

Contemporary English Fiction and the works of Kazuo Ishiguro

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this abstract is to study of memory in contemporary writings. Situating itself in the developing field of memory studies, this thesis is an attempt to go beyond the prolonged horizon of disturbing recollection that is commonly regarded as part of contemporary postcolonial and diasporic experience. It appears that, in the contemporary world the geographical mapping and remapping and its associated sense of dislocation and the crisis of identity have become an integral part of an everyday life of not only the post-colonial subjects, but also the post-apartheid ones. This inter-correlation between memory, identity, and displacement as an effect of colonization and migration lays conceptual background for my study of memory in the literary works of an contemporary writers, a Japanese-born British writer, Kazuo Ishiguro. This study is a scrutiny of some key issues in memory studies: the working of remembrance and forgetting, the materialization of memory, and the belongingness of material memory and personal identity. In order to restore the sense of place and identity to the displaced people, it may be necessary to critically engage in a study of embodied memory which is represented by the material place of memory - the brain and the body - and other objects of remembrance

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In the eighteenth century the years after the forties observed a wonderful developing of a new literary genre. We are referring here to the English novel which was born with Richardson's *Pamela*. However some consider the father of the English novel to be Daniel Defoe and some Samuel Richardson. Defoe's three great novels *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana* were published before 1730. Apart from Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson other pioneers of novels are Henry fielding, Jonathan Swift, and Laurence Sterne. Swift in his novel *Gulliver's Travels* gave an interesting narrative. The most important gifts of the eighteenth century to English literature are the periodical essay and the novel but the decline of drama also contributed to the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century.

The Victorian era was the great age of the English novel being sensible, strongly plotted, crowded with characters. It was the best way to demonstrate contemporary life and purpose was to entertain the middle class. The novels of Charles Dickens, was filled with drama, humour, and an endless variety of stunning characters and plot complications, however portraying urban life of all classes. William Makepeace Thackeray is best known for *Vanity Fair* (1848), he wickedly satirizes hypocrisy and greed in his novels. It was in the Victorian era that the novel became the leading literary genre in English. Women played an important part in this rising status both as authors and as readers. Charles Dickens is the most famous Victorian novelist. Emily Bronte's single novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), is a unique masterpiece, is a supposed Gothic novel with intense feelings and unorthodox attitudes towards a sophisticated yet decaying society.

The novels of Emily's sister Charlotte Bronte, especially *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), are daring in their own ways. The novels of George Eliot's or Mary Ann Evans appeared during the 1860's and 70's. A woman of great sophistication and moral spirit, Eliot was concerned with ethical conflicts and social problems. George Meredith produced comic novels known for their psychological perception. Another novelist of the late nineteenth century was the creative Anthony Trollope, famous for sequences of related novels that explore social and political life in England. Other Victorian novelists are Thomas Hardy, Samuel Butler, Robert Louis Stevenson, Benjamin Disraeli, George Gissing, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Willkie Collins. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, writing under the name Lewis Carroll, produced the complex and

sophisticated children's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871).

There are different types of novels like Detective Novels, Detective Stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), Edgar Allan Poe, wrote his tales of Sherlock Holmes. G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) wrote his Father Brown, a fictional character created by him in his detective stories as well as other non-genre novels. H.G. Wells (1866-1946) wrote very interesting science fiction, like *The Time Machine* (1895), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) as well as non-genre novels. Bram Stoker, author of influential horror work *Dracula*, based on the primary antagonist the vampire Count Dracula, with the vampire hunter Abraham Vel Helsing his arch-enemy. *Dracula* has given birth to a number of literary genres including vampire literature, Horror fiction, Gothic Fiction and Invasion literature, a literary genre describing tales about hypothetical invasions by foreign powers. In Victorian period, the novel was considered not only the premiere form of entertainment but also a primary means of analyzing to social and political problems including novels for children.

