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교육학석사학위논문

The Dilemma of Self-Integrity in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*

성실함에 놓여진 딜레마-*The Remains of the Day*  
와 *Never Let Me Go*의 경우

2020년 2월

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외국어교육과 영어전공

조 유 진



The Dilemma of Self-Integrity in *The  
Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*

by  
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성실함에 놓여진 딜레마—*The Remains of the Day* 와  
*Never Let Me Go*의 경우

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The Dilemma of Self-Integrity in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*

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# ABSTRACT

The most well-known and discussed of Kazuo Ishiguro's works are *The Remains of the Day* (1989), which won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1989, and *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Both were adapted for the big screen, confirming Ishiguro's status as a novelist within the popular imagination. Though set in seemingly very different worlds and voicing out different concerns, they both share a prominent first-person narrator who offers one's personal memory as a way to reconcile with the public context. Often, their narration is unreliable in their accounts of past reactions to crises.

While many critics have examined the subjectivity of the protagonists' unreliable voice and criticized their conformism in submitting themselves to a grand narrative, they fail to unveil the personal dilemma and psychological complexity which drive the narratives to be unreliable. In this thesis, by taking a more sympathetic stance towards the narratives, I attempt to connect the two novels by focusing on the inevitable dilemma which humans are constantly faced with in their earnest quest of meaningful life.

My thesis unfolds as follows. I examine the protagonists' private trauma as the source of self-deceptive narrative and explain how the working

of memory functions as a way to overcome the sense of loss and cope with trauma. Then, I claim that nostalgia, which is a distinct feature and a core attraction characterizing Ishiguro's novels, works as a necessary means to create an allegorical setting to express the protagonists' dilemma. I finally argue that the themes in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* can converge to arouse universal sympathy that can be commonly experienced by individuals beyond cultural boundaries. The novels are an allegorical representation for general human condition. Within the established context Ishiguro cleverly inquires ways humans respond to their particular condition, more specifically ways in which they seek truth but also constantly hide from what may threaten their firmly established self-concept. In his inquiry, Ishiguro portrays how consolation might be found and dignity preserved when human beings are brought face to face with all that they have failed to achieve.

Key Words: unreliable narration, trauma, nostalgia, self-integrity, human dilemma, dignity, self-concept

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's novels occupy an important place in contemporary British literary scene, yielding vast amount of interpretation and criticism from readers. His position regarding British national identity has often been an issue, as critics like Bruce King and Pico Iyer focus on the thematic concerns linked to Ishiguro's Japanese heritage. Regarding one of his most widely known works, *The Remains of the Day*, Pico Iyer states that the novel "purports to explain Japan to the West, and the butler depicted is so English that he could be Japanese" (as cited in Wang 117). King groups Ishiguro with post-colonial writers such as Salman Rushdie and Shiva Naipaul, designating them as writers of new internationalism, and thereby explains that such writers "write about their native lands or the immigrant experience from within the mainstream of British literature" (193). Though Ishiguro's ethnic background may be a significant issue, putting emphasis on Ishiguro's Japanese heritage in reading his novels is rather neglecting his novels' consistent dealings with universal human themes that need to be discussed beyond the boundaries of ethnicity. Ishiguro is also aware of how his works

are linked to a particular national setting and reveals the concern that he always struggles with “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” (*Conversations* 75). He further states that he is “not that interested in saying things about specific societies” (16) and thus affirms that the social or political backgrounds of his stories are not at the center of his interest. Therefore, it could be more appropriate to appreciate Ishiguro’s works beyond any boundaries that confine them to a particular time or background.<sup>1</sup> Barry Lewis considers Ishiguro’s cultural identity as “neither Japanese nor English” and describes him as “a displaced person, one of the many in the twentieth century of exile and estrangement” (1), and Ching-chih Wang studies the features of displacement and homelessness of the author to bring more focus on how all Ishiguro’s themes can converge to arouse universal sympathy that can be commonly experienced by individuals beyond cultural boundaries.<sup>2</sup> Aligned with the critical position of Lewis and Wang, I will

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<sup>1</sup> Ishiguro admits that he is constantly aware of the presence of international audience when writing his novels (Ishiguro, “For me, England is a mythical place” 17).

<sup>2</sup> See also Rebecca L. Walkowitz’s “Unimaginable largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature” which claims that Ishiguro challenges readers to see that a new conception of “global culture” will require a new idea of literature itself (219).

attempt to explore how Ishiguro invents the context of his works as an allegorical representation for general human condition. Within such context he cleverly inquires how humans respond to their particular conditions, more specifically the ways in which while seeking truth they at the same time hide from what may threaten their firmly established self-concept.

The most well-known and discussed of Ishiguro's works are *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Both were adapted for the big screen, confirming Ishiguro's status as a novelist within the popular imagination. *The Remains of the Day* centers around the narrative of a butler whose loyal service to his former master is inevitably linked with the British appeasement of Nazi Germany during the 1930s, which leads him to face public disgrace and shame. Successfully fulfilling the public fantasy of the nostalgic Britain, the novel has been commonly read as a postcolonial text which dismantles the myth of the British Empire and investigates the cause of its decline. With this approach of reading, critics read the novel as a challenge towards imperialism, sentimental nostalgia, and all other mythical ideologies that long sustained the British Empire. Another line of critics focus on the technique of unreliable narration and take interest in how it

sophisticatedly deals with public memory and private history.<sup>3</sup> These critics attempt to unveil the personal dilemma and guilt which drive the narrative to be unreliable by taking a more sympathetic stance towards Stevens's narrative. Cynthia Wong explores the author's uses of memory in forming a narrative and James Lang focuses on the issue of private history and public history, claiming that it is the gap between private and public memory that "produces a feeling of unease in the reader, caught between conflicting sets of impulse" (152).

*Never Let Me Go* imagines a dystopian society set in an alternative universe of England in the late 1990s, where human clones are brought into the world and raised in isolation. As the narrative voice of a clone is presented to forefront, the novel has been studied in diverse aspects in regards to its moral themes of human rights issue, cloning, and post-humanism. Studies that focus more on the characters' personal progress regard the novel as a Bildungsroman because it depicts their growth from the very early age to an adult, and the narrator thinks over the value and meaning of her life by

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<sup>3</sup> James M. Lang explains the private and subjective nature of memory as a parallel mechanism for constructing and communicating our visions of the past; Cynthia Wong has identified the conflict between public and private memories as a fundamental element in Ishiguro's work; Zuzana Fonioková examines how identities are recreated by unreliable narration.

recollecting past memories before her death.<sup>4</sup> The ruling force in *Never Let Me Go* is the institution which looks after the students but at the same time endows cruelty upon their destiny: “Your lives are set out for you. . . . You’ll become adults, then. . . you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do” (81). The failure of the characters to rebel against their somber fate has been the focus of discussion among critics, where they strenuously question the willingness of the narrator, Kathy, to cooperate with those who would exploit and finally kill them. The dilemma of how to read and understand the tragically misguided characters are similarly found in *The Remains of the Day*, as both Kathy and Stevens are unwilling to resist their duties, but just fulfill them with integrity as a way to bestow value on their lives.

F. R. Leavis writes in *The Great Tradition* that major novelists “not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers,” but that they are “significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life” (2). In this sense, it can be said that

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<sup>4</sup> See Carole Guesse’s “The Clones’ Apprenticeship: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* as a Bildungsroman” for *Never Let Me Go* as a bildungsroman. *Never Let Me Go* also belongs to the genres of alternative history, science fiction, and dystopian fiction.

Ishiguro promotes possibilities and limitations that life hold through the *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, reflecting on the preoccupation with things that disturb humans the most. Though set in seemingly very different worlds, voicing out different concerns, the two novels are closely related in that they complete Ishiguro's literary vision. He seems to be aware of the constraint of historical contingency and its catastrophic effect upon individuals who diligently progress with their lives, as he states, "we are often at the mercy of whoever it is upstairs as to whether our contribution is going to be used for something good or for something not so good" ("Kazuo Ishiguro" 142). When historical legitimacy starts to question the ethical validity of personal action and faith, the inevitable gap which follows it cannot not be ignored. Therefore, this thesis will connect the two novels by attending to the issue of how they reflect Ishiguro's primary concerns of the inevitable dilemma which humans are constantly faced with in their earnest quest of meaningful life.

The surface settings of the two novels are unlikely to share a common ground as *Never Let Me Go* is set in a dystopian society where human clones are raised as organ donors while *The Remains of the Day* is more of a historical novel which depicts the pre-war period of glorious England and its

decline after the war. Despite the difference of the background, they both share the feature of a nostalgic landscape and the narratives center around nostalgia. Ishiguro establishes this contextual framework as an allegorical representation for general human conditions in order to explore how humans respond to their particular conditions. He claims that the novel aims for “stories that can be applied to all sorts of human situations” and that it is “set in a particular time and place, but hopefully they’ll be able to see that it’s also about things that are happening over and over again” (Matthews 119).

