom cupboard, and in the very next moment he is performing that exact farcical move (278). In another incident Ryder is gazing at the ceiling of his hotel room when it suddenly *assumes* the contours of his childhood home 'on the borders of England and Wales' (16). The surrealist episode appears to be a stylised rendition of how a flashback might appear to an apprehending consciousness, but what is most surprising is that Hoffman later alludes to it when he says that his favourite hobby is the renovation of hotel rooms to 'match...[the] vision(s)' in his head (121). Echoing and in some ways *concretising* these flashbacks - Ryder's tendency to brood on his childhood - Hoffman states that he is practically 'obsessed' with redecoration once he sees the

potential of a particular room. 'Perhaps it's some sort of defect in my nature', he declares (*ibid.*).

I have already mentioned how the townspeople's excessive monumentalisation of the past is literalised in the absurdist suggestion that a 'statue' be erected to commemorate Brodsky's pet-dog (142). Yet another example of this concretising dynamic at work in the novel is the intimation that what Ryder calls his 'training' sessions (171-72), stems from a desire to block out an unhappy childhood. The sessions involve a kind of mental desensitisation exercise which as a boy Ryder would practice by calling to mind his desire for parental attention and then 'fight[ing]' them off (172). That he is unable as an adult to express affection for his son appears to stem from those exercises. But since his actions amount to what might be called a suppression of his unhappy childhood, which is to say an idealisation of his parents, Ryder also has a fantasy that they will make a fairy-tale arrival at his concert in a horse-drawn carriage (379). He also fantasies about his mother living in the turret of a castle (515). Elsewhere as well the emotional baggage associated with family conflict is hypostasised into the items of luggage featured in Gustav's 'porter's dance' (395-407).

As the desensitisation exercises show, Ryder has a tendency to indulge in defensive make-belief. But in the manner of the concretising or literalising dynamic outlined above that propensity then accounts for the proliferation of motifs, events and encounters in the novel where make-

believe and gaming feature or are alluded to. The concretising propensity explains, in other words, those episodes which feature people playing cards (103, 484), board games (281), and 'house' (171). It also surfaces in the fantasy games Ryder plays as a boy (261-64), and perhaps in the episode where Ryder and Sophie watch a science fiction movie (93).

Anita Brookner suggests in a review of *The Unconsoled* that 'the logic of the [book's] procedure is never in doubt',⁵⁵ and expanding on her comment we might say that its plot and events are driven by the dictates of Freud's *dreamwork*, by the processes that he marshals under the rubric 'displacement' and 'condensation'.⁵⁶ The episodes, incidents and details cited above suggest by accumulation that plot development in *The Unconsoled* is basically a matter of displacement and/or condensation. And the paradigmatic instance in this case would be the incident where Ryder's childhood flashback is echoed by Hoffman's declaration that he likes to redecorate rooms. For a useful capsule summary of how this dreamwork procedure operates we might turn then to August Strindberg's explanatory prologue to his work *A Dream Play* (1901-06):

I have in this present dream play sought to imitate the incoherent but ostensibly logical form of our dreams.

Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable.

Time and space do not exist. Working with some insignificant real events as a background, the imagination spins out its threads of thoughts and weaves them into new

patterns - a mixture of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, impossibilities and improbabilities.⁵⁷

Put in another way, what the dream logic amounts to is a situation where the properly *inanimate* or non-sentient comes to life. Yet this is also a logical corollary to the emasculation of aesthetic agency delineated above. What predominates in *The Unconsoled*, in other words, is a pattern whereby human and aesthetic agency is replaced by an involuntary oneiric logic operating at the level of narrative form, which is to say at the level of plot. An apparent metacritical allusion to this pattern, moreover, is the episode where Ryder and Sophie watch a screening of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, since the most intriguing incident of the movie is the mysterious sentiency achieved by a computer named HAL (93). That *The Unconsoled* utilises doppelgänger figuration fits this pattern too since its *modus operandi* lies in the way that (properly inanimate) memories and fears attain ontological being in the shape of, for instance, Brodsky and Stephan.

In a discussion of *The Unconsoled* Barry Lewis has also pointed to the dream logic underwriting the novel, showing how it utilises the categories of displacement and condensation.⁵⁸ But unlike Lewis, who opts to stop there, I would argue that we need to link this oneiric logic to the theme of aesthetic emasculation demonstrated above. A narrative strategy in which the properly inanimate and non-sentient drive *forward* the plot of the novel foregrounds the lack of human agency, and more

specifically the problem of aesthetic appropriation. In the terms proposed by Jameson, *The Unconsoled's* commentary on the metropolitan reception of cosmopolitan cultural production is *symbolically enacted*,⁵⁹ therefore, at the level of form, at the level of the dream logic pervading the novel.

Kafka reconsidered

The above suggests, in addition, why Ishiguro adopts in his depiction of Ryder the pattern of unconsummated actions, false starts and general paralysis of will typifying Kafka's protagonists. If, as Adorno remarks, Kafka's work is 'an attempt to absorb' in formal literary terms the totally reified society of monopoly capitalism and its corollary attenuation of agency,⁶⁰ *The Unconsoled* attempts an analogous appreciation of the late-twentieth century operation of this instrumental rationality in the field of cosmopolitan cultural production by articulating a related vision of thwarted agency.

Adorno also claims that the effect of reading Kafka is that 'each sentence says "interpret me"',⁶¹ and, in this respect, *The Unconsoled's* aggressive push into the realm of Kafkaesque expressionism might be taken as a mark of authorial determination to elude the culturalist nostrums attending the reception of earlier works: it signals Ishiguro's insistence that critical attention be paid to the themes and concerns registered therein, that attention be paid to the text.

Criticism and responses

So far I have argued that *The Unconsoled* should be read as a metacritical troping on the culturalist and Manichean pressures besetting Ishiguro's career. The novel takes up and extends these strategies into a full-blown framework in order to probe recurrent cultural practices, and as a result it helps unveil significant features of metropolitan literary discussion. I suggested that this metacritical configuration is characterised by the portrayal and scrutiny of a libidinal economy affecting the reception of Ishiguro's earlier works, with particular emphasis on the role of Brodsky's concert-performance as a metaphor for aesthetic domestication. I also argued that the use of dream logic in the novel mimes the theme of aesthetic commodification, which is to say that it constitutes a symbolic enactment of the social within the formal and the aesthetic.

If we move on to the wider significance of such a configuration, the topic is best approached, I believe, by a consideration of the separate readings of *The Unconsoled* proffered by Sheng-mei Ma and Mike Petry. The nature of the co-optive pressures discussed above can be clarified further, I suggest, by a careful consideration of the problems attending these readings. Of the two it is Petry's reading as well as its implications that are more worrying, but I will begin with Ma.

My reading of *The Unconsoled* is in a sense the obverse of Ma's, who is critical of what he deems to be disaffiliatory valences in *The Unconsoled*. In chapter two I questioned Ma's argument that *Pale View* is marked by self-Orientalising proclivities, and insofar as he levels the same charge at *The Unconsoled* my objections there stand here as well. As stated in that chapter, Ma is convinced that Ishiguro's post-*Pale View* work is marked by a 'suppression of ethnicity' (72) in favour of 'universalist parables [that go] beyond identity politics' (74). He believes that in reacting against the 'Orientalism' bedeviling the reception of his earlier works, Ishiguro has 'turned reactionary', as evinced by his pursuit of 'postethnic' themes in *Remains* and *The Unconsoled* (80). In Ma's opinion the use of white narrators in *Remains* and *The Unconsoled* underscores Ishiguro's failure to address his own position as 'an Asian minority living in the West' (81), and hence the charge of racial passing registered in the title of Ma's essay.

While I support Ma's larger project of affirming difference, what is underlined by *The Unconsoled's* pursuit of the domesticating logic by which cosmopolitan cultural texts are commodified is, nonetheless, the metropole's ability to neutralise counter-hegemonic discourses. In this context Jameson's salutary caution comes to mind, namely that any articulation of 'radical difference' - whether gender or culture directed - is susceptible to appropriation by that 'strategy of otherness' that Edward Said termed Orientalism.⁶² Ma's insistence that Ishiguro write, so to speak, a slice-of-(cultural)-life novel overlooks his interrogation of the

metropole's ability to emasculate oppositional discourses by arrogating them under a particularist rubric. He argues that the novel's formalism, 'stylization' (72) and 'lack of anchoring or contextualizing' (78) references represent the apogee of cultural disaffiliation. However, as my account has attempted to show, these were precisely the kinds of narrative devices used to allegorise and portray aesthetic co-optation.

Instead of shirking the task of 'self-representation' (Ma, 81) and of dissolving socio-historical particulars, the rendering of Ryder-as-Brodsky shows how certain textual strategies are vulnerable to a libidinal economy arising from the address of exilic concerns. Moreover, the move to scrutinise metropolitan literary discussion represents the apogee of an authorial trajectory distinguished by attentiveness to appropriative agendas, as well as the pursuit of counter-discursive objectives.

This is not to say that all slice-of-life approaches are critically stillborn at birth, or that domestication and exoticisation cannot be circumvented, only that these issues in Ma's analysis need to be addressed. Ma writes from essentially a North American perspective, and to the extent that debates in Asian-American writing reflect and shadow the dominant culture's presentation to minorities of a Hobbesian choice between absorptionism and enclavism, they are also, in my opinion, false options. Staging the issue in those terms merely pressurises minorities into the service of dominant hegemonic interests.

In my understanding, Ma's insistence that Ishiguro address his status as an 'Asian minority' fails to accommodate the greater exilic charge of his writing. In questioning his reading of *Pale View* earlier, I pointed to the novel's lack of interest in the self-fashioning of hyphenated identities. That observation is applicable to *The Unconsoled* as well. For what bears repeating is the lack of *comparable* levels of East-Asian migration in Britain, and also the differences in political culture which mean that the adoption of hyphenated identities to claim social and legislative space is not so readily operable. Anglo-Japanese lacks the semantic density that Japanese-American or Asian-American possess, and this is also to underline how Ishiguro's situation is to some extent unique. Indeed the choice of making Ryder's doppelgänger encounter the engine which drives forward the plot of the novel may be termed a textual sedimentation of the material differences in the demographic setup of the two social formations, so that the option of portraying a communal life-world has generally been foreclosed in Ishiguro's case. The historical conjunction from which Ishiguro writes makes the option of 'claiming Britain' in the way that Asian-American letters seeks to 'claim America'⁶³ unavailable. And that is perhaps why the slogan adopted for a recent British Council project aiming to promote greater pluralism was 'Re-inventing Britain'.⁶⁴

Beyond binarism

In any event, the criticism of appropriative articulations in *The Unconsoled* assumes even greater urgency when considered in the light of the reading proposed by Mike Petry, which I would like to outline in some detail. According to Petry, *The Unconsoled's* numerous 'dreamlike' (135), 'Kafkaesque' (141), and enigmatic features underscore Ryder's general dislocation and 'lack of orientation' (143). Together with the book's 'strange spatial and temporal proportions' (134) these features make him a 'hyperbolic fictional representative of the fragmented subject of postmodernity' (143). For Petry, the 'blurred, obscure, [and] uncertain' world of *The Unconsoled* dovetails with the fact that 'reality' is socially and discursively 'constructed' (145-46). And hence the novel should be read as 'an extended metaphor of the subject's supposed fragmentation in the late twentieth century' (7).

That fragmentation is signaled in turn by a quality of 'eclecticism' exemplified by the 'jet-setting' life of Ryder, a quality that in Petry's opinion characterises contemporaneous 'postmodern life' (144-45, italics in original). Explaining what this eclecticism entails Petry remarks - quoting French theorist Jean-François Lyotard - that 'one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong' (*ibid.*). While allowing that such a jet-setting lifestyle is not available to many, Petry maintains, nevertheless, that:

The phenomenon of *eclecticism* [is a]...general feature of contemporary life: an older, ordering ‘either/or’ paradigm seems to have given way to a new, confusing, serial ‘and-and-and-and so forth’ logic in many domains of contemporary existence (145, italics in original).

Insofar as *The Unconsoled* exhibits these features Petry believes, therefore, that ‘we may indeed read [its] fictional characters, and the relationships between them, as symbols and allegories for postmodern life and the habitual everyday dilemmas connected with it’ (*ibid.*).

While the link isn’t explicitly made, a programmatic rejection of the termed ‘either/or’ paradigm appears to underwrite a peremptory dismissal earlier in his commentary of what Petry assigns without discussion as ‘post-colonial’ approaches to Ishiguro’s fiction. In his words, ‘all kinds of “Centre/margin approaches” to Ishiguro’s writing strike me as missing the crucial point’ (15). Petry does not deign to elaborate on the paradigm shift responsible for this expansive claim, but it is under the imprimatur of a move beyond the constraints of ‘either-or’ dualism, which is to say of the postmodern condition as he conceives it, that he proposes to set aside the separate readings (of *Remains*) proffered by Melanie Griffiths, John Rothfork, Meera Tamaya and Susie O’Brien (15, n.29). Hence, ‘they will not affect this study more than marginally’, he declares (16).

Now postmodernism and its cognate term postmodernity are notoriously slippery terms.⁶⁵ It appears in the usage above that Petry considers the postmodern condition to be a fundamental datum of our present social existence. He also glosses it as an attribute of contemporary cultural praxis, although the link between the two - the question whether postmodernity refers to an artistic style or to a form of periodisation - is underspecified. To the extent that Petry deems fragmented, decentred or 'eclectic' experience to be a constituent of the postmodern condition as he conceives it there are, however, several things debatable about his formula.

