

Negotiating forms, experimenting genres : a study of Kazuo Ishiguro in three novels: the remains of the day, never let me go & the buried giant

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Day, Never Let Me Go & The Buried Giant***

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Genre and Form; Genre as Form.....	1
Chapter One: <i>The Remains of the Day</i> as a Novel of Manners	23
Chapter Two: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> as Dystopian Science-fiction.....	52
Chapter Three: <i>The Buried Giant</i> as Medieval Fantasy Romance	87
Conclusion	120
Works Cited	121

Abstract

This dissertation aims to interrogate the genre conventions and stereotypes as employed by British novelist, Kazuo Ishiguro, particularly in the post-war novel of manners, *The Remains of the Day*, the dystopian sci-fi narrative, *Never Let Me Go*, and finally, the medieval fantasy romance, *The Buried Giant* as literary devices. Arguing that instead of simply conforming to the genre-specific stylistic stereotypes of the aforementioned genres, Ishiguro first draws his readers into his stories with the use of these familiar genre cues, and then transgresses them both to create narrative tension and negotiate with his readers his unique viewpoints and beliefs regarding some of his recurring ideas surrounding the human condition: loss, the fragility of human memory and how we cope with them. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate that as a writer, Ishiguro aims to interrogate the boundaries of not just what he considers to be genres but also fictional narratives.

Introduction: Genre and Form; Genre as Form

What is genre? And what is the difference between genre and form? At the most basic level, the differences between the two terms seem straightforward enough. According to Oxford Dictionaries, like genre, a word derived from French and Latin, and which is defined as a style or category of art, music, or literature, form too is used to denote type or variety. The difference in definitions lies in the particularity of the word ‘form’ which also implies shape, or even configuration. Nevertheless, when used in the context of the society to describe the cultural products of art, language and especially literature, David Duff, in *Modern Genre Theory*, specifies genre as a “recurring type of category of text, as defined by structural, thematic and/or functional criteria.” Genre is also frequently utilised, at times derogatorily, to classify types of popular fiction in which a “high degree of standardisation is apparent” (xiii). Although form is often used synonymously with genre, form, however, could imply a particular type of literary work like a sonnet, as well as a means to differentiate between “the form and function of a given genre, and – a less reliable distinction – between its form and content (that is, its structural as distinct from thematic characteristics)” (xii).

Further to these definitions, I would also contend that on the one hand, genre is often perceived to be connotative of rules, conventions and stereotypes that have either been accepted by culture or conceptualised by literary critics. Form, on the other hand, alludes to narrative techniques, devices, as well as elements employed in unravelling a story that an author has intended for his or her own work, which thus, opens itself up to literary experimentation. It is

therefore unsurprising that compared to form, genre is an ever more contentious and problematic concept simply because it is difficult to agree on the boundaries and standards of what makes a particular work belong to a particular genre. Furthermore, the classification and organisation of genres is not a neutral or impartial process and can be rather subjective, especially with significant disagreement about the definition of specific genres, or even, sub-genres.

Since classical times, however, various critics and artists have dealt with genre in varied ways. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, one of the earliest surviving works on literary theory, genre is described as broad categories of dramatic works, including tragedy and comedy, as well as lyric and epic poetry, depending on their medium, objects and "manner or mode of imitation" (ch. i). Even though Aristotle appears to idealise the "tragic mode of imitation" and proclaims it the "superior" and "higher art" to epic poetry, such taxonomic and dogmatic approaches to genre unfortunately continue to be dominant through much of the history of genre criticism, and this is despite artists like Shakespeare at times satirising these fixed and rigid frameworks (ch. xxvi).

Hence, in an effort to defend the need for a genuine and systematic study of literary criticism, Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* claims that just as there is nothing that the philosopher or historian cannot analyse in his own specialised fields, the literary critic too "should be able to construct and dwell in a conceptual universe of his own" (12). Since criticism is to "art what history is to action and philosophy to wisdom," Frye not only develops on the Aristotelian concept of genres, but also expands on it after he laments how "the critical theory of genres is stuck precisely where Aristotle has left it" (12-13).

By differentiating narrative into modes that are dependent on the hero's power of action, he thus formulates categories such as myth or irony (33-34). For myths, which he perceives form the underpinnings of all major art forms including literature, music and paintings, as well as symbols, a comprehensive albeit prescriptive mode of identification and classification follows, after which, he classifies genre depending on the "radical of presentation." For Frye, the "radical of presentation" refers to the condition established between the artist and his or her audience that determines if the literary work is meant to be acted out, sung, spoken, or even read in a book. Indeed, these formal genre distinctions, together with his other monumental theories on literary modes, and symbolic and mythic archetypes, are important to Frye to make meaning in this prolific "age of the printing press" (246). Yet, this archetypal framework for genres still encompasses wide-ranging and far-reaching categories of literature that seem rather restrictive and has since become obsolescent.