Within the established context, there is always a prominent first-person narrator who offers one’s personal memory as a way to reconcile with the public context, and often they are unreliable in their accounts of past reactions to crises. Reflecting on past memories, the protagonists of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* all narrate based on their urge to articulate “the turning points of their lives and the bearing they have had on their present” (Drag 25). In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro attempts to draw a parallel between the individual and the community during the inter-war and post-war era, and *Never Let Me Go* gives voice to the clones who have been obliterated from the public setting. Kathy and Stevens share a common feature in their retrospective narration to parse through the trauma of being a clone who must die; and a butler who has given himself so fully to

his profession that he has lost all sense of himself. For each, there lurks in the past an experience that may invalidate the narrators' projected sense of self or destroy the vestiges of their human dignity. Just as implied in Lang's argument that the narrators' reconstruction of memories is done at least in part in order to excuse their own behavior in that public context, Kathy's and Stevens's narratives are complicated by their self-consciousness. They claim their memory for their own end to find meaning in the present, and for this reason they are compelled to revisit the past in an attempt to right the wrong or understand things in a new light. Through these narrators Ishiguro not only develops his interests for the way people investigate truth in their lives, but also for how they "find multiple ways of dismantling the access to it, because of the painfulness of truth itself" (Wong 21). Therefore, when they inevitably come to face their respective circumstances and shared traumatic experiences, all they can react is through silence.

In the two characters' motivation to understand, justify, and explain the past lies their overarching desire to secure a more stable identity. Stevens and Kathy accept their fate without doubt and they are even eager to carry out what is perceived to be their destined responsibility to society. The extreme conformism of adjusting themselves to the unpromising conditions provokes

outrage from the readers. An act of rebel or rage over what causes them to suffer is expected but they simply remain as helpless beings, refusing to act out for change. Their passive behaviors are connected to their repressed tone of narrative, and for this reason critics have argued that Ishiguro's novels are based on tranquil and reserved sentiments. However, the author himself is against the views that only see its surface quietness:

But for me, they're not quiet books, because they're books  
that deal with things that disturb me the most and questions  
that worry me the most. They're anything but quiet to me.

*(Conversations 58)*

The perspective that confines the narrators to reserved and deceptive characters, indeed, misses Ishiguro's more complex understanding of human nature that centers around the narrators' voices. Against the surface reading of viewing Stevens and Kathy as extremely quiet and passive, I argue that the development of their narratives are grounded in an acutely self-conscious construction of their identities. Gehlawat argues that Stevens's narrative of self-deception is not merely limited to pretending and covering up the ugly truth, but beneath the pretention exists a reliable self-reflectivity which results in a perfect recognition of realities as much as Stevens constructed the myth

of “a great butler” (43).<sup>5</sup> Moments of self-recognition experienced by Ishiguro’s narrators point to a fundamental need for a sense of identity and belonging, as stated by Ishiguro:

They do belong to a rather odd community, but they are nonetheless very much part of that community, and they cannot stand outside it. This is why they're so passive about what they're being told to do; they cannot stand outside their situation as individuals. (Matthews 115)

Stevens and Kathy cannot stand outside the system which they are bounded in, and towards the end they become sincerer enough to expose their weaknesses. Although none of the protagonists could resist the way history and society intrude upon their lives, there is still a sense of optimism toward the life ahead. Stevens decides to make the best out of the remains of his day by serving a new master and Kathy clings onto her pride of fulfilling the role as a carer for the clones. Stevens’s and Kathy’s choice of adhering to the

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<sup>5</sup> At the opening of Day two- Afternoon, Stevens indulges in a lengthy narration on what constitutes a “great butler”. Stevens defines his professionalism as “a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits” and that they should “inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising”, alarming or vexing.” (43)

integrity with which they have pursued their life truly makes them humans, thus highlighting their potential to create meaning in a life bound by limited possibilities and make a quest for their own values amidst overwhelming despair.

Though there are many studies that deal with the two novels respectively, studies which deliberately connect the two are very limited. The working of memory is central in understanding the narratives of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. But Yugin Teo's *Kazuo Ishiguro and Memory* is the only serious study which deals with the working of memory related with trauma, and Brian Shaffer in *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* explains how these protagonists employ psychological defense mechanisms to hide certain painful memories or intolerable desires from themselves. Nostalgia in Ishiguro's novels has not been paid sufficient attention to in literary criticism, though it was often mentioned in terms of its negative political connotation of the nostalgic past of the British Empire. Nostalgia plays an important role on the personal level of Ishiguro's characters, serving as an area for emotional comfort and reflection; but its more positive and complicated function in the novel seems to be neglected. Among a few studies which take interest in this aspect of nostalgia in Ishiguro's novels are *Ethics*

*and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* by John Su and *Revisiting Loss: Memory, Trauma and Nostalgia in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* by Wojciech Drag.

Given these limitations in the current literature, it seems necessary to read the two novels by focusing on the deceptive nature of narrative which results from the dilemma between sustaining their self-integrity and an inevitable sense of loss. Therefore, in this thesis, I will argue that *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are closely connected in a way that both stories are established upon an allegorical context of the essential dilemma inherent in human life. Whether the events take place in interwar England or a completely imagined background, the most essential drama is carried out in “the central character’s quietly anguished interior landscape” (*Conversations* 162). As Ishiguro elaborates that “the kind of English that I create in *The Remains of the Day* is not an England that I believe ever existed” (*Conversations* 74), the author’s construction of what he calls an “extra English” landscape<sup>6</sup> and the use of the first-person voice (*Conversations* 73)

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<sup>6</sup> In the *Mississippi Review* interview, Ishiguro explains that *The Remains of the Day* is “more English than the English” (73). Gehlawat elaborates that like Stevens whom he creates as an exaggeration, so too the world of England that Ishiguro constructs is rather more English than it needs to be (509).

all perfectly contribute to the allegorical context of the novel. Moreover, Mullan writes of *Never Let Me Go* that the novel is “removed from any historical reality that we can recognize” (80).<sup>7</sup> This novel is remote from any particular settings and does not make any comments on which direction science should take. Thus, Mullan calls it a “dystopian fiction,”<sup>8</sup> claiming that the setting which confines the characters as clones only functions to dramatize the inner responses of the characters. Within this context Ishiguro not only explores how individuals seek truth in their lives but also constantly pays attention to how they protect their self-integrity, not in a way of outrage but in a way of repressing the self and reconciling with the world because it is much painful to face the truth. The following body of my thesis examines the narrative and the role of nostalgia in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* to explore how the two novels converge to mirror the solemn dilemma which humans must face at some point, and subsequently suggests that these novels try to reveal a significant aspect of human life that one’s normal reaction to such predicament cannot be active nor enthusiastic, but

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<sup>7</sup> See John Mullan’s “On First Reading *Never Let Me Go*,” an afterward to the volume *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspective*.

<sup>8</sup> For the genre of dystopia see Krishen Kumar’s *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*.

somberly silent and suppressed.

Given the issues discussed so far, Chapter II begins by exploring self-deception and anxiety that underlie the two novels' narratives. I focus on an individual's private trauma as the source of such anxiety, and explain how the working of memory functions as a way to overcome the sense of loss and cope with trauma. At the end of the chapter, I will argue that despite many criticisms on the passivity and conformism implied in the novels, their narratives are grounded in an acutely self-conscious construction of identity. They consciously console themselves to find a value in life, but only in some part by obliterating some fearful and somber truth of the social conditions which they live in. In Chapter III, the thesis looks into the functions of nostalgia in various dimensions. Nostalgia is a distinct feature and a core attraction characterizing Ishiguro's novels and has been mentioned briefly in many studies, but it has not been explored as a single serious issue. On the personal level, Ishiguro's use of nostalgia and memory is geared towards a more reflective purpose. In both *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, nostalgia serves as an area where the narrators can get emotional comfort and constantly go back to reflect the meaning of their present lives related with the past. However, on the political level, as in *The Remains of the Day*,

it also works as satire against the “enormous nostalgia industry” (Vorda and Herzinger 139) going on in Britain.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, I will further argue that nostalgic memory and landscape are not confined to the story but reach out to the readers to generate a sense of empathy, ultimately evoking the readers’ own sense of nostalgia. Chapter IV picks up from where Chapter II left off. Both Stevens and Kathy submit themselves to a grand narrative rather than admitting that they were to a degree being tacitly manipulated through social forces outside of their control. They ultimately fail in articulating what they can do to reverse the resulting damage, and this failure to act out for change has been criticized as conformism by many critics.<sup>10</sup> However, I interpret their conformism in a different angle by calling into question whether it is simply an individual’s misjudgment or passivity that is to be blamed for the unfortunate consequence they confine themselves in. That is, I contend that they are helpless victims of a much larger system of power that forces them

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<sup>9</sup> In an interview with Vorda and Herzinger, Ishiguro notes that he writes against the “enormous nostalgia industry” (139) going on in Britain, especially when it is used as a political tool.

<sup>10</sup> Liani Lochner writes “The failure of Ishiguro’s characters in *Never Let Me Go* to protest against the medical purpose... provoked the most animated discussions and disputes on *The Guardian* Book Club’s weblog. Many readers were frustrated by the clones’ ‘passivity,’ which some also compared with Stevens’ inaction in *The Remains of the Day*” (101).

to act in certain ways, and thus that it is only through the working of their personal integrity that they manage to carry out the duty that is expected of them. Their choice should be said to go beyond the scope of individual volition since humans can never blandly admit that their lives have been failures if not outright destructive. Rather, Ishiguro portrays how consolation might be found and dignity preserved when human beings are brought face to face with all that they have failed to achieve. In brief, I finally argue that the novels are an allegorical re/inflection of how all of us live, and the adversities faced by Stevens and Kathy are literary representations of essential predicaments that humans cannot escape from and put easily under their control.