To begin with there is the question whether in making the postmodern condition more or less a *condition humaine* Petry risks eliding the specific reasons for the recourse to fabulist narration in *The Unconsoled*. Given the persistent culturalist prescriptions besetting the reception of Ishiguro's fiction Petry's claim that Ryder's figuration and relationships are 'symbols and allegories for postmodern life and the habitual everyday dilemmas connected with it' begs the question of whose existential dilemma he speaks for.

By taking a text that seeks to circumvent and foreground the discursive limitations besetting cosmopolitan authorship as registering instead the anxieties of postmodernist de-centring, Petry repeats, it would seem, the co-optive gestures and articulations that Ishiguro has battled against since *Pale View*. He thereby overlooks the entire trajectory of

Ishiguro's work culminating in *The Unconsoled*, the determination to elude domestication which this trajectory betokens, as well as the exilic and oppositional themes addressed earlier. Marginality and dislocation is expanded into a general social condition. Yet Petry's generalisation of the novel is then precisely the scenario Ishiguro maps out when he dramatises in metacritical terms the manner in which the townspeople seek out artists who putatively share its 'values', culminating with a communal meal to reiterate for good measure the theme of aesthetic annexation and commodification. Petry stages the issue as a toss up between theoretically simplistic formulations - those that retain the notion of an identifiable margin - and more sophisticated versions which have transcended 'centre/margin' or binary paradigms (read postmodernism); hence his dismissal of the readings of Griffiths, Rothfork, Tamaya and O'Brien. But as my introduction chapter shows these are precisely the kinds of formulations that are open to exploitation by those looking to further the interests of multinational capital.

As the apogee of an authorial trajectory shaped under the force of circumstances to adopt metacritical and fabulist strategies to elude aesthetic co-optation, I would contend, additionally, that *The Unconsoled* fundamentally questions the manner in which cultural production traversed by the experience of geographical dislocation are glibly arrogated as the metropole's existential dilemma. In her discussion of the metafictional genre form Patricia Waugh suggests that we use the term 'metafiction' to specify fictional work that 'self-consciously and

systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality'.⁶⁶ Yet as my discussion of *The Unconsoled* above shows a metacritical or metafictional construction need not be inveterately an investigation of the kind of epistemic questions that theorists of postmodernity might, for instance, want to pose. As *The Unconsoled* demonstrates, self-referentiality and the highlighting of textual constructionism need not necessarily address the so-called crisis of representation. It can be used to draw attention to discursive and aesthetic domestication as well. Ishiguro has stated that he finds 'very tedious...the kind of book whose *raison d'être* is to say something about literary form',⁶⁷ and in this regard, I believe, we would do well to keep in mind Kumkum Sangari's argument that there are 'different modes of de-essentialization' apart from the 'crisis of meaning', and that, furthermore, theoretical and interpretative practices need not always privilege the last.⁶⁸

Memory and manipulation

I have concentrated in my analysis on *The Unconsoled*'s use of a metacritical framework to interrogate restrictive literary-critical practices. But the sense in which it is an attempt to delineate the operations of memory needs, finally, to be stressed. This pertains to the stylistic experimentation undertaken in the novel and is especially noticeable in its treatment of spatiality and temporality. At one point, for instance, we are with Ryder and his son Boris as the latter orders confectionery in a town-

centre coffee shop (164-65); Ryder goes off for an interview with a journalist in the courtyard outside; they go off for a photoshoot, and he eventually fetches up in a roadside truckstop apparently miles away from town (192). But then in the very next moment he walks through a door at the back of the truckstop and is back again with Boris, thus straining our suspension of disbelief (203-04). Elsewhere, the same odd elasticity appears to characterise the novel's geographical terrain as, for instance, when Ryder drives out to an engagement in a countryside mansion only to find himself back in the hotel left behind in town (120-24, 147-48). In yet another episode Ryder - accompanied by Sophie and Boris - drives after a 'red car' that is supposed to lead them to an art gallery; yet when they reach there after what seems like an interminable journey they discover an abandoned wreck at the front of the gallery that turns out, coincidentally and implausibly, to be the ruins of Ryder's old childhood family car (244-62, *passim*).

Such episodes are immensely defamiliarising and contribute substantially to the novel's oneiric ambience. But they are explicable if we recall, as mentioned above, the sense in which the novel tries, I believe, to capture the 'murkiness' of a person wading through and 'manipulating' his memories. It delineates, that is, a consciousness so preoccupied with the past that temporal distinctions are effectively dissolved or bracketed, which is to say that time is rendered as space: Ishiguro presents in quasi-phenomenological terms, as it were, the experience of an apprehending consciousness as it wades through the past. The past is 'alive' and is

articulated together with the narrative present; at other times, it appears, different experiences in the past are also pleated together, hence obviating the need for flashbacks (and flashbacks-within-flashbacks). Thus, for instance, in the coffee-shop episode mentioned above the defamiliarising effect of the spatial elasticity encourages a reading of Ryder and Boris's subsequent visit to a housing estate - where they search for what they call 'the old apartment' (204) - as an articulation of elements of Ryder's own childhood. In turn, the logic of that narrative arrangement carries across to Ryder's discovery, as he peers into one of the windows in the homes of the estate, that he is looking at the 'parlour' of a house that his parents and him had lived in long ago in Manchester (214).

The manner in which the past comes alive in *The Unconsoled* suggests, as mentioned earlier, the exigencies of exilic and/or immigrant self-fashioning: the novel's hyper-melancholic ambience means that Ishiguro can continue to attend to the 'consolation'⁶⁹ that he self-professedly draws from creative work; yet its metacritical and defamiliarising attributes also help to fend off and problematise the culturalist and faux-Arcadian invocations that have bedeviled his career. This double move in which the continuously regnant hold or claim of the past on the present is underscored together with the rejection of prelapsarian discourses is important to keep in mind, because it comes to fore in *When We Were Orphans*, which can be read as the effort to reclaim nostalgia for counter-hegemonic ends.

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', trans. by Francis McDonagh, in *Aesthetics and Politics*, by Ernst Bloch and others (London: Verso, 1980), pp.177-95 (p.191). I am indebted to Neil Lazarus for his help in drawing my attention to this quote.

² Despite their address of specific social conditions, it should be noted that Ishiguro's first three novels are not conventionally 'realist' works. Their radically unreliable narrators undermine the quest for transparent, stable perspectives and thus may be said to problematise 'realist' aesthetic norms.

³ Amit Chaudhuri, 'Unlike Kafka', *London Review of Books*, 8 June 1995, pp.30-31 (p.31).

⁴ James Walton, 'Arts Interview: The Artist Formerly Known as Populist', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 May 1995, p.AB4.

⁵ James Wood, 'Ishiguro in the Underworld', *Guardian*, 5 May 1995, p.5.

⁶ Richard Rorty, 'Consolation Prize', *Village Prize Literary Supplement*, October 1995, p.13.

⁷ *The Cambridge Guide to Fiction in English*, ed. by Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.149.

⁸ Ned Rorem, 'Fiction in Review', *Yale Review*, 84, 2 (1996), 154-59, (p.159).

⁹ See chapter two.

¹⁰ Mason, 'An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', p.340.

¹¹ Pico Iyer, 'Waiting Upon History', *Partisan Review*, 58, 3 (1991), 585-89 (p.585).

¹² Ibid., p.587.

¹³ Gabriele Annan, 'On The High Wire', *New York Review of Books*, 7 December 1989, pp.3-4 (p.3).

¹⁴ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁵ David Gurewich, 'Upstairs, Downstairs', *New Criterion*, 8, 4, (1989), 77-80 (p.80).

¹⁶ 'Outside In', p.107.

¹⁷ 'Upstairs, Downstairs', p.80.

¹⁸ Quoted in O'Brien, pp.797-98.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.797.

²⁰ Rocio G. Davis, 'Imaginary Homelands Revisited in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro', *Miscelanea*, 15 (1994), 139-54 (p.144).

²¹ Peter J. Mallett, 'The Revelation of Character in Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Remains of the Day" and "An Artist of the Floating World"', *Shoin Literary Review*, 29 (1996), 1-20 (p.19).

²² John Rothfork, 'Zen Comedy in Postcolonial Literature: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*', *Mosaic*, 29, 1 (1996), 79-102 (p.81).

²³ Ibid., p.82.

²⁴ 'Outside In', p.111.

²⁵ Bryson, p.44.

²⁶ Vorda and Herzinger, pp.16-17.

²⁷ *The Unconsoled*, pp. 83-85; *Remains*, pp.176-77.

²⁸ *The Unconsoled*, pp. 395-407, 421-25, 453-54, 467-75, and 525.

²⁹ *Remains*, pp.31,33.

³⁰ Tom Wilhelmus, 'Between Cultures', *Hudson Review* 49, 2 (1996), 316-22 (p.322).

³¹ Boyd Tonkin, 'Artist of his Floating World', *Independent*, 1 April 2000, p.9.

³² 'Commitment', p.191.

³³ *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.120-167 passim.

³⁴ Krider, p.150.

³⁵ Jaggi, p.28.

³⁶ Sybil Steinberg, 'Kazuo Ishiguro: A Book About Our World', *Publishers Weekly*, 18 September 1995, pp.105-06 (p.105).

³⁷ Julia Llewellyn Smith, 'A Novel Taste Of Criticism', *The Times*, 3 May 1995, p.17.

³⁸ Walton, p.AB4.

³⁹ Mason, 'An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', p.337.

⁴⁰ See 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953-74), XIV, 239-58.

⁴¹ John Bowlby, *Loss, Sadness and Depression*, vol 3 of *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), p.147. Bowlby prefers the designation disordered or 'chronic mourning' to melancholia. He adds that: 'Clinical experience and a reading of the evidence leaves little doubt of the truth of the main proposition [of Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia'] - that much psychiatric illness is an expression of pathological mourning - or that such illness includes many cases of anxiety state, depressive illness and hysteria, and also more than one kind of character disorder' (p.23).

⁴² Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.135.

⁴³ See chapter one.

⁴⁴ Walton, p.AB4.

⁴⁵ Jaggi, p.28.

⁴⁶ 'Those few days are supposed to be emblematic of the way we go through our whole lives...*Other people's agendas* crowd in on our circumstances and we're just stumbling through. But occasionally we stop and look back and pretend that we actually made the decisions. And in that sense it is a book about our world'. The quote is from Steinberg, p.105 (italics added). Ishiguro states in another interview that: 'We go through life rather like this guy goes through these four or five days. He's very aware of this patch as he's moving along, but it's an illusion to think we carefully plan our lives...You're pushed around by *other people's agendas* and accidents, all this time making an effort to say, "Yes, I decided this consciously". We tend to think we're in far more control than we are'. Krider, p.153 (italics added).

⁴⁷ 'When I was 32 I had a certain view of how the world worked and now I am beginning to realise how little in control I am'. Smith, p.17.

⁴⁸ Philip Hensher, 'Smart Arts', *Harpers and Queens*, May 1995, pp.20-21 (p.21).

⁴⁹ 'It wasn't such a satisfying book to write; I didn't feel it was stretching my capacities' (Hensher, p.21). Elsewhere, Ishiguro states that: 'It [*Remains*] was never a book I had tremendous affection for. I don't dislike it, but it was well within my capabilities at the time. The techniques were tried and trusted, I knew how the bulk of readers would receive certain effects' (Walton, p.AB4); '[The first three novels] were young men's books...now I feel ready to try bigger things' (Smith, p.17).

⁵⁰ Rasheed Araeen, 'A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics', *Third Text*, 50, (2000), 3-20 (p.16).

⁵¹ *At Home in the World*, p.203.

⁵² 'China Men Autoeroticism', p.216. Further references to the essay will be given after quotations in the text.

⁵³ Like the episode in *Remains* where Stevens and Miss Kenton squabble over a porcelain figurine, Ryder's preparations for this speech appear to be another feature underscoring again the novel's metacritical concerns. He ponders whether to start by acknowledging his reputation for 'meticulous attention to detail' and 'precision in performance', and then to recount the mistakes he made at a recent recital, or else to adopt the alternative of striking 'a more obviously farcical note from the start' (p.136). Ishiguro thus alludes to the stylistic departure undertaken in *The Unconsoled*.

⁵⁴ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p.77.

⁵⁵ Anita Brookner, 'A Superb Achievement', *Spectator*, 24 June 1995, pp.40-41 (p.40).

⁵⁶ For an account of these categories see Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.19-23.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Richard T. Gray, 'From Caligari to Kafka: Expressionist Film and the Teaching of Kafka's Short Fiction', in *Some Approaches to Teaching Kafka's Short Fiction*, ed. by Richard T. Gray (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1995), pp.53-63 (p.55).

⁵⁸ Kazuo Ishiguro, pp.105-110.

⁵⁹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.

⁶⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), pp.245-271 (p.253).

⁶¹ Ibid., p.246.

⁶² 'Third World Literature', p.77.

⁶³ For a critique of this notion see Susan Koshy, 'The Fiction of Asian American Literature', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 9, 2 (1996), 315-46.

⁶⁴ See Nick Wadham-Smith, 'Editorial', *British Studies Now*, 9 (April 1997), 2.

⁶⁵ I follow Satya P. Mohanty in holding that 'postmodernist' claims, whether couched in political or cultural terms, are at bottom epistemological claims. See Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984), p.2.