English novels of the twentieth century were the age of the disappearance of British Empire. There was the change in beliefs and political ideas because of the influence of First World War. The effect of the First World War (1914-1918) was reflected in the works of many writers. After the war most English writers chose to focus on aesthetic or social rather than political problems. The novelists Henry Green, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Joyce Cary, and Lawrence Durrell, and the poets Robert Graves, Edwin Muir, Louis MacNeice, and Edith Sitwell cultivated their own style. Although the postwar era was not a great period of English literature yet it produced a variety of excellent critics, including William Empson, Frank Kermode, and F. R. Leavis.

During early nineteenth century Modernist movement began to influence British literature. According to the web source, Postmodernism is a reaction to what used to be called 'modernism'. Postmodernism as a philosophical movement is largely a reaction against the philosophical assumptions, values, and intellectual worldview of the modern period of Western history i.e., the period from about the time of the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the mid-twentieth century. This period was also marked by a number of highly individual novelists, including Kingsley Amis, Anthony Burgess, William Golding, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, and Muriel Spark. Anthony Powell and Richard Hughes, producing a series of realistic novels during the 20th century.

Late twentieth century popular novelists are Angela Carter (1940-1992) known for magical realism and picaresque works. Margaret Drabble (1939-) is a novelist, biographer and critic, Her older sister, A. S. Byatt (1936-) is best known for *Possession* (1990). Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999). Salman Rushdie is among a number of post Second World War writers from former British colonies who permanently settled in Britain. Doris Lessing her first novel *The Grass is Swinging* (1950), after immigrating to England. She initially wrote about her African experiences and won

the Nobel Prize for Literature in (2007). V. S. Naipaul (1932-) was another immigrant, born in Trinidad, who wrote *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961) and *A Bend in the River* (1979). Naipaul won the Nobel Prize in Literature, while from Pakistan came Hanif Kureishi (1954-), a playwright, screenwriter, filmmaker, novelist and short story writer.

His novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) won the Whitbread Award for the best first novel.

Kazuo Ishiguro (1954-) was born in Japan, known for his works *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

Contemporary fiction engages with key themes such as cultural identity, gender, myth and history, post colonialism and urban culture. The term contemporary fiction describes stories set in modern times that don't bring in any elements of fantasy. It is technically a kind of realistic fiction, and the term "Contemporary" is used specifically to distinguish it from realistic fiction with a historical setting, which is also generally common and fairly popular.

Contemporary fiction focused on giving people a window into some corner of everyday experience. When authors create contemporary fiction, there is generally a focus on making everything as realistic as possible. Contemporary writers include a broad range of leading British writers, including Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson, Will Self, Pat Barker, Angela Carter, Martin Amis Zadie Smith and Kazuo Ishiguro.

Once displaced from his ancestral homeland, Kazuo Ishiguro seems to exemplify the Diasporic writer. But a classification of such an astonishing individual is not easy, even if the categories are clearly defined, and the details of the theories of Diaspora that have been developed over the years are subject to heated discussion. This paper examines the Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction work in contemporary Diasporic and Postcolonial pattern, making identity and memory its thematic centrality. Kazuo Ishiguro utilizes memory as the focal point in his novels. He was born in Nagasaki, Japan, on November 8, 1954. In 1960, the five-year-old Ishiguro moved with his family to Britain, where his father, an oceanographer, began a one-year research project funded by the British government. What was originally intended to be a temporary visit gradually became a permanent one. Ishiguro admits that leaving Japan has left him a sense of "emotional bereavement or emotional deprivation". Though not overcharged with the raw nerves of unhealed exile, this sense of loss may be deemed as a defining streak of his personal and artistic temperament. A number of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel are situated in the past and remain hidden in the past and remain unsolved. Memory and Identity has been the central theme for his most of the novels.