## CHAPTER II

### Memory and Narrative of Trauma

Memory is an essential subject in Ishiguro's novels, which often deal with the subjective and reconstructive nature of human memory. The work of memory is known to be a main concern of Ishiguro, as Ishiguro states, "how one uses memory for one's own purposes, one's own ends, those things interest me more deeply" (*Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* 9). The protagonists of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* move back and forth seamlessly across events spanning their lives, recreating the bygone world to better understand the past and establish their identity in the present. The storytelling of such memory becomes not only a way for them to voice out their position in the public sphere of history, but also to become the active protagonists of their own life-stories. Both novels offer one's personal memory that could disclose the public context, as Wong argues "private memory can help us recapture moments and experiences which public history may elide or suppress" (qtd. in Lang 144). Kathy and Stevens both claim their memory for their own end, and they are compelled to revisit the past in an

attempt to right the wrong or understand things in a new light. During this process they undergo intense emotional upheavals in reconciling themselves to their pasts and in trying to find meaning in the present. It is stated by Drag that Ishiguro himself suggests memory's complex relationship with self-knowledge, as the author claims in an interview that "memory is terribly treacherous terrain. . . . the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception" (*Conversations* 39).

Trauma is remarked by Cathy Caruth as "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (4). Caruth further argues that it is "at the specific point where knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet" (2). Trauma takes on "a haunting quality" where it continues "to possess the subject with its insistent repetitions and returns" (Whitehead 12), and Teo further links the concept with forgetting as "traces of the original traumatic experience often stay hidden beneath the surface of memory" (40). In this aspect, narrative of both Stevens and Kathy are deeply rooted in their trauma as they continuously regress back to the past to find what they didn't notice or refused to notice all

along. These two characters' trauma takes a very restrained form and centers around continuous meaning making. Distinguished from a type of trauma which is generally discussed related to violent events that have a painful outcome on an individual's body or mind, traumatic experiences of Kathy and Stevens deal with "a more pervasive sense of absence or loss" (Teo 40), which are founded on acts of self-deception as well as occurrences of involuntary memories. On the surface, Stevens and Kathy are primarily concerned with what has happened or what is happening, but a closer look at their aims reveals that they suffer from the dilemma of self-concept. Scott explains this concern as the "traumas of identity which tell the subject that they are not who they think they are (qtd in Teo 40); and in this manner Stevens's and Kathy's narratives revolve around the question of their identity. Regarding the problem of the narrators' self-concept, Ching-chih Wang names Ishiguro's characters as "homeless strangers" (2) and calls the guilt and fear that they feel towards such situation as "uncanny strangeness" (76). More specifically, Stevens's and Kathy's homeward journey and their divulgence of trauma can be interpreted through Freud's account of the "uncanny," which he defines in *The Uncanny* as "class of the terrifying [feeling] which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (620). As explicated by Freud, the uncanny is an experience of a strange and alien feeling towards

events or objects that were originally familiar. Thus, Wang claims the sensation of the uncanny as demonstrating that something is frightening not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange (112). The traumatic fear which Stevens and Kathy experience becomes more unexplainable and terrifying for them because it calls forth what has been repressed under what was always familiar for them. Their unspoken anxiety is an anxiety derived from the trauma and the uncanny feelings that haunt them.

Regarding the language in both novels, Teo elaborates that the retrospective narration demonstrates how “emotionally and psychologically traumatic past events affect [Ishiguro’s] characters’ abilities to conduct their lives in the present” (40), bringing to the fore a tension that haunts the protagonists. This chapter, thus, attempts to unravel the source of the tension in those two narratives by arguing that at the very center of the anxiety lies an individual’s private trauma. Following their storytelling and continuous recalling of past memory, I will explore how the protagonists’ toleration of such trauma leads to a deceptive narrative as a way to overcome the sense of loss and cope with trauma.

The action of *The Remains of the Day* begins in July 1956 when

Stevens embarks on a motoring trip in his new American employer's vintage Ford, heading towards a much-anticipated meeting with Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper at Darlington Hall. By the time of the narration, Darlington Hall has become the home of Mr. Farraday, an American who explicitly commodifies Englishness and Stevens himself (Westerman 1): "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" (124). The current demise of everything that he once valued drives him to tell the story of the glorious past to the readers. As Stevens embark on a journey to the west, he experiences a feeling of "unease mixed with exhilaration" (24) at having crossed boundaries which he has never crossed before. It is significant that the outer landscape continuously leads him back to the memory of the past days in Darlington hall, surfacing the repressed memories. Stevens initially appears to be naturally recalling his past memories prompted by his forthcoming motor trip, but as the novel progresses it is revealed that his need to tell and retell the past is obsessive. Wong describes Stevens's journey as an inward journey, calling it a "mental and emotional expansion of the self" (57). While the readers rely on Stevens's narration to understand his past story, they get to realize that his memories do not surface haphazardly. Rather, the memories are fragments of events that surface with deliberate

consciousness. This implies that there is a deliberate nature in some part of Stevens's recollections, and these deliberate recollections are fueled by his repressed emotions from past regrets. His narrative of the past is a consolation for his personal and professional defeat and at the same time a desire to understand the reasons for the defeat. However, a more dominating desire is “the desire to deny that he has suffered a defeat” (Drag 79).

The central trauma in *The Remains of the Day* is an inner trauma reflecting the trauma of history, particularly World War II, which is intertwined with the anxiety of a need to forge a new identity. Stevens’s past choices of eradicating emotional life and a need to re-evaluate his self-concept later in life arouse such inner trauma. The conflict between the memories of personal experience and the public memory leads Stevens to interpret the past in a complicated and unreliable manner, making the past far from being rendered convincing. The ultimate downfall of Lord Darlington as a social figure after the war and his suicide poses a serious threat to Stevens’s professional pride and self-respect. Therefore, realizing the futility of his lifetime devotion to Lord Darlington works as a principal motivation behind his narrative. As Stevens’s identity and sense of self-esteem have been built around the existence of Lord Darlington, Drag claims that “most part of his narrative of self-justification takes the form of a justification of his former

master” (64). In a similar way, Stevens’s accomplishments and living up to the notion of dignity have come at the price of a loss of true identity, as Miss Kenton questions, “Why, Mr. Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to pretend?” (154) Thus, while Stevens’s private storytelling guides the readers to construct a more accurate historical context for Lord Darlington’s decision, it also confuses the readers by entailing a self-conscious control of narration as a way to protect his professional pride and vindicate his past debatable choices.

Stevens himself admits rather candidly that his memory of the events is far from perfect, and his mentioning of an inability to recall the exact circumstance of the event alerts the readers to the unreliable nature of his narrative: “It is possible that this is a case of hindsight coloring my memory” (87); “However, I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstances which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor” (212). His past memory stands on feelings of regret and guilt, and the subsequent precariousness derives from continuous inner struggles between certainty and remorse. Stevens constructed his professional ethos by firmly suppressing his emotion, and thus he refuses to admit the fundamental ambivalence within himself and to comment on his inner feelings. The repression of feelings is

depicted in his recollection of Miss Kenton:

One memory in particular has preoccupied me all morning. . . . a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the year. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlour. . . . I had been struck by the conviction that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying. As I say, this moment has remained firmly embedded in my mind, as has the memory of the peculiar sensation I felt rising within me as I stood there like that. (212)

Only explaining that the memory remained with him vividly “for some reason” and that it was “firmly embedded in his mind,” Stevens does not go beyond circumventing the emotion when he pondered before Miss Kenton's door. At the end of the chapter “Day four: Afternoon,” Stevens is once again immersed in the memory:

And that was the moment, I am now sure, that has remained so persistently lodged in my memory—that moment as I paused in the dimness of the corridor, the tray

in my hands, an ever-growing conviction mounting within me that just a few yards away, on the other side of that door, Miss Kenton was at that moment crying. . . . I do not know how long I remained standing there. . . . of course, I was required to hurry upstairs to serve some of the most distinguished gentlemen of the land and I cannot imagine I would have delayed unduly. (226-27)

The memory is a moment which represents the most crucial dilemma of emotion and professionalism that Stevens goes through. Likewise, the past to which Stevens invariably return leaves him with feelings of regret and guilt, haunting him with the possibilities of alternative choices and roads not taken.

The egotistical bias of Stevens's recollection also manifests itself in his account of an occasion when the silver at Darlington Hall had a delightful impact upon Lord Darlington's guests. He proudly describes how Lord Halifax exclaimed, "My goodness, Darlington, the silver in this house is a delight" (135). The butler takes credit for the success of the political meeting and expresses his pride that "the state of the silver had made a small, but significant contribution towards the easing of relations between Lord Halifax and Herr Ribbentrop that evening" (135). Ironically, Stevens's contribution

with silver was nothing more than supporting Lord Darlington's promotion of the totalitarian regime in Nazi Germany. Lord Darlington took the wrong path of history, performing a wrong decision out of his naïve character and it suggests that Stevens's trust was also misplaced. Stevens's self-deception exculpates Lord Darlington from the charge of his political position by alluding to Herr Ribbentrop as a well-regarded figure during the 1930s:

It is probably apt at this point to say a few words concerning Herr Ribbentrop. . . . It is, however, rather irksome to have to hear people talking today as though they were never for a moment taken in by Herr Ribbentrop.