⁶⁷ Mason, 'An interview with Kazuo Ishiguro', p.346. Ishiguro adds elsewhere that: 'While the nature of fiction or fictionality are things that writers might need to be concerned with to get on with their work, I don't believe that the nature of fiction is one of the burning issues of the late twentieth century. It's not one of the things I want to turn to novels and art to find out about'. See Vorda and Herzinger, pp.22-23.

⁶⁸ Kumkum Sangari, 'The Politics of the Possible', in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. by Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.216-45 (p.243).

⁶⁹ See chapter one.

Chapter Six. *When We Were Orphans***Synopsis**

When We Were Orphans (2000)¹ tells the story of a celebrated detective Christopher Banks and his efforts to unravel the mystery of his parents' disappearance in old Shanghai. It begins in London in the 1930s but soon circles back to Banks's expatriate childhood in Shanghai's International Settlement in the early years of the century: there are ructions at home because his mother is a vociferous opponent of the opium trade, from which his father's company obtains its profits; first his father and then his mother disappear, kidnapped it seems, and probably murdered by shadowy figures connected to the trade. Young Christopher is repatriated to the care of an aunt in Shropshire. He attends school and university and decides to become a detective; he forms a tentative liaison with a woman named Sarah Hemmings, an orphan like himself, who is keen to marry someone famous. After setting up in London he also begins to notch up some notable successes as a detective.

Despite increasing fame, however, London society holds little attraction for Banks, and in 1937 he sets off for Shanghai for his biggest challenge yet. With the narrative taking an increasingly surrealistic turn Banks moves from the glitter of the Shanghai nightclubs to his former home in the International Settlement to the slum warrens of the Chinese quarter of the city. Against all odds he believes that his parents are still

held captive in an abandoned house in the slum quarter. As he makes his way there he finds himself caught in the confused warfare between the Chinese communists, Chiang Kai-Shek's army and the invading Japanese; in the shell of a house he finds and rescues his childhood friend, Akira, now a soldier in the Japanese army, and after further meanderings they eventually find the house and enter it.

As we have long realised, however, Banks has been living a debilitating fantasy life. Instead of his parents they find a young Chinese girl, her family lying dead beside her from the shelling, who pleads with them to revive her injured dog, upon which he breaks down sobbing. Despite taking on the mantle of a novel of adventure, therefore, narrative focus is heavily psychological, where against the grain of Banks's first-person narration Ishiguro reveals his 'mummification'² of childhood as a bid to cope with the trauma of parental loss. It appears that Banks had embellished the hostage 'rescue games' (109) devised and played with Akira in the months following his father's disappearance into a kind of alternative universe, so that as readers we get a purchase on the wounds of childhood as they drive and distort adulthood. The psychological climax of the novel is, therefore, the episode where Banks enters the abandoned house, for with it he takes the first step towards confronting his delusions - 'in many ways', he admits, 'it's where I've continued to live all my life' (277).

Subsequently, the mystery of his parents' disappearance is cleared up in a key denouement chapter that is structurally analogous to

the traditional disclosure scene of a detective novel (284-96). From ‘Uncle Philip’, a man once considered to be a trusted family friend, Banks learns that his father had not been converted to the anti-opium cause, that he had no plans to sabotage his company’s drug shipments, and hence that he was not the victim of an ensuing criminal intrigue, as Banks had all along believed. Instead he had run off with his mistress and had died two years later from typhoid in Malaya: his putative kidnapping had actually been a tale concocted by Bank’s mother, in a bid to conceal a painful revelation from a young boy. More shockingly, Banks learns as well that in the course of her campaigning his mother had crossed a Chinese warlord who planned to muscle in on the lucrative trade, that the warlord had kidnapped her with the help of Philip, and, most importantly, that she had then reached a ‘financial arrangement’ (292) with her captor so that Banks would be richly provided for in return for her submission to enslavement, humiliation, and concubinage.

In this way the novel reveals itself to be a variation on Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861), a development explicitly signposted in Banks’s encounter with a Japanese colonel during his trek through the slum warrens, who declares that he is ‘especially fond’ of Dickens (276). In Dickens’ novel, the hero, Pip, is rocked by the discovery that the patron responsible for his ascension to gentility is not the elderly gentlewoman Miss Havisham but the ex-convict, Magwitch, whom he had helped as a boy; similarly in *Orphans* Christopher learns that his ‘real benefactor, all these years’ had been the warlord and not his aunt. As Philip tells Banks: ‘Your schooling. Your place in London society. The fact that you made of

yourself what you have. You owe it to Wang Ku. Or rather, to your mother's sacrifice' (293). Even the 'inheritance' which paid for his fashionable London home, and which he believed came from his aunt, had stemmed from misbegotten wealth (127, 293), so that the chief revelation of the denouement chapter - the novel's penultimate one - is of a life built on tawdry spoils: 'You see how the world really is? You see what made possible your comfortable life in England?' Banks is asked (294).

The final chapter recounts Banks's reunion with his mother in a Hong Kong sanatorium in the mid-fifties. She had survived the anarchy of the warlord era, invasion, war and revolution but had lost her mind, somehow fetching up in an asylum in Chunking, before being shipped to Hong Kong when China closed its borders. In a quietly moving coda Banks fails to penetrate through her mental fog but experiences a kind of compensatory epiphany: he realises that she had always loved him and that her love had not been conditioned on him achieving success or fame or saving the world, as he had secretly believed in his jejune, childlike fashion.

At the same time the novel's romantic interest is also tidied up. In the interim between their tentative courtship and Banks's decision to return to Shanghai Sarah had married an ex-diplomat and had set off for the city as well. Sarah's husband ill-treats her, and after re-establishing ties there Sarah and Banks had decided to elope. When Banks fails to make their agreed rendezvous however - because he is off searching for

his parents - Sarah sets off alone for Macao, and it is during the journey there that she meets the man she imagines to be the true love of her life. Shortly after the war, moreover, the two had died in Malaya. Faced with the loss Banks consoles himself with the thought that in setting off for Macau without him Sarah too had been searching for her parents, that their 'fate' had always been to 'face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents' (313). Like Stevens in *Remains* he seeks reconciliation with the events of his life, with the realisation that the bulk of it had been blighted by self-delusion. But unlike Stevens Banks is accorded the more rejuvenatory ending of a degree of solace in an adopted daughter, Jennifer, also an orphan, with whom he has a close and abiding relationship.

Introduction

The account above immediately raises key questions regarding the novel's rewriting of Dickens and its deployment of the detective genre. While its use of a stilted, manneristic language 'echo[es]', as one reviewer sees it, 'the stiff world of 1930s detective fiction',³ the fact that Ishiguro glosses over the details of Banks's work suggests that it is not a conventional crime escapade. A striking feature of *Orphans*, in fact, is the way it defies genre conventions - Banks demonstrating ratiocinative brilliance, say, or engaging in intricate spadework. We are told that he gets progressively more famous as he solves bigger cases. References are made to 'the Mannering case' (19), 'the Roger Park murder' (30), 'the Studley Grange business' (31), and the 'mystery of Charles Emery's

death' (36). Yet the distinctive readerly pleasures of an orthodox detective thriller are conspicuous by their absence.

On the other hand, the novel's deflation of genre expectations does not appear to be a matter of formal deconstruction seen as an intrinsically valuable exercise in itself, that is, of innovation for innovation's sake. As indicated above, the traditional disclosure scene of the detective narrative form is harnessed to a rewriting of *Great Expectations* emphasising the abhorrent provenance of Bank's wealth, and given that its climax highlights tainted earnings *Orphans* would appear to be an indictment of the Opium trade and of the expatriate and local traders involved in it.

The stress on tainted colonial earnings exposes, that is, the socio-political system - monopoly capitalism - which generated those earnings. In a study of the British colonial presence in China, Robert Bickers observes that there is 'no equivalent' in Anglophone fiction to an E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* exposing the discrepancy between imperial rhetoric and reality, and *Orphans* we might say addresses that lack.⁴ As will be shown the novel adroitly disinters the darker reaches of our historical and cultural archive, proffering glimpses of a sordid history of expropriation and exploitation.⁵ If, as Roland Barthes claims, Western cultural imaginary indelibly associates 'Sininess'⁶ with opium consumption, the novel takes pains it would seem to interpellate the forgotten history constituent to that association; it makes known that

which is elided when that consumption is conveniently glossed over as a besetting 'Oriental' vice.

Nevertheless, the restoration of historical trespasses to the cultural archive seems to me to provide only part of the picture. In the previous chapter I delineated Ishiguro's concern about readers who approach his works as historical documents, as well as his countervailing desire to 'take off into the realm of metaphor'.⁷ Based on that deliberation I suggested that the stylistic experiments undertaken in *The Unconsoled* are aimed at encouraging an allegorical take on the central protagonist's misadventures, and I think that the same narrative-thematic move takes place in *Orphans*.

That the climax of *Orphans* is set amid the outbreak of the 1937 Japanese invasion means that modern imperial aggression is implicated rather than just European expansionism *per se*. In this regard the episode where young Christopher teams up with Akira to steal from the room of a Chinese manservant is important, for read as a homology of Great Power collaboration the staging of that episode encourages us, I believe, to pursue a similar recondite or parabolic optic on *the rest* of the novel, to strive for some enlarged exegetical framework that would make *Orphans* more than a one-dimensional tale of Chinese users and European peddlers.

The lineaments of that framework emerges, I believe, when we examine several key features of the novel. Taken in turn respectively in

my analysis below these implicate: the novel's use of imagery; the thematic ramifications arising from the troping of Great Power collaboration; the rewriting of Dickens, and, finally, the deployment and reconfiguration of the detective narrative form.

My argument in this chapter is that these features encourage us to read our current historical conjuncture in the light of those thematic inflections, which is to say for continuities, both historical and structural. Ishiguro's representational agenda is to enjoin a recognition and an examination of the structural determinants of our historical moment, which perforce engages the issue of uneven development, for which international capitalism as a system is simultaneously one and unequal: with a core and a periphery (and a semi-periphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. Ultimately, the novel proffers a cognitive mapping of the world system of late capitalist modernity.

Tainted wealth

That the novel takes pains to indict the opium trade is generally evident. In the denouement, for instance, Philip tells Banks that: 'many European companies, including your father's, were making vast profits importing Indian opium into China and turning millions of Chinese into helpless addicts' (288). The Banks family, it is stressed, 'owe[d]' its 'existence' to 'ungodly wealth' (60, 68), thus exposing the rift between the rhetoric of free trade used to justify imperialism and the sordid reality of

wealth acquisition. Elsewhere, the social costs of the addiction epidemic are also tallied, with allusions to the 'untold misery and degradation' brought 'to a whole nation' (60), to 'entire villages found enslaved to the pipe' (59), and to enervated men lounging in the doorways of opium dens (61).

Banks adds to this critical dimension soon after his return to Shanghai when he expresses 'revulsion' (162) at a decadent expatriate community clutching cocktails as bombs rain on the slum quarter of the city; his remarks underscores the gulf between the International Settlement and the surrounding sea of abject poverty. In a sobering historical survey Frances Wood tells us that Shanghai was the most 'infamous' of the treaty ports opened up by the Opium wars: by the beginning of the twentieth century it had 'long [become] a byword for lawlessness, where East and West co-existed in great wealth and extreme poverty',⁸ and, in this respect, the reference in *Orphans* to 'whole families' living in 'stall(s)' (54) would seem to bear out that observation. That these realities are powerful enough to penetrate through a child's limited understanding is also significant, as, for instance, when Banks imagines that his father had been kidnapped by desperate men who wanted merely to feed their 'starving families' (111).

This social critical thrust is perhaps best exemplified in a key episode where Banks's mother confronts an employee of her husband's company whose name - a ^{homophone} _v for 'right' - quickly establishes its satirical intent. In his capacity as company 'health inspector' (56) the

employee - Mr Wright - counsels Banks's mother against hiring servants from Shantung. He tells her that widespread opium consumption there means even honest Shantung natives would invariably turn to theft to support those of their relatives addicted to the drug; in tendering this piece of advice he is speaking, he proclaims, from 'bitter experience' (58).

Yet it precisely Wright's attempt to occlude the question of agency that raises her ire. It is his attempt to essentialise the phenomena, to speak in a self-exculpatory manner about the 'Shantung' (59) character or mind that prompts her into a 'tirade' (60) against the company's participation in the drug trade, and thus the episode mines forcefully the ironic discrepancy between Wright's status as 'health inspector' and the social pestilence unleashed by those of his ilk. Moreover, the significance of the episode is underscored by the fact that Banks considers the confrontation between his mother and Wright the chief ethical lesson or 'key moment of moral triumph' that his mother had wanted him to learn and take to 'heart' (58).

As already indicated, however, the historical recuperative thrust of the novel is not the only noteworthy dimension. What is as significant, I believe, is that building on that foundation Ishiguro calls attention to the multifarious interpenetration of the metropole and the periphery, in keeping with the novel's wider thematic and rhetorical objectives. I took issue in the last chapter with the reading of *The Unconsoled* as affirming the obsolescence of centre-periphery dualities, and thus this aspect of

Orphans might be termed an extension of that critical consideration as well.