Incidentally, one of the most influential and pervasive pieces to be published on the topic of genres seemingly refutes the concept of genres altogether. In "The Law of Genre," Jacques Derrida explicates, "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn... [and] norms and interdictions are not far behind: 'Do,' 'Do not,' says 'genre,' the word 'genre,' the figure, the voice, or the law of the genre" (203). In describing the law of genre as a law against miscegenation, Derrida posits that a genre is contradictory in its function to classify, as there can be no "genreless text," and since all texts participate in one or several genres, their "participation never amounts to belonging." Its

“generic mark” that characterises a text as partaking of a particular genre, does not necessarily circumscribe itself as “belonging” to it as well, thereby defying genre classifications (212). Undeniably, Derrida’s law of genre problematises the study of genre in two ways: if the structural, taxonomical doctrine of genres is futile, or at least much too biased towards those who decide on the definitions and differentiations of various literary works into their various types, then in the face of such rich, vibrant genre hybridity as performed by artists such as Shakespeare, or even the Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, should the study of genres be developed further or abandoned completely?

The answer lies, perhaps, in the literary theories of the Russian Formalists, notably Mikhail Bakhtin. Picking it up, as it were, from where Frye’s archetypal approach to genre was discussed, Bakhtin proposes a socio-linguistic, dialogic approach to the novel, which to him represents a literary genre that is not only immensely multi-faceted and multi-voiced, but also self-reflexive in nature (Morris 113). In his seminal engagement with the works of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin declares, “Dostoevsky is the creator of the polyphonic novel” (*Problems* 7). Different from the attempts of previous novelists, Dostoevsky has performed a “small-scale Copernican revolution” when he developed the polyphonic novel, allowing both his hero and other characters to share in the privilege of what was previously the singular authority of the author in visualising and constructing the textual world of the narrative (49). With the multiplicity of individual voices within the novel, each with their own personal belief system as well as social and historical backgrounds, Bakhtin

postulates that these voices have been designed to develop disproportionately and thus created a diverse and diverging heteroglossia.

Compared to the epic literary form, which exemplifies to Bakhtin the monologic potential in language particularly in the ways it focuses on canonical ideals of style and form and even interpretation, the polyphonic or heteroglot novel thus symbolises the most dialogised of genres. As a manifestation of the “Galilean perception of language,” which “denies the absolutism of a single and unitary language,” it undermines the once fixed, hierarchal interrelationships between the author, reader and characters, as well as celebrates the multiplicity of voices in the text, prompting it to evolve through time and across history and culture, while other genres arguably reach a kind of completion (“Discourse” 366). Certainly, for Bakhtin, the novel as a literary genre is *sui generis*.

Arguing for a “radical restructuring” of genre theory, from the absolute classification systems reflective of the definitive modes put forward by Aristotle, for instance, to an organisational matrix that can be a more sensitive tool to the “ever-developing genre” of the novel, Bakhtin goes on to develop his theory of speech genres (“Epic and Novel” 72-73). In the Introduction to “The Problem of Speech Genres,” Michael Holquist accentuates how for Bakhtin, a study of genres should incorporate both the rhetoric and literary types, and the “enormous ocean of extraliterary genres... [where] they get their life” (xv). Here, in one stroke, Bakhtin not only resists Frye’s static, archetypal approach to genres, but also challenges Ferdinand de Saussure’s interpretation of language as a closed and self-contained system of signs.

Bakhtin propounds “the immediate reality of living speech *can* be studied” despite its “enormous variety” because such speech patterns are finite after all (xv-xvi) and can be organised according to their “speech genres” (“The Problem” 60). While secondary speech genres, especially novels, would emerge “in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication... that is artistic, scientific, socio-political, and so on,” they will usually incorporate primary speech genres like letters or even everyday conversations, which will change and “assume a special character when they enter into complex ones” (61-62). Irrefutably, the very particular combination and organisation of such primary speech genres within a secondary one would then reflect a particular style. As Bakhtin argues, there is an “organic, inseparable link” (64) between style and genre, so much so that wherever “there is style there is genre,” and whenever there is a transfer of style from one genre to another, it not only changes “the way a style sounds, under conditions unnatural to it, but also violates or renews the given genre” (66). It is indeed pertinent to note that it is this very astute re-envisioning or ‘radical restructuring’ of genres into primary and secondary genres, away from the highly contentious and fractious debates of what makes a poem or prose, or what constitutes literary or everyday language, that has made Bakhtin a tenable source of influence in revitalising modern discussions of genre not only as a linguistic or sociological phenomenon, but an aesthetic one too.