(136)

A sudden shift of the narrative from a proud and arrogant speech about silver to excusing Lord Darlington's political mistakes derives from an attempt to conceal the shame, ironically making Stevens's self-justification more apparent than ever. The shifting tone reveals his sense of insecurity and ambivalence about their past commitments. Stevens concludes the reminiscence of silver by claiming that he contributed to changing a disappointing evening into a triumph:

But I drift. I was in fact discussing the silver, and how Lord

Halifax had been suitably impressed on the evening of his meeting with Herr Ribbentrop at Darlington Hall. Let me make clear, I was not for a moment suggesting that what had initially threatened to be a disappointing evening for my employer had turned into a triumphant one solely on account of the silver. (138)

Though Stevens proudly remarks the story of polishing silver, he ironically reveals his awareness of the past mistakes. Yet, he defends his own decisions and repudiates any guilt with Lord Darlington's politics in what he believes are his own terms:

I carried out my duties to the best of my abilities, indeed to a standard which many may consider 'first rate.' It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best a sad waste—and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account. (201)

*Never Let Me Go* is a story of three friends, Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, who grow up together in a school called Hailsham and reunites in the future as adults. Like *The Remains of the Day*, Bruce Robbins notes that in *Never*

*Let Me Go*, “we look at the world through the eyes of a character of limited consciousness, immersed in concerns and anxieties that one cannot confidently call trivial, who prefers not to contemplate the Big Picture” (292-93). Though both Kathy and Stevens are compelled by similar motives in retelling their story and constantly seeking for meaning from the past and present, their use of language is different. Kathy’s narration is more simplified and straightforward compared to Stevens’s sophisticated use of language. James Wood observes that Kathy’s narration abounds in colloquialisms and clichés; and Krystyna Stamirowska sees Kathy’s straightforwardness as an expression of her honesty and courage in confronting her trauma (“After Such Knowledge” 156). Stevens’s camouflage of unpalatable truths and Kathy’s outright expression of it reveal their distinct ways of overcoming loss and coping with trauma.

Just as Stevens’s narration centers around the past days spent with Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton at the Darlington hall, Kathy recounts her days spent with Ruth and Tommy at Hailsham. Hailsham is a place that sustained the illusion of a rewarding life for Kathy and her friends. What is hidden at the heart of Hailsham, however, is the dark secret that the students are treated as “special” because they are clones, created for the purposes of

being harvested for their organs in a desolate, dystopian setting of England.<sup>11</sup> When they finish school, the clones are prepared to take on their roles as carers, looking after other clones who are undergoing organ donations until they become donors themselves. The novel is both elegiac and mournful with a narrative that is imbued with nostalgia, and this nostalgic narrative is founded on the memories of Hailsham not only from Kathy but all of its former students. Kathy's memories refer to the past that has been fragmented and lost; in the context of the novel, they are associated with lost items or what is referred to as "strange rubbish" (287). Ishiguro presents readers with a moving representation of lost memory through Kathy's episode when she drove up to Norfolk a couple of weeks after Tommy has completed. Norfolk used to be called by Hailsham students as "the lost corner of England" (169) where lost items ended up. As Kathy notices all sorts of rubbish, she allows herself to imagine that everything that she had ever lost since her childhood had been washed up on that spot, and that Tommy would eventually appear and wave to her (Teo 37):

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<sup>11</sup> In *Never Let Me Go*, Miss Lucy tells the students "You're students. You're. . . special. So keep yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me" (68-69).

I was thinking about the rubbish. . . . and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. (287-88)

Such short episode of retrospection is the only source for Kathy to reconnect with the past and with Hailsham, thus resuming the memory in her life before she gets to complete as a donor. Kathy's narrative is a writing of her friends' lives and a consolation for her personal loss and defeat, just as Stevens's narrative in *The Remains of the Day*. While Stevens's voice is more deliberate in denying that he has suffered a defeat, Kathy's voice more or less embraces the uncertainties and the defeat that she faces. Yet, she is also highly self-conscious about the life that she has lived and has to live, and chooses to pursue what is given to her to maintain her self-integrity as a carer just as Stevens kept his integrity as a butler.

In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones' bodies add a grim and depressing dimension to creating "a confessional narrative of loss, regret and nostalgia"

(Teo 79). The most traumatic element which lingers at the center of the narrative is mortality, since the predetermined death reflects the traumatic condition of having to live as a clone. Clones are haunted by the feeling of finitude, and the presence of death within their lives is acutely present throughout the novel. Memory in *Never Let Me Go* is not self-deceptive or suppressive as in *The Remains of the Day*. It plays a woeful yet consolatory role of supporting Kathy to overcome loss and comfort herself with her childhood nostalgia. Kathy's narration begins at a point after losing Ruth and Tommy, and her recollection is a reaction to these traumatic experiences and consciousness of her own imminent death:

I won't be a carer any more come the end of the year, and though I've got a lot out of it, I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest—to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories. What I really wanted, I suppose, was to get straight all the things that happened between me and Tommy and Ruth after we grew up and left Hailsham. But I realise now just how much of what

occurred later came out of our time at Hailsham, and that's why I want first to go over these earlier memories quite carefully. (37)

Levy views Kathy's autobiographical narrative as a "subversive act of protest," an attempt to "make sense of the traumatic past and to assert some form of autonomy in the face of a brutal regime" (11). Her storytelling is an attempt to reconcile herself with the past, transforming a past marked by tragedy and death into a meaningful present. For Kathy, memory works as a way to keep alive the memory of her missing friends, ultimately alleviating the trauma of mortality and finitude.

Kathy's core recollection of her childhood is how the students at Hailsham acquire knowledge of their predetermined fate and identity. Hailsham is a place that bestows the clones with a memorable childhood and also where they discover and learn to accept their identity. When they are small, they sense their destined role as a vague, childish embarrassment (Yeung 3). As they grow older as teenagers, they take an evasive attitude towards their identity and make jokes.<sup>12</sup> When they become young adults,

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<sup>12</sup> "The idea was that when the time came, you'd be able just to unzip a bit of yourself, a kidney or something would slide out, and you'd hand it over. It wasn't

they understand it in a different way, as Kathy narrates: “This time round it wasn’t awkward or embarrassing anymore; just somber and serious” (88). The slow but fearful awareness of death pervades their lives, and this emotional anxiety is reflected through Tommy’s eccentric behavior. Tommy is teased by students at Hailsham for not being creative or talented enough in arts, and this drives him to frequent temper tantrums.<sup>13</sup> Later in their adult years, Kathy and Tommy realize that Tommy’s past behavior was his passive resistance to their tragic condition, as Kathy says, “We couldn’t understand how you could ever get like that. . . . I was thinking maybe the reason you used to get like that was because at some level you always knew” (275). Tommy affirmatively responds, “Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn’t” (275). The conversation reveals that the clones are aware of their fate as organ providers all along, though their awareness is expressed only in an ambiguous manner.

According to Teo, there are two opposing forces at work in the novel:

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something we found so funny in itself; it was more a way of putting each other off our food. You unzipped your liver, say, and dumped it on someone’s plate, that sort of thing” (*Never Let Me Go* 89).

<sup>13</sup> “He was just raving, flinging his limbs about, at the sky, at the wind, at the nearest fence post. Laura said he was maybe 'rehearsing his Shakespeare.' Someone else pointed out how each time he screamed something he’d raise one foot off the ground, pointing it outwards, ‘like a dog doing a pee’” (*Never Let Me Go* 10).

one is the desire of the nation to deny the existence of the clones, and the other is the clones' desire to cling to their memories; one is a desire to forget, the other a desire to remember (76). Kathy and the other clones seek out the "possibles" they were originally cloned from in order to search for their origins.<sup>14</sup> In this process they cling onto their memories and exhibit a desire to recognize their existence. As Teo claims, the clones' existence forms part of the collective consciousness of the world in which they live and creates shared memories of their growing-up (83). During her time as a carer, Kathy encounters Laura, a former Hailsham schoolmate, in a car park at a service station. Laura has also become a carer, but suffers from immense mental difficulty and burden with the job. The two have a brief exchange about their childhood in Hailsham, and Laura mentions how "weird" (211) she feels about Hailsham closing down:

It was that exchange, when we finally mentioned the closing of Hailsham, that suddenly brought us close again, and we hugged, quite spontaneously, not so much to

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<sup>14</sup> Kathy narrates, "The basic idea behind the possibles theory was simple, and didn't provoke much dispute. It went something like this. Since each of us was copied at some point from a normal person, there must be, for each of us, somewhere out there, a model getting on with his or her life. This meant, at least in theory, you'd be able to find the person you were modelled from" (139).

comfort one another, but as a way of affirming Hailsham,  
the fact that it was still there in both our memories. (211)

Sharing the memories and feelings of their days in Hailsham comes as a huge relief for both Laura and Kathy. What matters to the clones is that Hailsham remains in their memories and remembering it is a way to affirm their existence. Teo suggests that it is only in the witness and testimony of subsequent generations of clones that their lives will be remembered, and therefore the clones' remembering of each other's lives is an act of mutual or collective recognition of each other (83). As stated by John Mullan, the narrative represents Kathy's attempts to "make a story of herself and others who might be like her" (113). Therefore, mutual recognition is the clones' final act of resistance to the whole nation's collective forgetting from which the wish to deny their existence derives.