The multifarious interpenetration of centre and periphery comes across most forcefully in the novel's use of imagery. Banks's return to Shanghai, for example, is prompted by an encounter with a police inspector who tells him in effect that he needs to go back there to learn the truth about his past. In an example of the novel's use of a child-like or melodramatic register the inspector alludes to a great 'evil' afflicting the land; he compares crime to a 'serpent' or a hydra, which is to say that crime is 'a beast with many heads'; everytime one is lobbed off another three grows in its place (135), and thus he advises Banks to address the problem at source. Rather than tackle what are merely epiphenomena, that is, Banks should go after the 'heart of the serpent' (136).

But since this 'West Country inspector' (145) calls to mind the earlier (health) inspector Wright, it is also significant that during Mrs Banks's confrontation with the latter she is described as the 'principal enemy of the Great Opium Dragon of China' (60). What strikes our attention, in fact, is the multiple displacement of the terms 'dragon' and 'serpent' into the associated imagery of hydra and snake in the novel. In using the image of a hydra - 'beast with many heads' (135) - to describe crime the West Country inspector's comments also call to mind Akira's outlandish story of his encounter with a 'warlord' ordering a giant to lob off the *heads* of passer-by's (54), which he invents after sneaking back from a forbidden incursion into the Chinese section of the city. Insofar as

his story references warlords it prefigures Banks's discovery that Wang Ku is his real benefactor. And given that the term hydra stems etymologically from the Greek for 'water snake' it is also appropriate that the mysterious informant 'yellow snake' (156-57, 169, 282, 285), the man whom Banks stalks in Shanghai and whom he believes holds the key to the entire puzzle of his parents' disappearance, is none other than Wang Ku's accomplice Philip. Interestingly, the advice to strike at the *serpent's* heart already contains the gist of the novel's denouement, because the associated form, 'dragon', is an acknowledged trope for the opium trade. And in the same way we might say other serpentine images in the novel also point forward to its climax.

Given that what Banks unveils at the 'heart of the serpent' is literally the opium Dragon or capital transfers operating through Wang Ku's agency, it is such imagery, therefore, that gestures at the material links between centre and periphery. At one level such imagery prefigures the ending; but the fact that the details of that West Country crime are not given - Banks only says suggestively that it is 'one of the most dispiriting crimes' he has ever investigated (134) - encourages a figurative reading, which is to say that it enjoins us to adopt an expanded conception of those material links and connections.

This approach is warranted because the serpentine iconography outlined above is embellished by an intimation of the distributive and transportation networks - both international and domestic - used in the haulage of opium. In the case of the latter Philip's betrayal of the Banks

family is ominously foreshadowed by his impulsive gift of a torn 'map of the Yangtze region' to Banks one day when he visits his office (75). Given that it is Wang Ku's control of trade routes down the 'Yangtze' river that gives him his power and influence (114, 289), the gift suggests that Philip was already then dealing with the warlord. And hence his need for a map of the region on his office wall for reference purposes. That Wang Ku hails from 'Hunan' himself (114, 289) is also significant since as the historian James Sheridan tells us opium from outer China was typically shipped over a 'well-established trade route' first to Hunan, 'where it could [then] be sent northward to the Yangtze valley or southward to the Canton delta'. Insofar as 'the warlord controlling western Hunan' had a decisive say in 'determin[ing] which route would be selected' and who would be enriched,⁹ *Orphans* gestures, therefore, at a vast distributive network.

This is also where the references to Banks and Akira having a favourite childhood spot or hideout by the banks of a canal near their homes helps to maintain the revelatory and thematic momentum. While the recollection is imbued with the innocent charm of a boyhood idyll, it is no accident that their hideout forms part of a supply conduit, that is located behind some warehouses belonging to the trading group 'Jardine Matheson', or that they need to pass a 'rickety boathouse' (98) to get there, thus presaging the 'boathouse' (165) in which the adult Banks later searches for clues to his quarry: the allusion to a company which actually participated in the drug trade helps to foreground the issue.

Again, such detailing allows Ishiguro to prefigure the novel's resolution. We are told that the boys like the canal spot because even on the hottest summer days those Jardine 'storehouses' help keep them cool in the 'shade'. Yet this is also where the evoked image of the boys sitting in the shadow of the warehouses, as well as the question whether they are 'trespassing' on company premises (98), prefigures suggestively Banks's London residence - the one purchased with Wang Ku's cash. The house 'overlooks a square' and is 'moderately prestigious'; but we are also told that it '*catches less sun* than any of its neighbours' (127, italics added), thus presaging the ending where the link between those Jardine warehouses and the London residence becomes clear.¹⁰ And given the import attached to the motif¹¹ the childhood game that Banks plays with his mother - the one where they make up alternative names for the vessels run by his father's company (85) - might be said to underscore as well the distributive dimensions of the trade.

These motifs are inflected in turn by a play on the image of excrement which is important, I will argue, because it implicates economic forces pertinent to the novel's thematic focus. We are told that as a child Banks has a habit of mimicking Wright, that he likes to role-play the part of a 'health inspector' scrutinising 'lavatory arrangements' (56). But given that identification this means that Banks's psychological state can also be tracked by his progression away from that fascination. This is appreciable if we contrast two surrealist episodes; one, where Banks returns to his childhood Shanghai home to find himself 'oddly comfort[ed]' by the smell of 'incense mingled with that of excrement' (185), and a

second episode where during his trek through the slum warrens he refuses to negotiate a passageway emanating an 'overwhelming stink of excrement' even though it lies athwart a trail that is supposed to lead to the abandoned house where he believes his parents are held (247).

Because of that refusal Banks takes a detour and ends up finding Akira. In turn, it is Akira's intimate knowledge of the slum quarter that allows Banks to find the house he is seeking. As outlined above finding that abandoned house is a necessary step towards his attainment of 'closure' on childhood trauma, and thus the rejection of excrement is symbolically associated with maturation, or at the very least with a positive demystification. In contrast, the earlier episode where Banks is comforted by the smell of excrement might be read as an exercise in wish-fulfilment, as some imagined-enacted fantasy of a regression to childhood where he had role-played the part of a health inspector, before his entire world fell apart following his parents' disappearance. Insofar as excrement is associated with neurosis of some kind the decision in the slum quarter to avoid it is, therefore, positive, because it betokens the turn away from a debilitative fantasy life.

That pejorative inflection of excrement imagery is then explicable if we return to the question of Wright's narrative function. I stated above that Wright's status as health inspector is ironically undermined by the social contagion he unleashes. Quite clearly, this is extended through his physical description, for Banks recalls that he can 'remember, in particular, two things about him: that he had a drooping moustache, and

that there was a brown mark - perhaps a tea stain - at the back of his hat disappearing into its band' (57). That brown mark can be read as an allusion to excrement as well as to raw opium, and thus the depiction underscores the fact of his participation in an odious trade.

But given these associations the reference to the 'tea stain' also becomes significant. Insofar as the physical description of Wright extends the pejorative glossing of excrement onto the stain the depiction is fitting because it signals the role that the international tea trade played in driving imperial expansion. As Carl Trocki explains the rise of the opium trade was intimately connected to the pecuniary pressures exerted by the tea remittance as well as Europe's historical trade deficit with Asia. Taking an appropriately lengthy perspective he observes that opium was the one commodity enabling a reversal of a centuries-long trade imbalance characterising the economic relationship between Europe and Asia. He tells us that 'for three centuries, European trade with Asia was marked by [a] one-way flow of exotic chemicals',¹¹ of spices such as nutmeg and cloves followed by pepper, coffee, cacao, sugar, tea and finally opium. According to Trocki: 'The trade balance between the two halves of Eurasia was maintained during most of those three centuries between 1500 and 1800 by the reverse flow of precious metals from Europe to Asia; or, perhaps more precisely, from the Americas, via European agency, to Asia'. Thus 'well before the eighteenth century, the Spanish silver dollar (minted in Mexico) [had become] the standard currency of the trading communities around the South China and Java Seas' (8). Opium was different because it was the first product that made

it possible for the trade imbalance to be changed. In particular, it paid for the tea remittance that was causing a bullion drain from Europe:

As many students of the tea trade and the East India Company have shown, opium was the answer to the tea remittance. If they could sell enough opium to pay for the cost of the tea purchase it would eliminate the bullion drain from Europe...Opium thus functioned, in the first instance as a source of virtually free capital which allowed the English to get their foot into the door of the Asian commercial system. In order to do this, it was necessary to do to opium what had already been done to commodities such as sugar, tobacco, cotton, and coffee. It was necessary to make it too a 'commodity'; to organize its production with a force of cheap and malleable labor, on land that was already controlled for as cheap a price as possible. It would be necessary to create centralized control over collection and processing of the product. It was also necessary to gain access to the market where it could be consumed on a mass basis. This was the course that opium now took. It was necessary to create an opium epidemic in Asia (32).

The fact that the 'brown mark' is visually faint, that it almost disappears into Wright's hat band tropes, I would contend, the status of the bullion drain or tea remittance as the *underlying* factor driving British expansion

in China. It was the logic of capital accumulation operating through all its multifarious concatenations that enabled the quelling of moral scruples over the drug trade. And, again, a lengthy quote from Trocki is necessary to establish the socio-political subtext:

Europeans, in particular British traders, did not plan this from the outset and they did not act necessarily from malicious intent, unless the aim of making money and getting wealthy at the expense of another is a crime. Nevertheless, a drug epidemic was begun and promoted, and it was done because it was profitable. It was profitable because it worked. The English trading in China fed that demand because it was there and because it was about the only way in which they believed they could make enough money to pay for tea. They were not ignorant of what sort of substance they were selling. They knew it was a poison. They knew it was addictive. They knew that it did its users no good. From the time of Warren Hastings in the 1770s, the British colonial records and other contemporary materials are full of quotations that indicate a perfect acquaintance with the nature and power of opium. It is in the creation of the opium trade that we can see the *invisible hand of capitalism* at work (32, italics added).

It is with such apparently gestural descriptions as a ‘brown mark’ that could perhaps be a ‘tea stain’, therefore, that Ishiguro interrogates a

vast global political economy ranging from the mining of silver in the Americas to the institution of large scale opium cultivation in India.¹² The novel gestures at the improvement in Britain's balance of payment on the back of the triangular trade between British India and China, and indeed *Orphans* does make explicit references to the importation into China of 'Indian opium' (60, 288).

The relay of imagery set out above - the serpentine iconography, the allusion to vast distributive networks, the question of the tea remittance - operates in a number of registers. At the character-psychology level, so to speak, the way that Banks spins an item of information from childhood - for example, Akira's warlord story with its oblique allusion to a hydra - into the fabric of his adult life points to his inhabitation of a childhood fantasy world. But, most importantly, the relay of imagery gestures, I suggest, at the gap between perceptual experience at the centre and material developments in the periphery. In the terms proposed by Fredric Jameson it helps to bridge the perceptual limitations affecting individuals in metropolitan locations, for as Jameson argues the onset of monopoly capitalism means that:

a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere, beyond the metropolis, outside of the daily life and existential experience of the home country, in colonies over the water whose own life experience and life world - very different from that of the imperial power - remain unknown and unimaginable for the

subjects of the imperial power, whatever social class they may belong to. Such spatial disjunction has as its immediate consequence the inability to grasp the way the system functions as a whole...No intensity of self examination (in the form of whatever social guilt), no scientific deductions on the basis of the internal evidence of First World data, can ever be enough to include this radical otherness of colonial life, colonial suffering, and exploitation, let alone the structural connections between that and this, between absent space and daily life in the metropolis.¹³

So argued, the inspector's injunction to Banks to leave the suggestively termed 'West Country' in pursuit of the serpent's heart might be termed an allegorical dramatisation of such phenomenological limitations as they impinge on cultural production and reception. The object lesson proffered by the novel's centrifugal ^{thrust} \searrow is the intimation that the world system can only be grasped by linking together the metropole and periphery in one intellectual configuration, in the intimation that the 'truth' of the metropolitan lifeworld lies outside and 'over the water[s]'. The revelations at the end of the *Orphans* are prepared by a relay of imagery playing on 'heart' and 'dragon', by references to distributive networks and international trade patterns, but in so doing they raise for critical deliberation the links between centre and periphery, together with their demonstrably global implications.

Theft and Restitution

I have read *Orphans* so far as, firstly, a parable of colonialism's immoral earnings, and secondly as the effort to interpellate for critical deliberation a vast global political economy. The next feature that requires attention, I believe, is that developing from these two dimensions the novel raises for consideration the question of systemic change; it asserts, in other words, that change can be effected, and that it is both probable and plausible. In brief, this is done by using the positive narrative forces of psychological recuperation and recovery to foreground urgent socio-political imperatives. At the same time the novel also encourages a consideration of our current historical conjunction in the light of that articulation.

This dimension comes across forcefully when we consider the novel's troping of Great Power cooperation. As indicated earlier, the homology can be traced to the episode where the two boys team up to steal from the bedroom of Akira's Chinese manservant Ling Tien (95-6). The theft occurs one day while they are playing: in the manner of young children they imagine that Ling Tien is a fearsome warlock who concocts magic potions and mutilates humans; they are afraid to enter his room and, as such, need to stoke up their courage by holding hands to get over their fear.

But it is in this way then that the staging of the theft takes on an explicitly isomorphic configuration, insofar as it becomes an allegory of

state cooperation in the pursuit of common hegemonic interests. If the 'arm-locks' that the two boys sometimes engage in when they play, their childish quarrels over which nationality 'cried the easiest', as well as Akira's insistence that Japan had become a 'great country just like England' (78) tropes in fairly straightforward fashion Great Power rivalry in the international arena, and this in turn prefigures the impending world war, then it is surely significant that the theft is staged in the manner of two boys linking 'arms' (95) to steal from the room of a manservant.