Nevertheless, critics have described Bakhtin, as well as Tzvetan Todorov, one of the key figures to interpret Bakhtin’s works outside of Russia and to be influenced by him, as still rather empirical in his approach to genre.

Whereas Bakhtin's theories, at least, have been said to be both "descriptive *and* prescriptive" (Bruhn and Lundquist 26), John Frow in *Genre: The New Critical Idiom* decries how Todorov's claims about genres, literary or not, are "nothing other than the codification of discursive properties," posing as an "institution" that readers can depend on for interpreting a text and writers for a "model for writing" (69). He refers to this specific claim in Todorov's work, *Genres in Discourse*, to substantiate his allegation:

On the one hand, authors write in function of (which does not mean in agreement with) the existing generic system... On the other hand, readers read in function of the generic system, with which they are familiar thanks to criticisms, schools, the book distribution system, or simply by hearsay. (18)

Here, I would actually emphasise suggestions otherwise as even within this quotation, some semblance of variance that might not 'agree' with the conventions or stereotypes of a particular genre is intimated. In an earlier work, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Todorov too alludes to this subversive nature of genres that are transformed by texts, and do not only define them. In dealing with a literary text, he explains that there is always a "double requirement" that needs to be met, where while we must be cognisant that it "manifests properties that it shares with all literary texts, or with texts belonging to one of the sub-groups of literature," we too must keep in mind that a text "is not only the product of a pre-existing combinatorial system" but also "the transformation of that system" (6-7). For Todorov, as long as a text exists by "means of words," the text would have already fulfilled its role of both a

“description of genre,” as well as a source of alteration of that genre which the text originally appeared to validate (7).

Ostensibly, this conception of the dual role of texts is revisited and refined in “The Origin of Genres.” According to Todorov, when a work “disobeys” a genre, such a “transgression requires a law—precisely the one that is to be violated.” Once this happens, however, “the work becomes a rule in turn, because of its commercial success and the critical attention it receives” (196). In other words, contrary to Derrida’s law of genre, which would possibly deny genre at the moment that it surfaces or comes to light, Todorov seems to assert a more optimistic and progressive view of how texts can continually inform and innovate genres, and vice versa.

Another significant contribution that Todorov makes to genre studies, though by no means the only one, would be the delineations he draws between theoretical and historical studies of genres. As he revisits the archetypal approaches to genres of Northrup Frye in *The Fantastic*, Todorov determines that Frye “enumerates only five genres (modes) out of thirteen possibilities that are theoretically available,” and so calls attention to the two possible methods of perceiving and reviewing literary genres: on the one hand, historical genres would result from an “observation of literary reality,” while on the other hand, theoretical genres would exemplify the critical works done by ancient writers on poetics that might even theorise genres that have not yet occurred (13-14). Needless to say, historical genres form part of theoretical genres. More importantly, however, Todorov’s perspective on the perpetually evolving state of genre that can even negotiate through time, by looking back to the past

through the ancient writers and anticipating future genres, strongly signifies the need for genre to be analysed not only in its site of production (i.e. the artist), but also at its point of reception (i.e. the reader, listener or viewer, or even time period, society, language, culture etc.). Here, the critical works of Gérard Genette, Hans Robert Jauss and popular film genre critics, in particular Steve Neale and Rick Altman, will prove to be indispensable.

In *The Architext*, Genette first returns to the exceptionally enduring work of Aristotle's *Poetics* in genre studies, only to demystify and debunk the similarly durable but erroneous belief that the triad of lyrical, epical and dramatic literary genres was an Aristotelian system at all. According to Genette, this triad is a system that was established and popularised in the Romantic period, and which "neither Plato nor Aristotle had ever considered" (33) because the Aristotelian pair contains only the (mixed) narrative and dramatic modes (23). More than that, as Robert Scholes points out in the Foreword, Genette next offers a new pathway to conceptualising genre: by defining genres as "intersections of certain modes of enunciation and certain thematic concerns," where modes refer to the "pragmatics of language itself (like narration)," then the most "persistent" and tenacious of these links between modes and themes like love or death should form literary genres or "architexts" (ix). Architextuality depends very much on both the relationships of "imitation and transformation" of one text with respect to others, and the relationship of "inclusion" as one text links to "various types of discourse it belongs to" (82). With this introduction of the architext, however, it is indeed intriguing to discover that dialogue, or so it seems, exists not only within texts, as Bakhtin

postulates, but also amongst texts, the conversation of which makes up a particular architext, or genre.