The narrators of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* reflect on personal losses in the context of a wider, and yet merciless social system that renders individuals helpless. They are faced with mortality haunted by the suspicion that they have failed to make the best of their lives. Ishiguro demonstrates what it means to live among and within social systems, how individuals try to repair or save themselves, and explores the psychological

challenges a person might face when forced to confront the possibility that their lives have been wasted. In this context, the source of anxiety embedded in the retrospective narratives of Stevens and Kathy has been explored with a focus on their trauma. While such trauma is at the center of their dilemma, they never recall it directly. Kathy and her friends do not explicitly discuss their tragic conditions as clones; Stevens refuses to speak out his feelings towards Miss Kenton, and his pursuit of dignity needs to be redefined some way.

In short, it can be said that these characters fail to step out of their self-justification, and on this point Lydia Cooper aptly points out that Stevens fails “to value the ‘warmth’ of human connection as opposed to the ‘dignity’ of obedience to a morally corrupt social system” (117). Certain signs of rage or rebellion are expected from the narrators, but they simply remain as helpless beings, refusing to act out for change. Kathy had no volition to control her situation, but Stevens seems to go through a more complex dilemma as his resolve to live up to the notion of professional dignity was established from his sole willingness and pride. As Ishiguro comments on Stevens, he hides “from what is perhaps the scariest arena in life” (*Conversations* 77)—i.e., the emotional arena. Individuals are given little

share of controlling their situations, and in case of Stevens and Kathy, they simply refuse to control. Nevertheless, the emphasis of the narrators' private trauma, as has been discussed so far, allows the readers to be more sympathetic toward their basically deceptive narration since the novels imply that these seemingly private traumas indeed generate from the social atmosphere to which the characters are helplessly confined. Thus, understanding their private trauma is essential for explaining the way in which the narrators act and speak in certain ways. I view Stevens and Kathy's conformity as a more complex psychological mechanism that results from the trauma that threatens their self-integrity and identity. Stevens's narrative of self-deception is not merely limited to pretending and covering up the uncomfortable truth as James Lang suggests, "his words are purposefully arranged rather than spontaneous, more strategically organized than we might expect from a story composed from involuntary memories" (56). Rather, beneath the pretention exists Stevens's self-reflection and consciousness which ultimately draws upon his personal conscience. Moreover, though Kathy never attempted to confront the meaning of her impending death, she later recalls that she "always knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven" (81). The recollection of memory, then, becomes the only way to cope with such trauma and functions as a consolation for the

narrators who undoubtedly face existential collapse and struggle to maintain one's self-integrity.

Both characters are to some point conscious of the events around themselves and what they avoid directly facing. This consciousness and the subsequent working of memory by which to cope with their trauma secure them a stable ground of understanding both the individual and the society which affects them. Nevertheless, their narrative simultaneously warns the readers that the consolation one makes to find a value to live on is achieved in some part by obliterating some fearful or somber truth of the social conditions which they live in. As Ishiguro mentioned in the interview, "I have to employ a language which is forever flinching from facing up to something" (*Conversations* 23), there exists a tension between saying and not saying in both novels. Such tension contributes to shortening the emotional distance between the reader and the text, thus inviting the readers to empathize with the protagonists.

## CHAPTER III

### Nostalgia as a Sign of Insoluble Human Dilemma

Though the surface settings of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are unlikely to share a common ground, they both include the element of a nostalgic landscape. The exaggerated English landscape of *The Remains of the Day* and the dystopian setting of *Never Let Me Go* all converge to the protagonists' nostalgic desire to return to the past. Ishiguro employs memory built on nostalgic feelings both to remember and discover the past through narratives filled with lost childhood innocence and alternative worlds. The discussion of past is inevitable when discussing nostalgia, as Merleau-Ponty defines nostalgia as “a past which has never been a present” (289). Concerning what kind of past people turn nostalgic about, Casey elaborates that “what is ‘nostalgic’ is a past that we cannot rejoin” (365). Therefore, what we become nostalgic about is irreversible past and it cannot be rejoined because we cannot experience it again. Beyond the dimension of nostalgia as memory, the issue of nostalgia has also been triggered by questions about

place. Most people feel nostalgic about the world which distinguishes itself not through definite objects but through obscure traces in some places.

John Su explores the concept of nostalgia and its values in literature, questioning the downplayed status of nostalgia in contemporary Anglophone literature. Nostalgia itself is a word which holds a negative connotation as it means an ability to truly escape from the past and be in touch with the present. As stated by Su, the analysis of nostalgia has largely been neglected despite the surging interest in topics relating to memory. Svetlana Boym argues that the rise of nostalgia in politics and culture since the 1960s is not without a certain utopian quality, claiming that nostalgia has a utopian dimension which is no longer directed toward the future. Emmanuel Levinas is highly critical in his judgment of nostalgia, asserting that nostalgia functions as an enforced return to the same and represents a refusal to confront the other as truly other. Thus, he criticizes the concept of nostalgia as “a delimiting form of human experience and at worst a vicious and self-serving mode of regression” (as cited in Casey 2).<sup>15</sup> However, Su, by mentioning Homer’s first image of

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<sup>15</sup> The regressive character of nostalgic longing has also been pointed out by critics focusing on its political and ideological aspects. Renato Rosaldo employs the term “imperialist nostalgia” to denounce Western nations’ seemingly “innocent yearning” for the world as it once was (107-08).

<sup>16</sup> Swiss physician Johannes Hofer coined the term “nostalgia” in his 1688 thesis

Odysseus sitting alone on the island of Ogygia and longing to go back to his homeland, draws attention to the longing to return to a lost homeland as a central feature of the Western literary tradition long before the term “nostalgia” was coined to describe it.<sup>16</sup> Su attends to nostalgia’s tendency “to interweave imagination, longing, and memory” since this tendency may serve to be envisioning “resolutions to the social dilemmas of fragmentation and displacement” (3). He asserts its ethical value of providing useful knowledge about the world by enabling individuals or literary characters to articulate disappointments and frustrations engendered from the present circumstances in clearer and more precise terms. Similarly, Wang suggests a new point of view for the nostalgic narrative by describing Kathy’s and Stevens’s return to the past as an atonement for the present, which allows them to reexamine the significance of their past in the new context. According to her argument, they simply do not terminate in re-seeing the events but rather “reposition themselves in new contexts and assess their own roles in contributing to both private and historical events” (131).

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Dissertatio medica de nostalgia. The term combines two Greek roots: nostos, “return to one’s native land,” and algos, “pain.” For a history of nostalgia and its mutations since the seventeenth century, see Edward S. Casey, “The World of Nostalgia,” *Man and World* 20 (1987), 361–84.

Given these critical assessments of nostalgia, rather than exploring nostalgia in terms of its ethical value, as suggested by Su, I will focus on how nostalgia works as a necessary means to create an allegorical setting to express the characters' dilemma. Though I admit the more complicated role of nostalgia which connects the private and public, and the past and present, it is unacceptable to entirely disregard the negative notion of nostalgia just to endorse the sincerity of Stevens's and Kathy's statements in their recollection of the past. The nostalgic narrative ascertains Stevens's and Kathy's extremely passive attitudes of compromising with their somber present, and thus I take a critical stance towards the nostalgic tone of the characters' narrative as many critics have previously done. However, rather than simply criticizing that they are confined to their nostalgic vision of the past, I attempt to step further by exploring how their nostalgic remembrances intricately reveal their struggling psychological mechanism. In this regard, this chapter examines nostalgia in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* as a device tactically used by the author to highlight in allegorical terms the dilemma which the narrators suffer from. Nostalgia as a device mirrors the insoluble dilemma which Stevens and Kathy must face, and this notion of nostalgia suggests that their reaction to such predicament can be no more active nor enthusiastic, but somberly silent and suppressed.

Nostalgic elements in Ishiguro's novels have been widely discussed by critics especially regarding its negative connotations on the political and historical level. Ishiguro himself suggests its pejorative aspect as the following:

. . . . possessing it impedes people from doing things properly. . . . it's escapism or evasion of something to an extent. Nostalgia is seen as a bad political force when applied to a nation's memory. (*Conversations* 166)

In *The Remains of the Day*, nostalgia is essential to Ishiguro's effort to re-envision what constitutes "genuine" Englishness and the novel is widely accepted as a satire against the "enormous nostalgia industry"<sup>17</sup> going on in Britain. Mirroring the decay of the British Empire, the novel seems to evoke a powerful yearning for lost national glory. Though Ishiguro refused to confine his works to a specific time or society, it is to some extent acceptable to relate *The Remains of the Day* to the social atmosphere in which it was published. Renato Rosaldo suggests the notion of "imperialist nostalgia" by claiming that it "uses a pose of innocent yearning both to capture people's

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<sup>17</sup> "Somewhere ahead lies greatness for the country again," Thatcher states on April 30, 1978. "Let us make it a country safe to grow old in. . . . May this land of ours, which we love so much, find dignity and greatness and peace again." Quoted in Krieger, 77.

imagination and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination” (70). The grotesque butler in *The Remains of the Day* is a reaction to the nostalgic politics of Thatcherism which, in the words of Patrick Brantlinger, “depended on a myth of national origins constituted in the purported struggle to ‘reclaim’ Britishness” (as cited in Su 129). Ishiguro mentions this phenomenon of nostalgia industry as follows:

In London, for example, there is a kind of unthinking nostalgia that evokes a time when Britain was more powerful, and I think it's for this reason that people think that sort of nostalgia is a dubious emotion. And I agree because it actually harkens back to a more comfortable, gracious life that was predicated on subjecting lots of other people to suffering. (Shaikh par. 12)

. . . . it is used as a political tool. . . . 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 immigrants started to come or before the promiscuous age of the '60s came and ruined everything. (*Mississippi*

*Review 74)*

The nostalgia on the political level works as a political tool to manipulate people by constantly enchanting them with past glories. Ishiguro's acute observation about the nostalgia industry reveals the danger of it, which “seduces the public into affirming the very systems of inequality that render them powerless” (Gehlawat 514). In a similar way, Stevens willingly dignifies his place in such a national system, achieving professionalism through the ideal dignity of “keeping with his position” (33). His dignity in pursuing professionalism as a butler is desirable, but it cannot be denied that under such dignity lies an unquestionable willingness to yield himself to a greater power:

This employer embodies all that I find noble and admirable.