As a troping of Great Power *collaboration* the boy's actions have a history at least as early as the joint Western and Japanese forces which put down the 1900 Boxer rebellion, although the obvious precedent here would be the late nineteenth century scramble for Africa. It was such Great Power collaboration, in fact, that resulted in the partition of China into various European and Japanese spheres of interests, in a historical development known as the 'scramble for concessions'.¹⁴ In this regard, the historian Immanuel Hsu gives a helpful indication of what was at stake when he observes that China's defeat in the 1884 Sino-Japanese war had ushered in a phase of accelerated aggrandisement:

Foreign imperialists cut the China melon into leased territories and spheres of interest, within which they constructed railways, opened mines, established factories, operated banks, and ran all kinds of exploitative organizations. The intensification of imperialism plunged

China ever deeper into a semi-colonial state, from which it was not freed until 1943.¹⁵

Given that the theft consists of a bottle of ‘patent’ medicine bought ‘to combat some chronic [medical] condition’ (96), the subtext just delineated suggests an even greater pejorative glossing of the episode. What reinforces such a reading (*theft* as a diagnostic dramatisation of global trading and economic relations), moreover, is the novel’s use of terms such as ‘East Furnace’ and ‘West Furnace’ (237-38) to designate key geographical landmarks in the Shanghai slum quarter. The terms designate two towering smokestacks that Banks needs to keep sight of in order to navigate around the warrens; but in the light of the homology set out above they also take on a figurative cast, alluding it would seem to the damage wrought, respectively, by Japanese and European expansionism.

Following such an alignment of the issue, what is telling is that Ishiguro then goes on to stage Banks’s psychological recovery as the *outcome* of his desire to make a proper restitution; in allegorical terms we might say Ishiguro stages Banks’s recuperation as the conceptual equivalent of a move beyond an expropriative and exploitative world order.

This is appreciable if we recall that although the boys become contrite after stealing the bottle of medication they never get a chance to return it, since on the day they are supposed to do so Banks’s father is

allegedly kidnapped (102-03). As his subsequent recollection of the episode suggests ('that was when Akira and I committed our little theft - an impulsive act whose wider repercussions, in our excitement, we failed entirely to anticipate' - 93), Banks appears to cathect his parental loss around the question of this failed effort to return the bottle, and thus at the climax of the novel when he finds the abandoned house his language recalls their little boyhood adventure. Before entering the house Banks tells Akira that he wants to link arms 'just like that other time going into Ling Tien's room' (267), which in turn recalls for us how, despite their fear of Wang Ku's sorcery, the boys had resolved to 'join arms again' to return the bottle (100). When they eventually cross the threshold of the abandoned house the novel takes pains to stress as well that Banks 'reached' for Akira's 'hand' first before entering (269).

At the personal level Banks's imaginary enactment of what they never got a chance to accomplish as children operates as a kind of symbolic restitution: the bottle has totemic significance for him, and thus he believes that 'returning' it will somehow restore his parents to him. But given the subtext delineated above it would seem that this question of restitution has a wider significance. Since it tropes colonial aggression the psychological importance assigned to the return of the bottle raises the question, I would venture, of what a non-expropriative world order would look like, one without, say, the present structural inequalities and uneven development. Given that other residential spaces in the novel - Banks's London and Shanghai home - are used to trope the fact of *state* capital-accumulation accomplished through expropriation it is not

farfetched, I believe, to read in Banks's aspiration - his desire to return the bottle to Ling Tien's *bedroom* - an articulation of the urgent imperative to contest neo-colonial articulations.

In his assessment of *Orphans*, Russell C. Jones suggests that the novel can be read as 'one long metaphor for lost identity - of Banks's and possibly that of the author', a prospect which he also found 'wearisome'¹⁶. But if an examination of 'lost identity' implicates Ishiguro's location between and within two social formations, and this is in turn troped, most obviously, by what appears to be an alter-ego relationship between Banks and Akira, my account above helps us to appreciate that the last is not just a self-indulgent exercise in exilic lamentation. Instead, Akira functions in the narrative, in tandem with Banks, to foreground the pressing need to imagine and theorise a movement beyond contemporary hegemonic arrangements. This is what Banks's restorative desire amounts to in thematic terms, a bid to stress, against the grain of the dominant ideological hold of contemporary neoconservatism, that change can be effected, that it is both plausible and necessary.

Rewriting Dickens

It is in this context, I think, that we can turn to a more detailed consideration of *Orphans'* rewriting of Dickens. For seen in the light of the framework outlined above - psychological recovery as a critical acknowledgment of expropriation and the initiation of restitutive action - the rewriting dovetails strikingly with the reading of *Great Expectations*

proffered by Edward Said. Insofar as the theft-cum-restitution imaginary uses the positive narrative forces of recuperation and recovery to foreground key political imperatives, the rewriting of Dickens also echoes that move, the difference being that on top of that recuperative dimension a regenerative one is added as well via the narrative mediation of Banks's ward Jennifer.

Said's reading of *Great Expectations* comes near the beginning of his influential book *Culture and Imperialism* and is directly relevant to his primary thesis. Because 'the great cultural archive' or received literary canon is where 'the intellectual and aesthetic investments in overseas domination are made',¹⁷ Said argues that cultural interpretation as a whole needs to be sensitive to the role that metropolitan literature played in nourishing the imagination of empire and in underwriting its ideology and practices.

To do so, he argues that the cultural archive should be read 'contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts' (59, italics original). His capacious term for allusions and references which permit the tracking of such marginalised histories is 'structures of attitude and reference' (61-62), one of which, therefore, is the extra-metropolitan or colonial provenance of Pip's wealth.

In particular, Said turns to *Great Expectations* because it contains in embryonic form the lineaments of his 'contrapuntal' method. He points out that although Pip initially spurns Magwitch it is his subsequent reconciliation with the man, or in other words his acknowledgement of Magwitch's 'surrogate father[hood]' (p.xv) that allows the novel's regenerative and redemptive valences to surface. To Said, therefore, 'an accurate reading of *Great Expectations* must note that':

After Magwitch's delinquency is expiated, so to speak, after Pip redemptively acknowledges his debt to the old, bitterly energized, and vengeful convict, Pip himself collapses and is *revived in two explicitly positive ways*. A new Pip appears, less laden than the old Pip with the chains of the past - he is glimpsed in the form of a child, also called Pip; and the old Pip takes on a new career with his boyhood friend Herbert Pocket, this time not as an idle gentleman but as a hardworking trader in the East, where Britain's other colonies offer a sort of normality that Australia never could. [Yet] even as Dickens settles the difficulty with Australia, another structure of attitude and reference emerges to suggest Britain's imperial intercourse through trade and travel with the Orient. In his new career as colonial businessman, Pip is hardly an exceptional figure, since nearly all of Dickens's businessmen, wayward relatives, and frightening outsiders have a fairly normal and secure connection with the empire. But it is only in recent

years that these connections have taken on interpretative importance (pp.xvii-xviii, italics added).

It is precisely in this way, I would contend, that Ishiguro reads and extends *Great Expectations*, except that whereas Said moves from the material to the cultural Ishiguro takes the opposite tack: he moves from the cultural to the material realm, stressing that artifacts in the cultural realm have 'interpretative importance' for contemporary socio-political practices. Ishiguro concretises the 'structures of attitude and reference' registered in *Great Expectations* in the manner proposed by Said, so that in *Orphans* the recovery of marginalised histories and the (imagined) realignment of oppressive arrangements also become necessary preconditions to the protagonist's development beyond self-delusion.

What I am suggesting, in other words, is that like *Great Expectations* *Orphans* also stages a purposeful exercise in recognition, regeneration and renewal. On my reading Banks's failure to shoot Philip in the penultimate chapter is a tacit acknowledgement of Wang Ku's *surrogate fatherhood*. In failing to shoot Philip Banks acknowledges that having benefited from the drug trade he is not in a position to claim the moral high ground needed to take revenge. His failure to shoot Philip amounts to an apprehension of a shared part in dispossession and theft. And related to this, moreover, is the fact that just as Magwitch takes vicarious pleasure in the idea that his wealth sponsors a gentleman in London, Philip in *Orphans* declares that he lived 'vicariously' through Wang Ku (296).

Taken at face value the vicarious pleasure that Philip takes in savouring the thought of the mother's sexual humiliation can only be termed gratuitous, whereas Wang Ku himself appears to replicate an essentialist line of Fu Manchu-style villains.¹⁸ But the true thematic purpose of such exaggerated villainy, I believe, is to encourage a figurative rendition of the episode, so that it is rather the larger social organism that is interrogated: in this respect it is precisely Philip's *vicarious* gratification and Wang Ku's surrogate fatherhood that dramatise in allegorical-diagnostic terms the sobering facts of global structural inequalities, the international division of labour and the metropolitan lifeworld's extraction of surplus value from the periphery. It is the melodramatic flourishes of *Orphans* that invite readers to append a parabolic appraisal.

In line with Said's argument we may note that like Pip Banks also experiences a breakdown after his confrontation. For an extended period after the climactic showdown with Philip he needs to be cared for like an 'invalid' by Jennifer (299). And just like in *Great Expectations* I am suggesting this breakdown is cathartic and regenerative, for Jennifer is then the structural equivalent in *Orphans* of the 'new Pip' who can only emerge after the old Pip's redemptive acknowledgement of Magwitch's financial support. In the same way Jennifer is the new Banks, and this is supported by the parallels between them, including the sudden parental loss that they both experience when young. *Orphans* suggests in its resolution that the solace Banks finds in Jennifer arises from his recognition of a shared part in an exploitative legacy, and thus the

thematic significance of that act is to underscore the need to contest contemporary incarnations of that legacy. That solace, as well as Banks's progress beyond a mummified childhood, helps to draw out these imperatives, and of the need for critical and social thought to come to terms with it.

Along these lines we may argue that it is the desire to bolster the redemptive and generative thematic outlined above that precludes a more conventionally 'happy' ending. An ending where Sarah and Banks get to cement their relationship would have directed attention away from those resonances, and thus it is important that Ishiguro ward off any kind of imperial romance optic on the novel. If one lesson garnered from the popular reaction to *Remains* was that such readerly demands can detract from critical recognition of a novel's contestatory configuration *Orphans* takes pains to ensure that Sarah does not become another Miss Kenton.

Jennifer's function as an instantiation of the novel's generative thematic is, therefore, effected through her operation as a substitute for Sarah. Although Banks does not cement his relationship with Sarah he is not left alone: the novel ends with him pondering Jennifer's invitation to go live with her in the countryside, so that the new residential site, unlike other residential spaces in the novel - Banks's London and Shanghai homes, Ling Tien's room - garners to itself generative inflections that are missing, say, in the Arcadian idyll staged and undermined in *Remains*.

Another way to express this argument is to say that Jennifer's characterisation allows Ishiguro to steer clear of the occlusive effects of Dickensian sentimentality. If for Fredric Jameson one recurrent 'Dickensian paradigm' is 'the idyllic space of family and child-bride as a Utopian refuge from the nightmare of social class',¹⁹ *Orphans* forestalls that thematic closure by staging Jennifer as a companion who is not, however, conventionally 'family', or for that matter a child-bride. Nevertheless, she does offer solace, and to the extent that *Orphans* has a more optimistic ending than *Remains*, Ishiguro we could say utilises the positive narrative forces of regeneration and recovery to underscore the importance of giving theoretical space to the question of social class as it operates at an international level.

I argued in my chapter on *Remains* that Ishiguro sites on metropolitan locality some narrative motifs that are customarily foreclosed by the recurrent use of the *sailing out* motif in nineteenth century novels. In *Orphans*, this narrative strategy comes to a head, so to speak, for in rewriting Dickens to emphasise social class as outlined above, Ishiguro develops in a much more explicit fashion what in *Remains* had a less ambitious metonymic role. *Remains* variously embodies the sentiment of otherness, but in *Orphans* the question of otherness or of non-metropolitan sociality actually takes centre stage: in this regard, the intertextual progression can be usefully conceptualised as a movement from another of Dickens' novel *David Copperfield* to *Great Expectations*, and thence to *Orphans*. *David Copperfield* is germane here because it exemplifies that sailing out motif mentioned above, for the novel ends

with one of the characters, Micawber, setting sail for Australia (the eponymous hero of the novel is also an orphan). Insofar as that sailing-out motif is reworked to implicate Victorian class guilt in the figure of the returned convict Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, *Orphans* then takes forward that thematic exposé by transferring the story to a non-metropolitan locale. And it is in the figure of Wang Ku, therefore, that *Orphans* implicates on a much larger canvas class oppression as it operates on an international scale.

Deconstructing detective fiction

What works in tandem with the rewriting of Dickens and the use of the 'Great Power' collaboration motif is the novel's deployment and reconfiguration of the detective narrative form. I suggested in the section above that *Orphans* mobilises the positive narrative forces of recovery and regeneration to foreground key imperatives. Another way to state this is to say that *Orphans* takes advantage of the libidinal dynamic instantiated by Bank's search for his parents; his search solicits empathy which is then channeled to advance specific rhetorical objectives. Yet Bank's search would be an entirely private affair, a family tragedy without public or thematic ramification but for the fact that Ishiguro converts the family retrospective into the detective snoop. Since Banks's search for his parents is enacted in the form of a family retrospective it amounts to an inquiry into personal identity, and what the conversion achieves we might say is to imbue the pursuit with allegorical significance, to turn it into something like an examination of social identity in its widest sense, that

being the conditions of possibility or the socio-political genealogy of our current historical conjunction.