Similarly, in “Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature,” Jauss too appears to augment this notion of genre as being part of a conversation. Conceiving of the well-known and oft-cited phrase “horizons of expectations,” he employs the term to describe how in order to arrive at an understanding of a text, readers need to draw on various points of reference, such as their own social and historical conditions, traditions, as well as prior knowledge of other known texts (79). Put across differently, what Jauss has done is to transfer the powers of interrogation, interpretation and organisation of texts, and accordingly of genres, from the hands of those who formulated these texts to those who read or analyse them. It is also decidedly noteworthy to highlight how this realignment of interest from artist to audience might allude to a kind of *carte blanche* being given to an audience when he or she elicits meaning from an artistic work. However, this is simply not the case.

Rick Altman, in *The American Film Musical*, describes how meaning is seldom elicited from the content that the “words or texts *have*,” but “always something that is *made*” in a “four-party meaning-situation” that consists of an *author* circulating his or her *text* to an *audience* whose interpretation is partly reliant on his or her *interpretive community* (2). Like Jauss, Altman too believes that there is usually a condition to interpreting a text, such as a “specific critical tradition” which “arrests the free play of a text’s signifiers and freezes them *in a particular way*, thus producing a meaning proper to the particular community in question.” Most notably in the realm of popular media, especially television

and Hollywood films, its keen nature as a historical genre would imply that its production methods and modes of reception are much more susceptible to the cultural forces at work in the negotiation of meaning, and subsequently, of genres. Once a particular genre is defined, for instance, the role of the interpretive community is “usurped” by the genre, marginalising it and relegating it to a “vestigial” position in the “meaning-making process.” Such claims, though certainly somewhat valid, do make it seem that genres are not only static and prescriptive once again, but have also become the passive “agents” of an “ideological project” to dominate and regulate the audience’s emotions, thoughts and reactions to a specific film by providing a specific context through which the film must be interpreted (4).

Jane Feuer, in “Genre Study and Television,” too highlights the nature of the film as an “industrial product” that is both “culturally specific and temporally limited” (139). For the film and television industries, genres, or more specifically, sub-genres, offer a way for them to “control the tension between similarity and difference inherent in the production of a cultural product.” Yet, Feuer admits how while audiences might expect each Hollywood film to be “unique,” such utterly experimental products do not “mesh with the system of production regularity and division of labour upon which Hollywood is built.” As such, “the classical Hollywood narrative style and genres help to regulate the production of difference” by only altering each film within “very circumscribed structures of similarity” (142). Nonetheless, at the same time that such creations might be deemed as products that have been replicated and manufactured, these creative works still ‘participate’ in the genres that they

‘belong’ and ‘transform’ them all the same. Whether genres represent literary forms such as prose, poetry or performance, or sub-genres such as romance or horror, this notion of transformation reveals insights not only of the genre or sub-genre in themselves, but also the entire system of classification as a whole.

This fluid nature of genre is outlined in Steve Neale’s “Questions of Genre” as well. Although imitation and similarity appear to be the trademarks of genres as if “inherently stasis,” genres are also “marked fundamentally by difference, variation, and change.” Indeed, this “processlike nature” of genres presents itself as an “interaction” between the levels of expectation, the generic corpus, and the rules or norms that govern both, such that the “elements and conventions of a genre are always *in play* rather than being simply *replayed*.” As a result, any “generic corpus” will always be “expanded” especially in this day and age with such a pervasive, highly accessible and globally diverse entertainment and aesthetic landscape (189). Additionally, similar to how an audience is able to perceive and interpret a work of art according to its ‘architexts’ or ‘horizons of expectation,’ the creator of the work of art too has the autonomy to ‘play’ at varying, combining and developing such genres as part of his or her style, or oeuvre, which can at times be done ironically or even derogatorily.