I will hereafter devote myself to serving him. This is loyalty *intelligently* bestowed. . . . our best course will always be to put our trust in an employer we judge to be wise and honorable, and to devote our energies to the task of serving him to the best of our ability. (201)

On a more personal level, nostalgia reflects narrators' self-conscious justification resulting from memory attuned for their own interest. It is a constant effort to cope with the present, revealing the characters' failure to free themselves from the constraint of history and move on. It also serves as

an area for emotional comfort and reflection, and connects the readers with loss experienced by the narrators. Ironically, nostalgia recalls the suffering but threatens to eliminate or distort the suffering it recalls.

By 2001, after publishing *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro starts to reflect on a different way of defining his protagonists and their roles in relation to their memories, beyond “emotional repression” and the inability to voice their feelings (Shaffer and Wong 172). He reinterprets the concept of nostalgia within their storytelling by taking a more positive stance towards nostalgia on the personal level. He says:

I don't necessarily mean that kind of nostalgia. . . . some sort of sweet or cozy past when we lived in a more innocent preindustrial time or something. I'm talking about the more pure, personal sense of nostalgia. I think nostalgia of that sort can be a very positive force, as well as a very destructive force. You remember a time emotionally when you thought the world was a better place.

(*Conversations* 184)

As implied here, in a more optimistic aspect, nostalgia serves as an area where the narrators can get emotional comfort and constantly go back to reflect the meaning of their present lives related to the past. The moments of escapism

within the characters' narratives are imbued with a utopian longing; and as claimed by Teo, "utopian longing and nostalgia can act as an effective source of resistance against forgetting" (156). Ching-chih Wang also shares the same view, demonstrating the displaced people's anxiety to return to a nostalgic past, as implied in what she calls the "homeless strangers" (2) in the floating world. She inquires how the butler and human cloning can alleviate the anxiety of being out of place, when their highly praised professionalism has come to terminate and relocate themselves in a world whose national mood and social values are undergoing transformation. They have no place to truly call home, but their nostalgic place functions as some sort of home where they can get emotional comfort and constantly go back to reflect the meaning of their present lives related with the past. Ishiguro's characters demonstrate how positive aspects of nostalgia can function to prolong the memory of things that they have been forgotten, and to remember and recognize those who are no longer in existence. Though the way they narrate their nostalgic past may be deceptive and escapist, it empowers them with something to live for, providing "a mode of imagining more fully what has been and continues to be absent" (Su 9).

In *Never Let Me Go*, nostalgia is depicted as "a means to recover positive emotions of fairness and safeness" (Shaffer and Wong 166-67).

Kathy feels continuously drawn back to her earliest years, which she endows with a hindsight significance. The clones in the novel are witnesses to one another's lives and nostalgic memories of Hailsham is the only way for them to seek consolation. According to Drag, Hailsham remains for Kathy a stable "point of reference" and "a spiritual space that gives strength and the will to live" (200). Kathy's recollection is a purposeful response to a distressing psychological state, allowing her to better understand her past and as a result, deepen her understanding of herself and her social environment. It creates a sense of secure attachment by allowing her to emotionally reconnect with her friends in Hailsham. For Kathy, nostalgia has an emotionally positive force which reminds her of the happiest moments of childhood, and it is also a way to preserve the memory of her friends who are destined to die soon. Moreover, when Ruth has become a donor, she confesses to Kathy at the medical center that she wishes she had kept her collection box as well.<sup>18</sup> This shows that

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<sup>18</sup> Hailsham students used to store mementos they acquired in the collection box. While Kathy is never embarrassed about it, Ruth throws away her collections having noticed that none of the older residents in the Cottages possesses such a box. Ruth says to Kathy: "My plan was I'd find a really good wooden box for it all once I got to the Cottages. But when we got there, I could see none of the veterans had collections. It was only us, it wasn't normal. We must all have realised it, I wasn't the only one, but we didn't really talk about it, did we? So I didn't go looking for a new box. My things all stayed in the hold all bag for months, then in the end I threw them away" (131).

nostalgic memories offer certain emotional supports when the characters are faced with the contingency of death. It is clear that Ishiguro in some parts defend nostalgia as a positive emotion because it can be a valuable force in individuals' lives, as he states: "The nostalgia I'm trying to get at is a kind of emotional equivalent to idealism. It's a remembering of a time in your childhood before you realized that the world was as dark as it was. . . ." (*Conversations* 166). Nevertheless, its deceptive nature cannot be justified, as the author concludes that his novels cannot be exempt from self-deception:

[The novels] end with kind of partial accommodation on the part of the narrator of the painful things he or she has come to accept, that he or she couldn't accept earlier on. But usually there's still an element of self-deception or something left there, just enough to survive, because one of the sad things about people's lives is that they are rather short. (Shaikh par. 20)

Ishiguro takes interest in exploring the sense of futility and inaction that individuals and communities often face in the midst of life events, and regarding this aspect of Ishiguro Teo suggests that the author is more focused on characters who experience a longing for an irretrievable past than he is on

characters who are determined to effect change.

While the clones are nostalgic about their personal childhood memories, Stevens's nostalgia is more related to history, as his professional life is firmly based on a nation's glorious past. Stevens undertakes a narrative journey in order to find a sense of purpose and wholeness for the present. The alternative descriptions of his life story force him to reevaluate his behavior, but the attempt to restore his loss only ends in a greater disappointment. It is possible to say that the most salient objective of nostalgia in Stevens's narrative is a yearning of the glorious past of the Darlington Hall and also a possibility of finding happiness with Miss Kenton. Never admitting his longing for the possibilities that he failed to fulfill, he shifts his desire to Miss Kenton, as shown by his interpretation of the letter:

At this very moment, no doubt, she is pondering with regret decisions made in the far-off past that have now left her, deep in middle age, so alone and desolate. And it is easy to see how in such a frame of mind, the thought of returning to Darlington Hall would be a great comfort to her. Admittedly, she does not at any point in her letter state explicitly her desire to return; but that is the unmistakable

message conveyed by the general nuance of many of the passages, imbued as they are with a deep nostalgia for her days at Darlington Hall. (9)

Stevens' repeated returns to what he lost or neglected in the past leads him to gain insight of his status in the present. However, at the same time the nostalgic narrative highlights his problematic tendency to "romanticize the very same past we also regret" (Casey 362). In this light, the phenomenon of nostalgia is of a highly ambiguous character as it gives rise to regret as well as romance, and I argue that such ambiguity is what most intricately express the narrators' struggling inner psychology.

It is clear that the lost homelands for which Stevens and Kathy are nostalgically seeking are flawed or never existed. Kathy feels continuously drawn back to her earliest years, which she endows with a hindsight significance. Her portrayal of Hailsham is predicated upon subtle idealization which is a characteristic feature of all nostalgic reconstructions: "they tend to blur into each other as a kind of golden time, and when I think about them at all, even the not-so-great things, I can't help feeling a sort of glow" (77). Stevens and Kathy settle into the remainder of their lives with a slim hope for a different ending, even though they are well aware that this hope is impossible to be fulfilled in their lives. Their return to a nostalgic past proves

that an attempt to transform the inevitable is a futile exertion. In the end, they both find themselves desolate, but irrefutably worthy of the professionalism they have dedicated themselves to. Stevens in his last resort begins to practice bantering in order to appeal to his new American employer, and Kathy chooses to end her career and embark willingly on her final stage of a donor. Although everything is on the verge of termination, Kathy still retains her memory of Hailsham, for it is “something no one can take away” (286). The revelation of Hailsham’s role in preparing its students for being physically exploited is disturbing, but what is even more unsettling is the way in which the clones accept and reconcile with the horrible truth. Ishiguro explains this reconciliation as follows:

I knew from the start that I didn't want to write a story about an enslaved, exploited class that would then rebel. My subject matter wasn't going to be the triumph of the human spirit. I was interested in the human capacity to accept what must seem like a limited and cruel fate.

(Moore and Sontheimer)

Nostalgia functions as a way to reveal the complexity of the dilemma that Stevens and Kathy go through; that is, it ironically informs that their

situations are not to be simply resolved by rebelling and regretting. Their desire to restore the past is a displaced expression of frustration with the current condition. As Wong notes that the ending of Ishiguro's novels are "marked by spiritual hope" (86), Stevens's and Kathy's nostalgia both represent a painful yearning and a pressing hope, by which the novels' final moments are endowed with spiritual elements. Therefore, both *Never Let Me Go* and *The Remains of the Day* are committed to showing the narrators' desperate attempt to cope with their fate which cannot be controlled simply by rational choices. It somberly tells the readers that there are greater, intangible things that can never be changed by individuals' desire and effort, but nevertheless shows that humans take a path to survive in any way.