This can be appreciated if we look at how *Orphans* specifically engages three offshoots of the detective narrative form, in particular the way it problematises the so-called Golden Age detective fiction associated with Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, its deployment of the Sherlock Holmes motif and also in the way it implicates the hard-boiled genre of detective fiction associated with Raymond Chandler. My contention is that each of these dimensions serves specific functions in *Orphans*, and thus they will be discussed separately. While the engagement with Golden Age detective fiction prevents the taking up of a neoconservative optic on the novel, the other two dimensions provide the positive content of its social commentary by enlisting a critical perspective on late capitalist modernity. These then operate in tandem with the rewriting of Dickens and the theft-cum-restitution imaginary discussed above to effect specific pedagogical articulations.

To begin with we need to attend to the elitist and escapist orientations of Golden Age detective fiction. Jon Thompson has argued in this respect that the detective novels of Agatha Christie articulate a 'conservative vision of modernity' because of their tendency to valorise 'middle and upper-middle-class society and mores'.²⁰ He detects a marked nostalgia for 'an Edwardian type of domesticity' in her writings as well as a 'remarkable exclusion of social conflict', as a result of which,

therefore, 'all working class people are happy domestics and all women are happy homemakers' (129).

But if that is the case, Orphans' impersonation of the Golden Age detective form is also manifestly ironic or satirical. In the denouement, for instance, Philip rebukes Banks for living in an 'enchanted world' of 'stolen jewels' and 'aristocrats murdered for their inheritance' (294), and indeed Ishiguro has specifically declared his intention to scrutinise the occlusive propensities of the sub-genre:

The English books present an innocent world in which one thing has gone wrong. In a sleepy little Dorset village, the vicar has poisoned someone. And all that is required is for the detective to come along, go click, and everything is beautiful again. Everyone is happy, all the subplots are resolved. Everything reverts to how it once was...I had the image of such a detective let loose in the modern world...And how absurd it would look going round with a magnifying glass trying to stop the second world war. And the comic possibilities of that.²¹

This demystificatory dimension is quickly apparent when we examine the crime that Banks solves in a town named Shackton, in what appears to be a pastiche of the conventional 'sleepy...village' motif mentioned above. When he first arrives on the scene, for instance, Banks observes that 'the whole of Shackton' has 'started to rot' (33) following the

murder committed there. By way of elaboration he adds that 'this used to be a happy and thriving market town' (*ibid.*), and then after he solves the case he tells us that the villagers are grateful because he has helped to stem the 'rot' (36).

It has been argued that crime fiction fosters status quo conservatism because we know that in the end, despite the intrusion of violent crime, order will be restored to a basically law-abiding society:²² transgressive murder and the subsequent restoration of order are merely instruments for reproducing received visions of social harmony. But through his remarks above Banks immediately lays bare the ideological investments of the sub-genre; he violates an obvious criterion of all ideological articulations, namely that to be effective they should not be spelt out. That the Shackton crime occurs within the confines of a 'walled garden' (31) also gestures at the ideological stakes in play, namely the pressing into service of a citadel mentality stoked by bucolic Arcadian fantasies.

Just as *Remains* interrogates a particular ideology of discreet servants and teas-on-lawns the related deployment in Golden Age detective fiction of big-house settings, exclusionary *dramatis personae*, and citadel-mentality themes is, therefore, questioned in *Orphans*. In manifest terms the novel suggests that Banks turns to that Christie-esque world because it allows him to mummify his childhood, to inhabit a cloistered 'enchanted' realm; but this then precludes the reader's concurrent occupation of the same Edenic interpretative space.

Having forestalled such a reading, the specifically positive content of the novel's use of the detective narrative-form comes, as I have intimated, in the way that Banks's search for his parents is pressed into the service of social commentary, so that as a trope for the scrutiny of personal identity it becomes, by extension, an interrogation of metropolitan identity or sociality as well. Before I can elaborate on this, however, I need to establish how *Orphans* deploys the Sherlock Holmes motif and also the way it implicates the so-called hard-boiled tradition of detective fiction. I will begin with a discussion of the former.

That Conan Doyle's famous creation acts for and reinforces the dominant social order appears to be a commonplace of literary criticism. Thus, for instance, Jon Thompson and Franco Moretti argue separately that in their general narrative configuration the Holmes stories help advance the ideological presuppositions of monopoly capitalism. Moretti's thesis is that the stories embody the metropole's transition from the phase of liberal capitalism to monopoly capitalism.²³ His argument has been usefully summarised by Tony Bennett as follows:

Noting that the criminal in the Holmes story is always either a noble or an upstart, Moretti argues that both of these embody a threat to the achieved property relations of monopoly capitalism. The noble seeks to reverse the historical process of bourgeois capital accumulation by increasing his own wealth through 'a revival of feudal arbitrary will'. The upstart reverts to the earlier stage of

what Marx called primitive accumulation in seeking to acquire property through violence and theft. In its opposition to the individuality of both noble and upstart - disruptive individualities which the narration works to efface - Moretti suggests that the classic detective story promoted an adjustment to the requirements of monopoly capitalism in separating 'individuality and bourgeoisie' by representing the latter as 'no longer the champion of risk, novelty and imbalance, but of prudence, conservation and stasis'.²⁴

On his part, Thompson argues that the Holmes stories were instrumental in the instantiation of what he calls a 'Sherlockian empiricism' (66) which ultimately served the enterprise of Empire. He observes that 'class conflict, racism, imperialism, [and] even women' (62) are typically excluded from or domesticated in Doyle's writings: 'the world of Sherlock Holmes' is one in which crime is 'intriguing, individual, and eminently soluble [and] not an ugly social problem; a world in which urban squalor makes a quaint contrast to the elegance of London hansom cabs and gas street lamps' (77). Doyle achieved this because he managed to rework the 'ideology of empiricism in popular form' by incorporating into his fiction 'conventions of sensation and adventure' that 'enlivened and dramatized' what would otherwise have been 'static tales of ratiocination in the style of [Edgar Allan] Poe' (75). For Thompson, Doyle's 'particular genius was to take the tradition of adventure fiction - a tradition that includes Shakespeare, Aphra Ben, Defoe, and Scott - and to transform it into a recognizably new genre by combining it with other

traditions, genres and values' (68), the upshot being the famous ratiocinative-deductive brilliance of the Holmes persona.

Insofar as 'the values of empiricism - the emphasis on quantification and utility over qualitative considerations - are the same ones that have come to structure and regulate capitalist economies' (67), and insofar as 'adventure...is the energizing myth of empire' (68), Doyle was, therefore, helping to popularise the distinctive mode of capital accumulation represented by Empire. It was his 'reworking of an ideology of empiricism in popular form [that] helped produce a comforting and reassuring image of society untroubled by sexual, economic, or social pressures' (75, italics in original); it helped produce consent to hegemony by 'marginalizing subjects capable of calling into question the narrow empirical ideology by which Holmes lives' (*ibid.*), and hence the generally unfavourable assessment proffered by Thompson.

Given the arguments above, it is significant as such that the Holmesian allusions in *Orphans* are also used to register the links between cultural production and the project of Empire - between 'Sherlockian empiricism' and the workings of the opium trade. We are told, for instance, that the Banks family often had to play host to recently-arrived company employees before they found their feet and that, in Banks's opinion, these 'young Englishmen' often brought with them the air of the 'foggy streets' of 'Conan Doyle mysteries' (52). He remembers as well that as a young boy he was greatly fascinated by these 'house

guest[s]' (51), that for some reason he wanted to 'study' and to 'closely...emulate' them (52).

Nevertheless, a pejorative glossing of these visits and, by extension, the Holmesian intertext is discernable if we consider the contrast between the figurative miasma the young men bring and the 'atmosphere' in the Banks's household, for the last is said to 'undergo a complete change' or improvement after every anti-opium campaign meeting hosted by the mother (62). The 'air' in the headquarters of the anti-opium movement - Uncle Philip's office - is also said to be 'much purer' than elsewhere (74), and thus the novel sets up forcefully an association between the 'foggy' street ambience of the 'Doyle mysteries' and the social pestilence unleashed by the opium trade.

This interrogation of the Holmes intertext is intensified if we examine in greater detail why Banks wants to 'emulate' (52) his house guests. It turns out that the aspiration stems from the way he misapprehends the fighting between his parents, which is to say his mother's reproach of his father for accommodating himself to 'ungodly wealth' (70), and of participating in the 'un-Christian and un-British' (61) opium trade. Due to the untoward influence of Akira, Banks construes the clashes, nevertheless, as a reflection of his own conduct. He believes that his parents are fighting because he isn't behaving 'sufficiently like an Englishman' (73), and thus in the way that children will often blame themselves for domestic turmoil his emulation of the 'young English'-visitors stems from a desire to make things right at home. But in the

process, it would seem, Banks's unwarranted self-disparagement also heightens the pejorative inflection of those 'house guest[s]' (51) with their explicitly Holmesian connotations.

This negative demarcation is maintained in the novel's psychological climax when Banks whips out his magnifying glass - the archetypal Sherlock Holmes ornament - out of an acknowledged force of 'habit' to scrutinise the corpses in the abandoned house (272); despite his obsessive fantasies his parents have failed to materialise, and hence his response might be seen as a last-gasp effort to roll back Freud's reality principle, to re-establish that cloistered 'enchanted world' that Philip alludes to. But since a return to that world has become patently impossible, he also breaks down sobbing.

Because it forcefully associates these Holmesian allusions with the opium trade and, by extension, with the enterprise of Empire, *Orphans* concretises the criticisms made by Thompson and Morretti. Its staging of those allusions allow us to think the links between nineteenth century imperialism and popular cultural forms of the twentieth century; and thus we might say the literary genealogy unveiled by *Orphans* also encourages an examination of our current historical conjunction in the light of that genealogical revelation.

What is still required to complete the interrogation of the Holmesian intertext, nevertheless, is a properly structural and spatial modeling of contemporary capitalist globality, and this is where the

novel's engagement with the hard-boiled tradition of detective fiction comes into play. Although Ishiguro has said that *Orphans* is different from the last (as noted above he sees it more as a pastiche of the 'English' Golden Age offshoot), there is one attribute in which it recalls that variant. Or rather, *Orphans* appears to take advantage of one structural possibility opened up by that narrative tradition.

As identified by Fredric Jameson the key formal innovation accomplished there was the creation of a detective-hero figure able to traverse all sections of society. Commenting specifically on the writings of Raymond Chandler, Jameson observes that although set in the Los Angeles of the 1930s, his novels already anticipate 'the realities of the fifties and sixties [in which]...various classes have lost touch with each other because each is isolated in his own geographical compartment'.²⁵ Jameson adds that:

Since there is no longer any privileged experience in which the whole of the social structure can be grasped, a figure must be invented who can be superimposed on the society as a whole, whose routine and life pattern serve somehow to tie its separate and isolated parts together.²⁶

In the person of Chandler's hero-detective, Marlowe, this perceptual and cognitive conundrum is, therefore, resolved, for by moving through those isolated class compartments and fractions Marlowe helps to complete a hermeneutic gesture; he makes apprehensible a social

totality that has become increasingly fragmented and centreless. And as Kristin Ross points out 'the very *content* of Chandler's novels is [therefore] a scenic one. The divided scenic content conjures up the figure of the detective, Marlowe, who alone can unite the disparate parts of the city into a social whole'.²⁷

In the same way we might say Banks works to unite the disparate parts of the novel's social space. But this means that the rationale behind the parents-disappearance plot of *Orphans* also becomes clearer, for through the staging of Banks's need to return to Shanghai Ishiguro is then able to bring together the similarly 'separate and isolated' portions of the 'social structure' in question, except that instead of operating at the city-scape level the referent of that 'social structure' now becomes the entire world system of late capitalism. Pre-communist Shanghai becomes in this respect a metaphor for all peripheral and semi-peripheral social spaces, so that the non-metropolitan presences customarily occluded or domesticated in metropolitan cultural forms can also be given narrative scope.

What the globalisation of capital and the onset of flexible accumulation²⁸ means for us is that, ever increasingly, the bulk of the working classes of the metropolitan social formations are now located overseas; they are structurally the equivalent of the isolated class compartments and fractions which in Chandler's novels had required the superimposition of a Marlowe-figure in order to be grasped as a complete hermeneutic gesture. Arguably, that is, Banks fulfills the same narrative

function in *Orphans*. In the terms proposed by Ross the very content of *Orphans* is also a 'scenic' one, intimating variously the economic and distributive networks linking the vast hinterlands of the Yangtze valley and a privileged littoral society, as well as the warrens of the slum quarter of Shanghai.

Ishiguro's wager is that in getting his readers to invest in the libidinal dynamic of Banks's search for his parents, he can get them to grasp a slice of the logic connecting centre and margin, to move from the rarefied world of the London social set and sleepy 'Dorset' villages into the urban purgatory of a remote slum quarter. Again, it needs to be stressed that the narrative acquires allegorical significance in the process. The true significance of the 'West Country' inspector's advice to Banks to make for the 'heart of the serpent' lies in the concatenations delineated above, which is to say in the political imperative to think the links between the different class fractions of the world system as a social whole.²⁹

In view of the preceding discussion, the significance of the various detective-genre parallels registered by *Orphans* can now be elaborated. First of all as I have indicated an ironic deployment of the Golden Age detective form helps to highlight and undermine parochial, quiescent and/or elitist articulations. Such a deployment provides the necessary groundwork for a desegregation of the disparate and normatively compartmentalised social spaces of the world system, a move effected

by the mobilisation of the structural possibilities opened up by the hard-boiled detective genre.