As mentioned earlier, even from the time of Bakhtin’s writing, the self-reflexive, metafictional nature of the novel has long been recognised, and according to Patricia Waugh in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, has always been a “tendency or function inherent in *all* novels” (5). Like Bakhtin’s polyphonic or heteroglot novel, Waugh’s

conception of the metafiction is also based on the dialogic, relativistic potential of the novel as it is “constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition” (6). However, through metafiction, Waugh maintains that readers are offered “extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary existence of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems” (9) by “preserving a balance between the unfamiliar (the innovatory) and the familiar (the conventional or traditional)” (12). While conventions are the “control” upon which experimental techniques take “foreground,” parody thus becomes one of the manifestations that metafiction takes form (18). Certainly, parody may be “doubled-edged,” as its literary mimicry of structural conventions is often criticised as “escapist” or dismissed as a “joke” (78), but particularly in its use of popular conventions, it is uncommonly useful for interrogating the typically intractable, parochial definitions of what would comprise “serious” or “good literature,” or even genres (86).

Moreover, Waugh contends that the integration of popular, mainstream forms in metafiction is critical to the “survival of the novel as a widely read form of cultural expression.” Though an audience from a different age might consider different popular forms to be “trivial or of purely ephemeral entertainment value,” the “defamiliarization of the popular form within the new context uncovers aesthetic elements that are appropriate for expressing the serious concerns of the new age” (79). Today, writers prefer to experiment with popular literary genres that have been more frequently cinematised like science fiction, because even as these forms are not completely compatible with current

critical issues, they at least reach a wider and more receptive audience (81). Indeed, it is my contention that this very genre experimentation with popular, or at least familiar genres, is not only explored, but also utilised, refined and mobilised as a technique in three of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, namely *The Remains of the Day*,¹ *Never Let Me Go*² and *The Buried Giant*.³

Genre as Form

A critically-acclaimed author, with an oeuvre that spans over three decades since the publication of his first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982),⁴ and more recently *The Buried Giant* (2015), Kazuo Ishiguro (b. 1954, Nagasaki, Japan) has gotten rather accustomed to criticism. Certainly, TBG contains semblances of a real historical event where a war transpired between the ancient Saxons and Britons, but he chooses to tell this story through an “other, magical world” (Chang) set in “sixth- or seventh- century Britain... with dragons, ogres, and Arthurian knights” (J. Wood 2). Neil Gaiman, in his interview with Ishiguro, appropriately entitled “Let's Talk About Genre,” shares with readers that prominent fantasy author, Ursula K. Le Guin, had condemned the novel in these terms: “This is fantasy, and your refusal to put on the mantle of fantasy is evidence of an author slumming it.” In his defence, Ishiguro remarks how

¹ TRTD

² NLMG

³ TBG

⁴ PVH

a novelist writing in 1920 or 1930... would simply be perceived as having written another novel. When Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* nobody went ‘Ah, this respectable social novelist has suddenly become a fantasy novelist: look, there are ghosts and magic. (4)

This comment leads Gaiman to muse that, genres, it seems, are only useful as categories for “publishers and bookshops” (11). Even the Pulitzer Prize-winning literary critic, Michiko Kakutani, sounds scathing in her review of the novel, referring to it as an “ungainly fable that reflects none of Mr. Ishiguro’s myriad and subtle gifts” (3). However, this is not the first time that Ishiguro has defied genre boundaries or subverted genre elements in his writing.

Central to the three novels chosen for this study is the experimentation of genres which have become vehicles for Ishiguro to express his recurring ideas surrounding the human condition: loss, the fragility of human memory and how we cope with them. While the genres change in each of these novels; the post-war novel of manners, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), the dystopian science fiction narrative, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), and finally, the medieval fantasy romance, *The Buried Giant*, I would contend that instead of simply conforming to genre-specific stylistic devices and conventions, Ishiguro first draws his readers into his stories with the use of these familiar genre cues, and then transgresses such expectations not only to create tension but also to negotiate with his readers his unique viewpoints and beliefs.

For instance, in TRTD, Ishiguro first lays the intricate foundation of a familiar, formulaic element of the British novel of manners with the setting of

the story in the country estate of Darlington Hall, which is regularly regarded by both readers and critics alike as a “metonym for England and its post-war decline” (Childs 135). However, at the heart of this seemingly idyllic and innocuous domestic space is also where Ishiguro situates Lord Darlington’s meetings with known Nazi sympathisers. Certainly, this subversion of the private, domestic space of Darlington Hall into a public, political stage is Ishiguro’s way of inserting tension into the very heart of British domesticity, and through which better figure than that of the very symbol of domestication, the butler, Stevens. In this way, what Ishiguro offers to his readers may not just be what “Raymond Williams calls ‘emergent’ forms of culture that can challenge dominant social structures and practices,” but also endeavours at genre experimentation (cited in Sim 120).