## CHAPTER IV

# Sustaining Self-Integrity in the World of Predicament

A butler's professional devotion to a gentleman who makes important decisions for the society and clones' sacrifice to prolong the life span of "normals"<sup>19</sup> are extremely similar. The butler and the clones all faithfully submit themselves to a grand narrative, fulfilling the given roles for the good of the society as they construe it. Ishiguro's primary concerns in these stories point to the inevitable dilemma which rises when humans strive to accomplish something with diligence and integrity, and this dilemma is reflected through Stevens's and Kathy's lives of seeking dignity in professionalism. Many critics have interpreted Stevens's and Kathy's choice as a failure to act out for change, criticizing their conformism. Wai-chew Sim points out that the clones are eccentric as they accept the brutal system without any spirit of defiance.

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<sup>19</sup> In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones call humans as 'normals': "Someone else said what we had to remember was that the guardians were normals." (46)

M.J. Harrison interprets the ‘otherness’ of the clones in their extreme submission to injustice and oppression as an allegory for the condition of the modern human being who abides by a series of predetermined routines (as cited in Gungor 118).<sup>20</sup> Also, many critics have interpreted Stevens's bantering in a highly critical manner, explaining the character as an artifact of flawed ideology. However, as mentioned earlier, Ishiguro claims that his novel doesn't dwell on “the triumph of the human spirit” (Moore and Sontheimer) and calls for a deeper understanding of Stevens's and Kathy's acceptance of their fate. Given these critical interpretations, in this chapter, I will explore their complacency in a different angle by asking whether this sort of complacency is simply an individual's misjudgment or passivity that is to be blamed for the unfortunate consequence they confine themselves to. More specifically, I contend that Stevens and Kathy are helpless victims of a much larger system of power that forces them to act in certain ways, and it is due to their personal integrity that they carry out the expected duty. Their choices are beyond the questions of individual volition since humans, especially those who committed their lives to pursuing self-integrity, can never blandly admit

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<sup>20</sup> M.J. Harrison writes in “Clone Alone”. *Guardian* 26 February 2005 “why we don't just wake up one morning sobbing and crying down the street, kicking everything to pieces out of the raw, infuriating, completely personal sense of our lives never having been what they could have been” (26).

that their lives have been failures. Stevens and Kathy's choice of clinging onto the integrity with which they have pursued their life highlight their potential to create meanings and values amidst overwhelming despair.

In Stevens's case, wholly changed collective ideals and popular sentiments stand in opposition to the past ideals and sentiments of which he was once committed. The new era is more ignorant than generous regarding Lord Darlington's personal vision of making "small contribution to the creation of a better world" (189) and their actions are reevaluated in light of different public sentiments. After re-examining the past and realizing that his professional dignity has somehow ended up in vain, in Weymouth Stevens finally faces his position in history. As the awareness of past mistakes begins to dawn on Stevens, his bias lessens and the new awareness allows him to gain momentary insight into his thwarted ambitions. According to Drag, "Stevens is faced with situations which push him towards confronting the sources of his present predicament with a greater degree of self-criticism" (78):

You see, I *trusted*. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes.

Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that? (243)

In the end, Stevens goes through a confessional breakdown which reveals much regret of his past choices. Despite certain moments of perspicacity scattered throughout the narrative, only the final regretful confession explicitly shows “the notions of agency and moral responsibility” (Drag 67): “The fact is, of course. . . . I gave my best to Lord Darlington. . . . Goodness knows, I've tried and tried, but it's no use. I've given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington” (243). When Miss Kenton challenged Stevens about firing the two Jewish servants, his decision was justified in the name of professional dignity: “It was a difficult task, but, as such, one that demanded to be carried out with dignity” (148); and when Lord Darlington's support for Ribbentrop and the Nazis were questioned, Lord Darlington was “the sole competent judge of such questions” (Luban 9). After the great emotional conflicts and revelations, it is natural to expect Stevens to spend his life in a different way than before; that is, he is expected to abandon his unquestioning loyalty to one master and replace it with something that is more enriching to his own remaining days. However, as Tamaya claims, “old habits of mind reassert themselves in a new guise” (54) as Stevens decides to surprise the

new master by learning how to banter:

It occurs to me, furthermore, that bantering is hardly an unreasonable duty for an employer to expect a professional to perform. . . . Perhaps, then, when I return to Darlington Hall tomorrow. . . . I will begin practicing with renewed effort. I should hope, then, that by the time of my employer's return, I shall be in a position to pleasantly surprise him. (245)

Even when Stevens realizes that his life has been wasted in service to a disgraced master, he prepares to devote the rest of his life to an American gentleman, as his self-justifying statement shows: “there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ our services” (244). Stevens's attitude towards bantering is inevitably butler-like since he regards it as a service which he must perform to satisfy his new employer. Regardless of most people's new awakening of the changed reality after the Second World War, Stevens is not able to escape the misfortune, and decides to accept it with professional diligence: “Well, whatever awaits me, Mrs. Benn, I know I'm not awaited by emptiness. If only I were. But oh no, there's work, work and more work” (237).

In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones comply with their fate without doubt, and eagerly carry out what they perceive to be their responsibility to society, a sentiment clearly expressed by Ruth when she says: “I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it’s what we’re *supposed* to be doing, isn’t it?” (227) Like Ruth’s acceptance of her position, the clones do not speak out against the inhumanity of their situation. Moreover, in her conversation with Tommy, Kathy displays diligence and dignity in her profession as a carer which is no more trivial than the pride which Stevens held as a butler: “I don’t mind. Anyway, it’s important there are good carers. And I’m a good carer.”; “A good carer makes a big difference to what a donor’s life’s actually like” (282). Though, as in the words of Tommy, “the donors will all donate, just the same, and then they’ll complete” (282), Kathy’s quest of meaning as a carer shows that one can create values in life despite their transience. She pursues meaning in her profession despite her impending death: “Okay, maybe I *am* boasting now. But it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well” (3). Stevens’s adjusting himself to bantering and Kathy’s willingness to pursue her career before donating her organs are all the result of persisting in their self-integrity. Despite those willful sacrifices, however, the choices they have made are grimly doomed rather than hopeful and the bitter dilemma which pervades throughout the two

novels remain unresolved until the end.

Both *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are an allegorical re/inflexion of how all humans live, and the adversities faced by Stevens and Kathy are a literary representation of essential predicaments that humans cannot escape from and willingly control. Regarding *Never Let Me Go* as an allegory, Theo Tait refers to it as “a parable about mortality” (qtd. in Beedham 139) and Barry Lewis also claims that it is a novel about “death and the human condition” (200-01). However, I focus more on how Stevens and Kathy react to finiteness and mortality by noticing that their reactions represent humans’ ways of dealing with their fate. I argue, therefore, that their reactions can be interpreted as allegorical in regards to the following aspects: their story is a fable of human beings’ inability to see beyond their immediate surroundings, and it composedly shows their capacity to withstand such limited and cruel fate. Consequently, the dilemma between grim truth and self-deception is a figurative illustration of a broader existential predicament. By choosing to make sense of their lives through deceiving themselves, fabricating life-meanings, and ultimately pursuing dignity in professionalism, Stevens and Kathy become a metaphor for ordinary human beings who have common flaws of human nature such as bigotry, self-delusion, and short-sightedness.

They don't recognize these flaws under the name of self-justifying dignity or professional necessity. Stevens lacked a perspective to see beyond the immediate surroundings and values of his time, or probably didn't feel any obligation to do so. However, his story does not seem to be eccentric because the ethos of the story appeals to ordinary people who have similar parochial visions of their lives. As stated by Wood, Kathy's statement "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham. . . ." (13) becomes double-edged because it ironically questions us if we might be no more different from Kathy and Tommy. The readers read *Never Let Me Go* with an uncomfortable feeling of sympathy due to the similarity they feel towards the clones' condition from theirs. In *The Remains of the Day*, the readers quite probably ridicule over how serious Stevens thinks of his job as a butler, which was no longer granted in the post war era. While there is an obvious distance between the readers and the protagonists of the two novels, towards the end they are left with uncomfortable and even dreadful feelings because of the clones' and the butler's extreme similarity with them. Therefore, I argue that the pathos we experience in the novels emerges not simply because the characters in them are pathetically self-alienated but because we, like Stevens and Kathy, recognize the similar feeling of self-alienation in ourselves.

As Stevens's and Kathy's lives are conditioned in historical contingency, humans are inevitably confined to the world of uncertainties. This is a catastrophe which history necessarily conveys because none of us is farsighted enough to anticipate what our choices or actions will lead us to. Stevens deplores over the limitation, questioning "How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish?" (201) Stevens's excuse is far from nonsensical as Heisler argues that "it is unclear whether or not we are justified in applying today's criteria for moral behavior to actions that occurred decades, even generations, ago" (206). Thus, when historical legitimacy starts to question the ethical validity of personal actions and faiths, the circumstantial details by which these personal choices were made must be considered at the same time. That is, the inevitable limits of a person's actions and faiths need to be recognized and Stevens's professional commitment calls for attention in this regard. While Stevens's misfortune is more related to history and Kathy's centers around predestined mortality, they are all faced with the same dilemma of suffering from personal losses in the context of an impersonal social system that renders individuals helpless.