Having provided an indication of the synchronic or systemic articulations at stake it is then the Sherlock Holmes motifs which help set up a properly diachronic optic on the novel's subject matter. If in *Artist* the hiring of detectives to check up on the family background of prospective marriage partners leads to the disclosure of the protagonist's collaboration with militarism, the exploitative practices foregrounded by the Holmes motifs in *Orphans* also encourage a move from the symbolic or cultural to the material. There is a sense in which the literary genealogy established through the Holmesian motifs and the novel's *missing-parents* storyline combine to foreground the question of what we have inherited from the nineteenth century, a recognition, in other words, that the present world order continues to be neocolonial in its make-up.

Such a reading is warranted, I believe, by the encounter near the beginning of the novel between Banks and an ex-schoolmate named Osbourne, an incident which results in Banks taking umbrage at the latter's 'casual judgement' that he was 'such an odd bird at school' (7). Mulling over that observation Banks insists that Osbourne had had no reason to call him 'odd', since as he remembered he had 'blended perfectly' well into 'English school life' following his repatriation from Shanghai (7). On further reflection he concedes, significantly, that there were, nevertheless, two occasions suggesting that despite his careful concealment of his plans from his schoolmates they already knew about

them (the implication being that that might have been the reason for Osbourne's 'odd bird' assessment), once when his friends bought him a magnifying glass for his fourteenth birthday (7-9), and a second incident when one of his classmates had sniggered at him and called him a 'Sherlock' (10).

At one level these deliberations help set the scene for the novel's denouement, giving us a sense that Banks has been embroidering his fantasy world since childhood; but more important for our argument is the way Ishiguro weaves together these Holmesian allusions with the issue of class relations and social reproduction: what is illuminating here is Osbourne's utterance of the odd-bird assessment in the same breath as he invites Banks to a ball that an uncle had organised for a 'tycoon' friend (4); as Osbourne jokingly puts it, he was hoping thereby to demonstrate just what being 'well connected' means, since, as he recalls, Banks had been wont to 'interrogate' him 'mercilessly' about his 'well-connectedness' in school (5-6). Yet this is also what causes Banks to take umbrage, for as he recalls he had only questioned Osbourne about the matter *once* during a cross country run: he remembers that he and Osbourne were the designated route-'markers' for the event, which took place during one 'foggy autumn morning' (5), and, more specifically, he recalls that while waiting for the runners to emerge he had quizzed Osbourne so insistently about the matter that he had replied in exasperation: 'It's all just nonsense, there's nothing to analyse. One simply knows people. One has parents, uncles, families, friends' (6).

Following his outburst, however, Osbourne had apologised when he remembered that Banks was an orphan (*ibid.*).

For the purposes of our argument the thematic focus of this seemingly innocuous invitation then occurs at the ball - held during the days when Banks is still making his way into London society - where one of the guests assumes, talking to Banks, that he was there to find someone to give him 'a leg up in life' (15). To a certain extent the description fits Banks, although the implied assumption that the 'leg up' would come from some well-placed business figure or captain of industry is not exactly the case; instead Banks hopes merely that some famous detective figure would attend the ball and that he would take a 'fatherly interest' (11) in him, and, furthermore, that he would offer him some useful professional 'advice' (12).

It should be clear from my account above that *Orphans* works purposefully to foreground for critical deliberation the question of 'well-connectedness' (6). At this point Banks has just come down from Cambridge and has still to set up operation; 'leg up' does refer to the advantages that a felicitous introduction might bring; but with the reference to 'fatherly interest' the novel also hints at what underpins Banks's desire to become a detective, namely his search for his parents. While 'well-connectedness' for Osbourne and his social contemporaries is an unremarkable matter of class privilege and the benefits of the old boy's network, for Banks it is a notion intimately related to the trauma of parental loss.

But that is precisely the point, for I would suggest that in this way Ishiguro prompts us to move from rarefied high society in England to a larger global arena. Banks's insistent questioning of what 'well-connectedness' means sets the scene for the revealed surrogate fatherhood of Wang Ku; it enjoins the recognition that the conditions of possibility of the metropolitan lifeworld are intimately tied up with expropriation. Not for the first time, that is, Ishiguro uses biological reproduction or the concept of parenthood to gloss the question of social reproduction. If in *Remains* the entrusting of Stevens with the task of telling a young Lord Cardinal the facts of human biological reproduction, together with the fact that Darlington assigns the task while clutching a copy of *Who's Who*, raises the question of Stevens's role in the perpetuation of privilege, the imbrication of Banks's parental-search with class privilege in *Orphans* turns it into a claim about social reproduction as well. Since Banks's fascination with the concept of 'well-connectedness' is made coeval with class privilege and the old boy's network through Osbourne's invitation, the revelation that well-connectedness in the novel actually 'refers', so to speak, to Wang Ku's cash means that the novel's disclosure of the source of Banks's income acquires allegorical import - it tropes the much larger capital and material flows between centre and periphery.

Through the variously embodied variation on the theme of well-connectedness - serpentine iconography, distributive networks, the rewriting of Dickens and the use of the detective fiction genre - Ishiguro moves the reader, that is, from domestic class relations to an

international arena, to a consideration of how hegemony operates on a global scale. To the extent that *Orphans* is more or less the dramatic rendition and enjoinder to an analysis of well-connectedness Ishiguro avers that the reproduction of social relations is the central and hidden process of capitalist sociality.

Despite or because of Osbourne's attempt to claim that 'it's all...nonsense', and that 'there's nothing to analyse', Banks's fascination with the topic means that *Orphans* puts the issue of social reproduction on the agenda right at the beginning. If, for Moretti, 'the dominant cultural oppositions of detective fiction are between the individual (in the guise of the criminal) and the social organism (in the guise of the detective)', and if, additionally, detective fiction 'exists expressly to dispel the doubt that guilt might be impersonal, and therefore collective and social',³⁰ *Orphans* does not subscribe to those genre-constraints. Rather, the imperatives of collective and social action are underlined, so that in the process Ishiguro asks whether there are still global and capital flows of the type that bankrolled Banks; he calls attention to the burning issues of uneven development, de-development, unfair trading practices as well as exploitative trading and financial systems, in what amounts to a forensic examination of late capitalism.

Cognitive Mapping

To the extent that *Orphans* can be read as variously embodying the notion of 'well-connectedness', together with the sobering geopolitical

realities they imply, its thematic configuration also dovetails with an argument propounded by Jameson, namely that in the era of late capitalism politically contestatory art is that which operates in the manner of an allegorical interpretant helping us to grasp at some level a complex globalised sociality. In the terms suggested by Jameson Ishiguro provides in *Orphans* what might be called a 'cognitive mapping' of the world system of late capitalism.

As developed in an influential essay Jameson ponders the possibility of politically oppositional art in an era where culture has become thoroughly permeated by the logic of the marketplace, where there is a lack of 'critical distance' between the realm of culture and the socio-economic realm.³¹ He proposes in properly dialectical fashion, nevertheless, that contemporary art might actually achieve its political edge *through* that logic: it can provide consumers with conceptual models, or 'cognitive maps' of the new socioeconomic terrain that they must daily negotiate - indicating to them their position with respect to the multinationalist-capitalist world order so that they might mount a resistance to it out of an appropriately heightened political consciousness.³² I demonstrated in the previous chapter the manner in which *The Unconsoled* dramatises and parodies the lack of 'critical distance' between the culture industry and cosmopolitan cultural production, and *Orphans* moves on it seems to tackle the challenges thrown up by that problematic. In her discussion of Jameson's reading of the detective fiction of Raymond Chandler, Kristin Ross remarks that even in that early work Jameson already anticipates the call sketched out

above for a 'cognitive cartographer', and it is significant, I think, that *Orphans* also utilises a detective figure to yoke together as I have indicated disparate class fractions and heterogeneous social spaces. For it is as a cognitive mapping of the variously imbricated features of the multinationalist-capitalist world order that the various permutations on 'well-connectedness' in *Orphans* contribute to an interrogation of the present.

It is here, moreover, that another key image insinuates itself, since what concretises the notion of well-connectedness in *Orphans* is the trope that Akira uses when he offers advice to the young Banks. As Banks recalls he had been telling Akira about the squabbles and quarrels at home over his father's vocation; in reply Akira offers the ludicrous response that his parents were fighting because he was not 'English' enough (73). Akira's remarks appears to be a projection onto Banks of his own fears about an impending return to Japan, a fear stemming from an earlier sojourn there when he had been mercilessly bullied for being too 'foreign' (89). His remarks also bring to mind the 'young Englishmen' who bring with them the 'foggy streets' (52) of Conan Doyle's mysteries and are, therefore, another means by which the text alludes to and indicts the drug trade; taken as a whole this complexly-inflected episode gestures as well at Ishiguro's location within and between two social formation. But what is more important for us is the manner by which Akira rationalises his child's eye view of the world: he holds Banks responsible for the squabbling at home because, he says, a Japanese monk had told him that children are the 'twine' that keep together the slats of a window-

blind; they bind together, in his words, 'not only a family, but [also] the whole world' (73).

The literal content of Akira's proverb strikes us as mawkish and sentimental. Yet this yoking together of 'well-connectedness' - in the shape of the 'twine' imagery - and childhood becomes crucial when seen as part of an ambitious undertaking to redeem the notion of nostalgia for political purposes. As Ishiguro explains, the Orphan metaphor registered in the title of the book 'refers to that moment in our lives when we come out of the sheltered bubble of childhood and discover that the world is not the cosy place that we had previously been taught to believe...Even when we become adults, something of this disappointment, I think, remains'; Banks represents, as such, a naive and innocent part of us that wants, accordingly, 'to go back, [and] to fix things'.³³ The assertion in the title that we are, all of us, Orphans is, therefore, linked to that political imperative to 'fix things', for as Ishiguro adds:

[There is] nothing wrong with nostalgia...It is a much maligned emotion. The English don't like it, under-rate it, because it harks back to empire days and to guilt about the empire. *But nostalgia is the emotional equivalent of idealism.* You use memory to go back to a place better than the one you find yourself in. I am trying to give nostalgia a better name.³⁴

Reading *Orphans* can be a defamiliarising experience. It forcefully undermines genre expectations; it appears to straddle purposefully both popular culture modes and so-called serious literary fiction, it also appears to be seeking an alignment of the last with *children's literature* - with *all* the seams exposed. But given the remarks above, this syncretic framework begins to fall into place, since it is precisely those awkward, defamiliarising episodes and effects that preclude an easy suspension of disbelief, that force the deployment of a parabolic optic on events and incidents. The manner in which Banks and Akira suddenly find each other during the slum sequence, the overpowering inconsolable tone of the novel and Banks's constant harkening to his halcyon childhood days can be framed, that is, under the rubric of political idealism; and this is also where the novel's invocation of the positive narrative forces of redemption and regeneration to stress the imperatives of meaningful socio-political change comes into its own. In an age where commentators can proclaim without embarrassment the advent of millenarian capitalism and the end of history, where the very thought of a radical transformation of the public sphere appears to die stillborn before enunciation, it is important, I believe, that Ishiguro turns to the thought-figure of childhood-nostalgia as an emblem for idealism. This is why the reunion between the boys in the slum quarter is made so unsettling. On the one hand its sheer improbability suggests some kind of extreme psychological regression. Yet a straightforwardly psychological reading is discouraged by the more 'realistic' portions of the novel. We are still compelled more or less to read for narrative progression, with the reunion striking an uneasy balance between the literal and the solipsistic.

Yet it is under the imprimatur of that tension that the episode takes on allegorical significance, as, for example, when Akira comments during their meanderings that 'when we nostalgic we remember, a world better than this world we discover when we grow' (263, *sic*). Elsewhere as well, the effort to give nostalgia 'a better name' can be seen in the encounter with the Japanese colonel - the one responsible for signposting the Dickens allusion - who, commenting on the generally underappreciated importance of childhood, quotes a Japanese court lady to the effect that 'our childhood becomes like a foreign land once we have grown' (277). It is as the 'emotional equivalent' of idealism that such references attempt to reinvigorate a political idealism weighed down by contemporary neoconservatism, and this would explain in turn those moments in the novel where Banks displays an oddly monumentalised sense of responsibility and desire to save the world, as when he expresses a desire to fight 'encroaching wickedness' (30), to avoid 'frivolous' socialising (21), and to combat 'evil of the insidious, furtive kind' (21). If, for Jameson, 'the example of [Walter] Benjamin is there to prove' that 'there is no reason why a nostalgia conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude, cannot furnish as adequate a revolutionary stimulus as any other',³⁵ Ishiguro's effort to redeem nostalgia may be aligned in the same fashion as the effort to take advantage of memory and of remembered plenitude.