Speaking in an interview with Linda Richards, Ishiguro himself admits that his intention of re-inventing or re-structuring the “branded, packaged” norms that prevailed in the English novel about butlers and the “stereotypical images of a certain kind of classical England” is to address the “stereotypes that exist in people’s heads all around the world and manipul[at] them engagingly.” He also claims to “disguise those elements of my writing that I feel perhaps are experimental” (Mason) and “write about life in the way that is profound as well as at the [highest] technical level... to the point that perhaps it’s not that obvious” (Vorda and Herzinger). As such, whether it is the psychological thriller of PVH which tells the “emotional story” (Mason) of how Sachiko comes to leave Japan and comes to terms with the tragic loss of her daughter who committed suicide, or the fiction “masquerading as a detective

novel” of *When We Were Orphans* (2000) as Christopher Banks unravels the mystery of his parents’ disappearances, Ishiguro emphasises the need to utilise both technicality and subtlety when working with the complex natures and textures of genres in order to circumvent the sensation of contrivance in his narratives (Gorra 1). Indeed, this literary mastery on the part of Ishiguro is described by David James in “Artifice and Absorption: The Modesty of Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*” as Ishiguro’s unrivalled ability to persuade his readers to “become absorbed in what happens within the world” of his novels and to “be made aware of how our absorption can coalesce with, though without being compromised by, a heightened awareness of Ishiguro’s craft” (55). Yet in contrast to such proclamations, I would posit that it is this very experience of ‘absorption’ and ‘heightened awareness’ of Ishiguro’s virtuosity in the ways he has re-forged and recast the genres, as well as the narrative tropes and reader expectations that correspond with such genres, that creates an unsettling, almost uncanny, feeling of dissonance, distance and doubt in Ishiguro’s novels rather than a seamless sense of immersion or even ‘absorption.’

As a case in point, in the same way that genre conventions and characterisations in TRTD have been overturned by failures—the failure of the novel of manners to reveal more about the sensibilities of post-war aristocratic England and the failure of the butler, Stevens, to be a ‘great butler’ who can ‘banter’ with his employer—NLMG too struggles against its own dystopian, science-fiction conventions.

Set in the alternative timeline of the 1990s, during which clones and organ donation programmes have become the norm, the main protagonist, Kathy H., seems to challenge the role of the “Final Girl” stereotype that often populates the science-fiction and thriller genres as articulated in Carol J. Clover’s *Men, Women and Chainsaws*. According to Clover, the Final Girl appears mostly in “slasher movies” as a “feminist” hero who “brings down the killer in the final moments” but not without devoting

a good hour of the film up to then: being chased and almost caught, hiding, running, falling, rising in pain and fleeing again, seeing her friends mangled and killed by weapon-wielding killers, and so on. “Tortured survivor” might be a better term than “hero.” (x)

Internally profound but yet physically meek, Kathy too appears to embody this role of the ‘tortured survivor’ as a ‘carer’ but seems to spend most of the novel being wholly complicit in the abject organ donation programme, witnessing as well as supporting her closest friends’ ‘completions’ or organ donations which imminently result in their deaths. In one critical resolution scene in the novel, however, Tommy and Kathy do confront the two founders of Hailsham, Madame Marie-Claude and Miss Emily, and seek to confirm the rumour that they could get their “donations deferred if they’re really in love” (172). Despite decisively being told that there is “no truth in the rumour” (255) and that they are clones that have been “reared in humane, cultivated environments” (259), both Tommy and Kathy continue on with their lives, or deaths, as if “nothing seemed to change” (274). In some ways, just like how the science-fiction

conventions and stereotypes are found only in the fringes of the narrative of NLMG, the central social and moral conflicts concerning the organ donation programme and the inhumane treatment of clones especially of those found in “government ‘homes’” have been similarly pushed aside, both linguistically through undisguised euphemisms and structurally through failed generic expectations, therefore amplifying the sense of tension and anxiety within the perceived Final Girl figure of Kathy and the science-fiction plot surrounding her (263).