By inviting the readers to consider the futility of Stevens's and

Kathy's professional lives, Ishiguro forces us to consider the futility of our own. Everything that the clones learn in Hailsham seems futile because predestined death awaits for them. Stevens's efforts to continue making commitments as a butler are also futile because he feels shame in realizing that he has served a master who is not respected in the public sentiment anymore. Certainly *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* do not celebrate or even appreciate the protagonists' efforts to withstand the predicament and rather depict them somberly and ironically by highlighting their futility. However, at the core of their absurd struggles to make meaning out of professionalism lies a compelling human desire to sustain dignity even in the world of futility. Ishiguro claims that "a person's dignity isn't necessarily dependent on what he achieves in his life or in his career" (Gehlawat 344). Likewise, though Kathy and Stevens fail to achieve what they hoped or strived for, there is still something dignified about them. The dignity arises simply out of their being human in desperately holding onto their self-integrity, as stated by Ishiguro: "I was interested in how people lie to themselves just to make things palatable, to make a sense of yourself bearable. We all dignify our failures a little bit, and make the best of our successes" (*Conversations* 117).

Even though the clones are predestined to be the bodies out of place, they still hope for a “deferral” to live through their ephemeral lives with love. Deferral is Tommy and Kathy’s final plea and Tommy desperately explains to Madame that he has a soul: “I was so mixed up those days, I didn’t really do any art. I didn’t do anything. . . . I know that’s my fault, and I know it’s probably too late, but I’ve brought some things with me now. . . .” (254).<sup>21</sup> The way in which Kathy and Tommy struggle to earn a few more years to love each other and then finally give up after realizing that there is nothing they can do to change the fate reflects the process of how humans embrace death after recognizing their physical limitations. As claimed by Yeung, *Never Let Me Go* metaphorically shows “the psychological tension that arises from facing an inescapable situation, an unalterable state that one has no hope of changing” (5). Despite the cruel fate and loss of hope, Kathy shows how to accept her tragic fate and seek consolation in memory: “I’m glad that’s the way it’ll be. It’s like with my memories of Tommy and of Ruth. . . . I’ll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that’ll be something no one can take away” (286). In *The Remains of the Day*, the act of narration has enabled

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<sup>21</sup> There was a rumor that privileged Hailsham students stand a chance of being granted “deferral” of donor operations, which is earning three or four more years of additional time on Earth if they are really in love.

Stevens to embrace the legitimacy of his experience and led him to resigned acceptance of and reconciliation with his personal and professional defeats. Though he persists in justifying his misguided actions, he could somehow reflect on his position in the big framework of history by stepping out of the Darlington hall, and “advance his self-knowledge” (Drag 79) through re-evaluating the past.

Ishiguro foregrounds an interest in “the ordinary, private, and marginal lives and moments” (Lang 151) which fill the gap between important historical events and trivial stories of individuals. In a particular context of England which is built upon a perfectly constructed myth, Ishiguro draws a picture of a person's dilemma which every individual can relate to in some way or another. He says, “so my characters may be isolated figures personally, but I do try to make them like everyman characters” (*Contemporary Literature* 115). While Stevens and Kathy are oblivious of the changes in the social climate and fail to rebel against the cruel system, they make things bearable by dignifying their failures. Through these characters Ishiguro asks if it is only the personal that is to be blamed. Facing historical contingency and its impersonal operation, an individual's blindness and misjudgment are not to be the sole reasons for the unfortunate consequence

they confine themselves to. Stevens's narrative shed a new light on Lord Darlington's behaviors which have been neglected in "the unconditional condemnation of his conduct by the general public" (Drag 66). Nevertheless, this does not exempt personal choices and actions from any moral responsibility. Stevens's case shows that it is problematic and more or less impossible to simply dismiss the past choices with such an excuse as "I carried out my duties to the best" (245). Although no pejorative implications are intended, Stevens and Lord Darlington cannot be exempt from the burden they must carry for being oblivious of the social changes. There still abides a great deal of responsibilities, regrets, and feelings of guilt which all the people situated in historical turmoil must bear with them.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusion

So far, how Ishiguro represents and assesses possibilities and limitations that human beings' lives carry with them has been examined in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. In the two novels Ishiguro turns away from the Japanese settings of his first two novels *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), and reveals that he is capable of expanding his creative imagination:

I very much feel that as a writer of fiction that is what I'm supposed to do- I'm supposed to invent my own world, rather than copying things down from the surface of reality.  
(“The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation” 111)

In Ishiguro's own fictional landscape, history recedes into the background and individuals' struggle against the predicament of life is highlighted in the foreground. The existential predicament leads the protagonists to suffer from the dilemma between grim truth and self-deception. Therefore, the two

different worlds in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* converge to complete Ishiguro's literary vision of an inevitable dilemma which humans are constantly faced with in their earnest quest of meaningful life. The two contexts of pre-war and post-war period of England and a dystopian society of human clones all become an allegorical representation for general human condition.

By exploring how the protagonists respond to their particular condition, I have examined their complex psychological mechanism that is motivated by a desire to secure a more stable identity and self-integrity. Stevens and Kathy are forced to narrate their life stories in a self-deceptive manner due to the private traumas they suffer from, deliberately distorting the past and coping with the present. Their self-deceptive narration leads them to nostalgic memories and nostalgia as a device mirrors the insoluble dilemma they must face. For both Stevens and Kathy, there lurks in the past an experience that may invalidate their projected sense of self or destroy the vestiges of their human dignity. There lies great horror beneath the placid surface of everyday life, and against this overwhelming predicament they sustain their self-integrity not through direct confrontation but through concealment and meaning-making.

When Ishiguro was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2017, the Swedish academy claimed that Ishiguro “in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world” (Grady par. 1). The abyss is foregrounded through an insoluble dilemma which bothers humans the most in *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. The dilemma is concerned with inevitable moments of misfortune which humans must face when they are bound to a specific historical setting. Teo contends that Ishiguro's reluctance to offer fully resolved endings to his novels demonstrates his belief that it is never possible to truly understand one's place in history retrospectively (*Kazuo Ishiguro in a Global Context* 46). As such, Ishiguro never attempts to resolve the dilemmas which Stevens and Kathy go through, nor does he seem to presume that the readers can resolve them. The unresolved dilemmas resonate with inevitable predicaments which humans cannot escape from and put easily under their control.

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## 국 문 초 록

카즈오 이시구로의 대표작은 1989년 맨부커상을 수상한 『남아있는 나날』 *The Remains of the Day* (1989) 과 『나를 보내지마』 *Never Let Me Go* (2005)이다. 두 소설 모두 영화로 개작되었으며 소설가로서 이시구로의 대중적인 인기를 더욱 견고히 해준 작품들이다. 비록 각각 상이한 배경을 바탕으로 다른 주제를 내세우지만, 1인칭 서술자 시점에서 서술한 개인의 기억과 사회적 맥락과의 조화를 추구한다는 점에서 공통점을 지닌다. 소설 속 두 주인공이 과거와 현재에서 마주하는 위기에 대처하는 방식은 종종 믿을 수 없는 화법 (unreliable narration)으로 서술된다.

이러한 믿을 수 없는 화법에 초점을 두어 많은 비평가들이 주인공들의 주관적인 서술 방식과 거대한 체제에 순응하는 태도에 대해 비판을 해왔다. 그러나 이러한 비평은 서술 속에 숨겨진 개인적인 딜레마와 죄책감과 같은 심리적인 갈등을 심도 있게 분석하지 못한 결과이다. 따라서 본 논문은 주인공들에 대해 좀 더 공감적인 태도를 취함으로써, 이 두 소설의 방점이 의미 있는 삶을 살아가고자 할 때

인간이 직면할 수 밖에 없는 불가피한 딜레마에 찍혀 있다는 점을 주장하고자 한다.

이상과 같은 주장을 바탕으로 본 논문은 우선 기만적인 서술의 원인으로써 주인공들의 개인적인 트라우마에 대해 알아보고 이들이 기억의 회상을 통해 어떻게 상실감과 트라우마를 극복하는지 살펴보고자 한다. 다음으로, 주인공들의 딜레마를 표현하기 위한 알레고리적 설정으로서 이시구로 소설의 대표적인 특징으로 자리잡은 향수(nostalgia)의 역할에 대해 살펴본다. 마지막으로 본 글은 『남아있는 나날』과 『나를 보내지마』에 드러난 주제가 일반적인 인간의 삶에 대한 알레고리적인 표현임을 제시한다. 두 소설 모두 문화적 경계를 초월해 모든 인간이 경험할 수 있는 보편적인 공감을 불러일으킨다. 각 소설의 맥락 안에서 이시구로는 인간이 특정 상황에 놓여있을 때 진실을 추구하면서도 확고한 자기 개념을 위협하는 것으로부터 어떻게 끊임없이 도망치고 숨는지에 대해 묘사한다. 이러한 탐구를 통해 두 소설은 인간이 성취하고자 한 것을 이루지 못하고 쓸쓸한 실패를 대면하는 과정 속에서 어떻게 스스로 위안을 얻고 존엄성을 보존할 수 있는지 보여준다.

주요어: unreliable narration, trauma, nostalgia, self-integrity, human

dilemma, dignity, self-concept

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