Since an effort to redeem nostalgia calls to mind the equivalent category of utopian thought and the systematic transformation of society,

it also echoes Jameson's remarks on the subject: 'Now it is practical thinking which everywhere represents a capitulation to the system itself, and stands as a testimony to the power of that system to transform even its adversaries into its own mirror image. The Utopian idea, on the contrary, keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one'.³⁶ How these remarks dovetail with the dramatic diagnosis rendered in *Orphans* comes across even more strikingly in the way that Jameson links together as well the category utopia-nostalgia with the plenitude of psychic gratification associated with childhood, and with the workings of memory:

Now the origin of Utopian thinking becomes clear, for it is memory which serves as a fundamental mediator between the inside and the outside, between the psychological and the political...It is because we have known, at the beginning of life, a plenitude of psychic gratification...that memory, even the obscured and unconscious memory of that prehistoric paradise in the individual psyche, can fulfill its profound therapeutic, epistemological, and even political role...The primary energy of revolutionary activity derives from this memory of a prehistoric happiness which the individual can regain only through its externalization, through its reestablishment for society as a whole. The loss or repression of the very sense of such concepts as freedom and desire takes, therefore, the form of a kind of amnesia or forgetful numbness, which the hermeneutic

activity, the stimulation of memory as the negation of the here and now, as the projection of Utopia, has as its function to dispel.³⁷

John Carey has suggested that a strength of Ishiguro's recent works is their effort to extend 'the possibilities of fiction'. As he sees it, proto-surrealist episodes such as the slum sequence and Banks's visit to his old Shanghai home are 'masterpiece[s] of the phantom reality [that] Ishiguro now works in';³⁸ like *The Unconsoled* they represent the effort to explore innovative ontological and fictional terrains. But as my discussion above suggests that evocation of a world uneasily poised between the literal and the solipsistic is not just an aestheticist enterprise. By something akin to Brecht's famous alienation effect - by means of which the audience is kept at such a distance that unthinking emotional and personal involvement is inhibited - I would venture to suggest that these proto-surrealist episodes are geared, as Ishiguro puts it, to recuperate nostalgia as the affective equivalent of political idealism. In this way the novel also uses 'memory' as a 'fundamental mediator' between the 'psychological and the political'; it references the remembered 'psychic gratification' of childhood so that the last can be yoked to contestatory purposes.

If *Remains* and *The Unconsoled* target, as I have argued, the more questionable forms of nostalgia operating in public discourse, *Orphans* moves on it would seem to proffer a positive hermeneutic of transcendence when it calls up the category of political idealism. Just as

in *The Unconsoled* stylistic experimentation in *Orphans* is, therefore, not undertaken for its own sake but as part of an authorial trajectory that seeks a grasp of both the historicity and totality of the world system, as well as of the prospects for radical change.

Conclusion

Given that narrative wisdom in *Orphans* is staged as the enunciation, respectively, of a Japanese 'monk' (73) - the reference to twine - and a Japanese 'court lady' (277) - the reference to the importance of childhood -, and given that these moves are expressly deployed to redeem nostalgia-utopia under the thought-figure of a return to childhood, *Orphans* could be said to carry forceful exilic inflections: the turn to Japan's literary and cultural-spiritual heritage to instantiate narrative wisdom in *Orphans* suggests a degree of affiliation, and in this respect we might say that what Ishiguro does in *Orphans* is to rework the *topos* of exile for narrative-rhetorical purposes. Despite Sheng-mei Ma's insistence that the course of Ishiguro's writing since *Pale View* is distinguished by a progressively increasing disaffiliatory bent, the benefit that accrues to my analysis from the interpretative category of exile helps, I believe, to overturn Ma's charge.³⁹ *The Unconsoled* and *Orphans* may indeed represent Ishiguro's 'mature style' as one reviewer puts it,⁴⁰ but it is this reworking of the *topos* of exile for contestatory ends that most typifies an authorial trajectory.

In a summary assessment of the novel another reviewer stated perspicuously that: 'What Ishiguro has done, bafflingly and hauntingly, is to show us Dorothy Sayers L. transforming steadily into Joseph Conrad'.⁴¹ My analysis has helped to fill in what is left unsaid in that prescription, insofar as Conrad is customarily taken to have exposed in his work some of the disjunctions and tensions of an exploitative world order. In a sense it might be said Ishiguro updates Conrad for our era.

Notes to Chapter Six

¹ Hereafter abbreviated as *Orphans* and cited parenthetically in the text. I am indebted to Jeremy Treglown for helping me obtain an advance copy of this novel.

² John Bowlby uses this term to designate a kind of pathological response to bereavement, giving as example several individuals who preserved their homes exactly as they were before the death of a spouse, and also of one woman who, following the sudden death of her elderly father, insisted for over a year that neither her flat nor her mother's should be 'redecorated'. I use the term here loosely to illuminate Banks's psychological condition. For Bowlby, mummification 'may represent the bereaved's more or less conscious belief that the dead person will return and a desire to ensure that he will be properly welcome when he does so'. A similar reunificatory desire appears to account for Banks's mummification of his childhood. See Bowlby, *Loss, Sadness and Depression*, pp.150-51.

³ Anonymous, 'Back to Basics', *Economist Review*, April 15 (2000), p.12.

⁴ Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900-1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.48.

⁵ It should be noted, however, that the trade did not meet with unqualified approval. Carl Trocki cites, for example, two individuals whose testimony are worth recounting. The first one stems from 1849, when, Donald Matheson, a young partner in the trading group, Jardine Matheson, felt he had to resign to register his objection: 'It was intolerable to me to continue in such a business, and I sent home my resignation to the senior partner who was in this country. I left China finally in 1849'. Trocki also cites the case of Lord Elgin, who defeated the Chinese at the Second Opium War and negotiated the treaty of Tianjin in

which the Qing government agreed to legalise the trade, but who was moved, nevertheless, to express outrage at his countrymen's activities: 'I have seen more to disgust me with my fellow-countrymen than I saw during the whole course of my previous life, since I have found them in the East among populations too weak to resist and too ignorant to complain'. See Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.163, 162.

⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (St Albans: Paladin, 1973), pp. 84, 121.

⁷ See chapter five.

⁸ Frances Wood, *No Dogs and Not Many Chinese: Treaty Port life in China 1843-1943* (London: Murray, 1998), p.3.

⁹ James E. Sheridan, 'The Warlord Era: Politics and Militarism under the Peking government, 1916-1928', in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 12*, ed. by John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 284-321 (p. 296).

¹⁰ It is significant that other references to the company in *Orphans* are also negatively glossed. A 'Mr Keswick' of 'Jardine Matheson' suggests, for example, that Banks should 'taste' the city's 'night-life' (p.166). Another employee named Morgan also takes Banks to his former Shanghai home, in what appears to be a stylised rendition of an exercise in wish-fulfillment (p.180).

¹¹ Trocki, p.8. Further references to the book are given in the text.

¹² Trocki indicates, for instance, that for most of the nineteenth century opium was the major export from India to China. Drug revenue was also the 'second most important source of income for the Indian government' (p.58). He argues that centralised cultivation of the crop was instigated through 'a system of forced cultivation' involving 'at least a half-million peasant households' in the Malwa

and Bihar-Benares areas of India with an acreage of 'nearly half-million hectares' (p.86).

¹³ Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp.43-66 (p.50-51).

¹⁴ C. Y. Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, sixth edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.344, 348-9, 434.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.344.

¹⁶ Russell Celyn Jones, 'Books: When We Were Orphans', *The Times*, 6 April 2000, p.15.

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.xxiii. Further references to the book are given in the text.

¹⁸ For a discussion of this and other popular-culture motifs see Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), especially chapter one: 'Images of Asians in Anglo-American Literature'.

¹⁹ *The Political Unconscious*, p.188.

²⁰ Jon Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp.122,129.

Further references to the book are given in the text.

²¹ Mackenzie, p.17.

²² Kristin Ross states, for example, that 'most popular mysteries, especially of the English variety, are devoted to solving rather than examining a problem...the feverish acceleration in pace of hermeneutic frenzy that plummets the reader head forward to the final moments demands a solid, reliable closure, a reaffirmation of some comforting order and stability in the world'. Kristin Ross, 'Watching the detectives', in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*,

ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.46-65 (pp.61-2).

²³ Franco Moretti, 'Clues', in *Signs Taken For Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, rev. edn, trans. by Susan Fischer, David Forgacs and David Miller (London: Verso, 1988), pp.130-156.

²⁴ Tony Bennett, ed., *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.217.

²⁵ Quoted in Ross, p.52.

²⁶ Ibid., p.54.

²⁷ Ibid., p.51 (italics in original).

²⁸ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

²⁹ I am adapting here the arguments used by Kristin Ross in her discussion of the work of Belgian novelist Didier Daeninckx. See her essay 'Watching the detectives'.

³⁰ 'Clues', pp.134, 135.

³¹ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), 52-92 (p.85). See also his essay 'Cognitive Mapping', in *The Jameson Reader*, ed. by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp.277-87.

³² 'Postmodernism', pp.89-92.

³³ Mackenzie, p.17.

³⁴ Ibid., (italics added).

³⁵ *Marxism and Form*, p.82.

³⁶ Ibid., p.111.

³⁷ Ibid., pp.113-14.

³⁸ John Carey, 'Fiction; Books', *Sunday Times*, 2 April 2000, p.45.

³⁹ See Ma, 'Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream'.

⁴⁰ John Walsh, 'Master of detached passions', *Independent*, 5 November 2000 [http://www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=40408, visited on 9 April 2001].

⁴¹ Sam Leith, 'Shanghai Sherlock', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 March 2000, p.A4.

Chapter Seven. Conclusion

The previous chapters have argued that Ishiguro's writing is marked by a propensity to refine and restate oppositional concerns in response to the critical and popular reception of his work. The apotheosis of this process was *The Unconsoled* (1995), whose fabulist configuration was glossed in metacritical terms as a diagnostic dramatisation of metropolitan literary discussion, contesting and parodying Ishiguro's misidentification as a supplier of ethnographic and essentialist verities in his earlier novels. This arose because the interpretations they attracted failed to accord due regard to their contestation of Japanese and English exceptionalism, as evidenced by such features as the continuity of theme between them (highlighting the costs of self-deception and misplaced loyalty), the replication of plot, and the penchant for formal devices such as extended flashback sequences and unreliable narration, hence challenging, it would seem, the Manichean divides besetting Eurocentric conceptions of self and other. Support for this argument - regarding the claimed contestation of culturalist and exceptionalist paradigms - was sought in the rewriting and appropriation of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and the interrogation of the double-metaphor registered in the title of Ruth Benedict's study, *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*, in, respectively, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). In turn, the criticism of heritage consumerism in *The Remains of the Day* (1989) was read as an extension of that counter-

discursive dynamic, insofar as it targeted the opposing side of the symbolic economy deployed to sustain Manichean and particularist nostrums. Attention was also drawn to the way these works negotiated the exigencies of Ishiguro's location between different social formations, including the incidence of exilic and/or immigrant self-fashioning occurring therein.

When We Were Orphans (2000) extends this authorial trajectory in two ways. Like each of the other novels it is primarily an attempt to demystify occlusionary narratives, in this instance the elisions fueled by the detective narrative form. Hard on the heels of the interrogation of retrograde forms of nostalgia in public life (as effected by *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled*) the novel also offers to recuperate the category - shorn of its neoconservative appendages - as the affective equivalent of political idealism. It does this by rewriting Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* in order figure the systematicity of the contemporary socio-economic order, stressing its essentially inequitable design and also the necessity for radical change. This move, and, more generally, the recourse under the pressure of interpretive misrecognitions and appropriations to foreground materialist categories (totality, structure, expropriation, and commodification) in Ishiguro's recent work was seen as mounting a fundamental challenge to formalist and idealist currents in contemporary cultural discourse. More specifically, it problematises the increasingly normative exorbitation of diaspora, syncreticity, hybridity and other cognate categories in social and critical thought, including its corollary tendency to subsume all cosmopolitan

texts under a monumentalised conception of these terms, but which tends, as a result, to obscure the ways in which cultural production traversed by the experience of geographical dislocation is also sited, even if those sites fall out of national categorisation.

Such a trajectory underscores the need for critical discourse to attend to the heterogeneity among diasporic and immigrant groups and individuals in different class, national and gender locations. It suggests that critical discourse must be wary of the ways in which disingenuously celebratory and/or inclusive conceptions of global culture operate to disguise continuing asymmetries of power, and, furthermore, that greater skepticism should be accorded to increasingly commonplace evocations of boundary violation and cultural interpenetration that purport to make obsolete conceptual tools such as centre and margin in critical analysis. Read as an intervention in contemporary discussions of globalisation the foregoing acts as a corrective to exaggerated claims regarding the advent of an epochal phase of mutual, cross-border transculturation, drawing attention to the ways such claims obscure the lack of equality of access to the means of representation, which is to say the conspicuous inequality of resources between metropolitan and periphery formations.

More, speculatively, I would contend, the fixation on tagging Ishiguro as a cultural or native informant against the grain of the anti-exoticist dynamic of his early work raises compelling questions about contemporary

critical discourse. The issue of the extent to which the metropolitan academe parses cosmopolitan and/or immigrant writing as isomorphic with non-metropolitan writing is raised, including the propensity of such practices to efface differences or areas of incommensurability between socio-cultural collectivities. While this question has been left out of the purview of this dissertation further work on Ishiguro and/or other cosmopolitan authors might want to consider the degree to which such a substitutive dynamic erases from critical attention the cultural production of vast swathes of the world's population. And, overall, this would suggest the need for a more carefully grounded understanding of the processes of production, dissemination, consumption and accumulation that have surrounded the rapid development and promotion of Anglophone fiction-writing from non-traditional sites.

Length of thesis:

Approximately 79,430 words

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