Royal Society of Literature awards the Winifred Holtby Prize for *A Pale View of Hills*. Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* interests the Post-World War II reconstruction of images of middle-aged Japanese widow, Etsuko, who now lives in England. It focuses on Etsuko's relationship with her two daughters and her remembrance of destruction of Nagasaki in World War II. *A Pale View of Hills* is Kazuo Ishiguro's literary attempt to re-establish his memories of postwar Japan. Through the reminiscences of Etsuko, a Japanese widow now have taken up residence in the English countryside, we get glimpse of the social-psychological conditions of

postwar Japan. Most of the characters of the novel seem reluctant to discuss the past, and this explains why there are gaps and omissions in Etsuko's recollections. However, through her recollections, Etsuko somehow is reconciled with her past. It was written in first person narrative like Ishiguro's rest of the novels. Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* published in 1986 in Britain and America. It had won the Whitbread book of the year Award, and also shortlisted for the Booker prize in the same year he got married. *An Artist of the Floating World* is an ambiguous illustration of war and explored Japanese reactions to World War II through first-person narrator in the 1930s and early 1940s. Ishiguro in his second novel centralize on the relationship between personal psychological and political issues. The novel centers on Masuji Ono, a Japanese artist now in his declining years. Ono look back his whole life and career from the prospective of twenty months i.e. between October, 1948, and June, 1950, which is present time of the novel. Ono as compared to Ogata-San is more developed version of him. Ogata-San in *A Pale View of Hills* endeavors to rekindle his memories but a foggy-one. Both have many similarities like they are former fascists, artist and ageing widower living in solitude in their own tradition. Ono as a lead character moves more close than any other Ishiguro's protagonist to admitting past mistakes.

Kazuo Ishiguro's third novel *The Remains of the Day*, a Booker Prize-winning novel, made him on the list of world-wide popular and authentic novelists. It contributes in a well documented sub-genre of British Fiction. *The Remains of the Day* was first published in 1989. *The Remains of the Day* is set in post-war England, and tells the story of an elderly English butler confronting disappointment as he recalls a life spent in service, memories viewed against a backdrop of war and the rise of Fascism. *The Remains of the Day* portrays the suppressed emotion of Stevens who had deprived of human warmth in pursuing dignity but his concept of dignity makes him a loner and he felt the need to reconsider it. Kazuo Ishiguro utilizes memory as the focal point in his novels Ishiguro's this third novel was awarded the Booker Prize for Fiction.

A Pale View of Hills (1982), and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), encourage the reader to regard him as an ethnic Japanese novelist writing in English. Although as a novice Ishiguro capitalized on his Asian heritage. Ishiguro is sometimes referred to as *Postcolonial* author because his Japanese ancestry evokes an immediate association of Asian colonies of the British Empire. Pico Iyer groups Ishiguro with Booker-prize winners of postcolonial backgrounds and considers him "an exile from Japan" (46). Graham Huggan aligns Ishiguro with Carl Philips and Salman Rushdie in the category of marketable exotic novelists; he characterizes them as novelists of "canonical status" whose works are "legitimately 'minor'" (84). On the website of *Contemporary Postcolonial and Post-imperial Literature in English*, Ishiguro is grouped with Hanif Kureishi and Timothy Mo in the category of postcolonial authors from the United Kingdom. Cynthia F. Wong roughly divides their approaches into three categories: examination of "postcolonial elements," analysis of "technical aspects," and "thematic concerns linked to Ishiguro's Japanese heritage" (Kazuo 90). As separate as these methods may seem, they

are actually interconnected by their collective consciousness of Ishiguro's Asian background: they more or less relate the novelist's Japanese heritage to his thematic concerns, rhetorical techniques, and narrative style. Meera Tamaya's "Ishiguro's Remains of the Day: The Empire Strikes Back" links thematic post-coloniality with the novelist's racial identity. Just as the grouping of Japan with British colonies in Asia is historically ungrounded, the link of Ishiguro with postcolonial writers such as Naipaul, Mo, and Rushdie seems feeble. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin lucidly define, postcolonial literatures from different regions of the world are bound by the fact that "they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center . . ." Susie O'Brien's "Serving a New World Order: Postcolonial Politics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*" addresses the racial politics of marketing Ishiguro in world literature. When grouped with Rushdie, Mo, and Naipaul, Ishiguro is assigned to a margin where the corresponding center remains elusive. Ishiguro differs from the other three novelists in the fact that he comes from a former empire instead of a former colony, and that his narratives do not revolve around the consequences of Japan's decolonization after World War II.

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