Yet, I would also emphasise that Ishiguro still finds it necessary to use genre markers as well as character stereotypes in his novels and utilise them as narrative frameworks through which he negotiates with his readers, and later, disembarks from them. Having written a clone narrative in NLMG while being fully aware that clones were “once a quintessentially genre-sf motif,” Ishiguro intentionally treats the “figure of the clone in a cursory way” and strategically uses it as a “stepping stone” for his own “narrative goals” (Frelik 30). Just like Peter Swirski in “Genre and Paradoxes,” who professes that one of the principal functions of genres in fiction is to “help us model the interpretive mechanisms that come into play when readers sit down with a book” (76), John Rieder in “On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History” correspondingly avers on the efficiency and efficacy of genres in their capacities to build and shape the “world depicted in the text in question, and its relation to both an empirical environment and to other generically constructed worlds” (197). Equally, Robert Scholes in “Fantastic Reading: Science Fantasy as a Genre” too propounds, “No writer can invent an entire world.” He determines that “every

fictional world must borrow more than can be invented by its author” such that certain “[h]abits of information—what Umberto Eco calls the reader’s ‘encyclopedia’” can “come to the aid of the fictional imagination.” Nevertheless, the key point is how “only a few details from the historical past are necessary to start the reader on the task of furnishing a world appropriately” (188). In other words, genres need only provide a ‘few details’ of ‘past’ popular tropes to spur readers to ‘furnish’ the rich, multi-faceted and multi-generic worlds of Ishiguro’s novels with their own ‘habits of information’ or ‘encyclopaedia.’

To illustrate, even as *TRTD* can be read as a realist, novel of manners set in post-war England through the eyes of the butler Stevens, its foiled domestic sensibilities in the ways that Stevens fails to find love in Miss Kenton, or to address the threat of Lord Darlington’s collusion with the Nazis in his own home facilitates the negotiation of genres ‘at play’ in the text. Next, while Kathy obsessively recollects her boarding school experiences in Hailsham for the donors of the organ donation programme, or even for herself, through the “mutual recognition” of these memories that may only be “challenged” but never “eradicated,” these memories too urge her to formulate her own internal, psychological struggle against the ever present, omniscient threat of the science fiction reality in *NLMG* (Teo 42-43). At the same time that the medieval romance fantasy of *TBG* presents Ishiguro with the opportunity to “reinvent King Arthur with no loss of recognition—or participation—as long as one or more of the regular features is present: Gawain, Guinevere, a feast,” these historical ‘details’ too problematise Ishiguro’s notions of the mythic, cyclic

nature of history, memory and trauma as put forth in the novel (Crofts and Rouse 87). After all, just as Derrida, Todorov and Altman have testified in their conceptions of genres, without a norm or a law to define or delineate against, genres cannot be shown to expand beyond or even fall short of the very genre that they seem to belong.

Coincidentally, though the assimilation of popular genres such as science fiction and medieval fantasy does evoke the metafictional techniques of pastiche or parody, I would also argue that Ishiguro employs these strategies not so much to highlight his narrative as ‘construction’ or ‘artifice’ as to borrow the sense of uncertainty and subversiveness that come with their use. Ultimately, it will be my assertion that Ishiguro aims to interrogate both the fluid, transformative boundaries of not just what we consider to be genres but also postmodern narratives.

In summary, in the words of Daniel Chandler, in *An Introduction to Genre Theory*, while genres might first appear to be a “theoretical minefield,” which is further aggravated by present-day conceptions of genre that rest uneasily between perceptions of their fixed conventions, such as structure and style, as well as their ability to “overlap” or form “hybrid genres” (2), a clear benefit of genres is that one can “rely on readers already having knowledge and expectations about works within a genre” (6). Nonetheless, while Chandler claims how a genre “*constrains*” how a text is read, I am predisposed towards H. Porter Abbott’s more transformative conception of readers and their act of reading. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, he explains how readers “draw upon pre-existing *types* that we have absorbed from our culture” but also

“synthesize... something that... is to a greater or lesser extent unique, yet as a rule sufficiently flexible to accommodate new information” (116). As readers assimilate and negotiate this ‘new information’ of not just the novel but genres that the novel situates itself within, I would contend that Ishiguro deliberately and purposefully creates ‘hybrid genres’ in his novels to expand and inform the plot, themes and characters by forcing readers to also “read against the grain” (cited in Fiske 1987).

All in all, through my dissertation, I aspire to demonstrate the contention that genre conventions act in contrast to the narrative elements in Ishiguro’s works, in terms of expected plotlines, characterisations or even verisimilitude. Indeed, Ishiguro does so in order to not only cast doubt and create tension in his discussion of “universal human issues” (Cheng 10) in particular the fragility of human memory, trauma and loss, but also challenge the boundaries and depths of genre discourse as something more than just its “surface elements,” “porous, if not non-existent,” and as a “means of distraction” from having to face up to realities that are difficult to confront or overcome (Cain 2).

Chapter One: *The Remains of the Day* as a Novel of Manners

At its core, *The Remains of the Day* tells a tragic story of loss. On the face of it, however, it relates the account of the butler Stevens as he leaves on his “motoring trip” (12) in the present-day of the novel of July 1956, which will take him “through much of the finest countryside of England to the West Country” at the “most kind suggestion” of his current American employer and proprietor of Darlington Hall, Mr Farraday. Spurred to go on this “break” (3), especially after having to come to terms with his “series of small errors in the carrying out of my duties” such as a “faulty staff plan,” which he attributes to “the arrival of Miss Kenton’s letter” (4-5) that contains “unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall” (9), and perhaps for him, Stevens also plans to travel out to recruit Miss Kenton (now Mrs Benn) again as a housekeeper like back in “Lord Darlington’s days” (17). As he spends the next six days travelling and interacting with the inhabitants of the historic counties of Salisbury, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and finally Weymouth, it becomes quite discernible that this journey actually takes place both outwardly as well as inwardly.

Internally, Stevens seems embroiled in an intensely interior exploration of reflection and reminiscence, but also regret and redemption. While Salisbury hearkens him back to the “memorable March of 1923” during which an “‘unofficial’ international conference” to discuss the “harshest terms of the Versailles treaty” (75) was held and organised by Lord Darlington for other like-minded Nazi sympathisers, as well as supported by Stevens which imbues him “with a large sense of triumph,” it also forces him to face up to the

uncomfortable memory of his father's death (110). In Devon, Stevens recalls the unfair dismissal of the two Jewish housemaids, Ruth and Sarah, while Cornwall evokes his memory of his utterly proper and professional, but entirely restrained relationship with Miss Kenton in the years "around 1935 and 1936" (164). Eventually, of course, Stevens concludes his trip in Weymouth after realising that he has indeed lost his "dignity" after all. Due to his blind subservience to Lord Darlington, giving him his "all" (243) and even attempting to vindicate him three years after his death for his role in being manoeuvred by the "trickster" (136), the German Ambassador, Herr Ribbentrop, as well as giving in to his superfluous notions of what it means to be a professional or a "great butler" (29), he weeps as he confesses to a complete stranger his story of loss. He has lost even without making his "own mistakes" or calling his life his own (243).

Certainly, TRTD represents a powerful narrative of 'manners' against which characters, plotlines and settings are described in relative terms to it. From the way that Stevens unquestionably carries out Lord Darlington's instruction to dismiss the Jewish housemaids even as it is "wrong, as sin as any sin ever was one" (149), to the manner in which he arraigns Miss Kenton for her disrespect when she informally calls the under-butler by his given name, William, despite him being Stevens' father and a former butler at "Loughborough House," these supposed infractions only exist because they take place within a codified set of manners within the novel (34).

According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, author of *Novel Beginnings* in which she surveys the creative evolution of the British novel in the eighteenth century, manners, not physical appearances, are the "subject of consuming

interest” and told of “momentous, reflections of important values” (160) as well as “morals” (161). Furthermore, manners are meant to “make oneself pleasing to others” by considering how one should prescribe to specific social rules such as “speaking in low and harmonious tones” or “avoiding controversial subjects” (161-2). At the same time that “its action takes place in a social world, with the rules of decorum constructing its environment,” its “manners [too] make motives” or become plot devices that “evoke real experience, not only plausibly but persuasively” (168). As such, manners provide “social code[s]” that can be turned to “private purposes... not to smooth but to roughen human relations” (184) by restricting the behaviours of characters, their impressions of others and others of them, as well as their individual “fates” in the novel (185). Evidently, many of these features of the novel of manners can be observed and analysed in TRTD, but not in the most straightforward of ways.

The ‘social codes,’ for example, upon which thematic discussions regarding dignity, honour or professionalism take place constitute most of the narrative, and are continuously subscribed to, if not struggled against by all the characters, including the conservative, career-minded Stevens. Therefore, these same deliberations too help set the plot in motion and take centre stage in many of Stevens’ past recollections: in one major flashback, Stevens retells his most “severe test” (43) which he feels will prove his worth as a great butler, when he supported the “conference of March 1923” (70) at the same time that he dealt professionally and systematically with his own father’s death, no matter how “surprising, alarming or vexing” it was (42). While it might be fair to analyse this recollection as an illustration of Stevens’ competencies as a butler, as he

believes he was able to organise both the details of the event and the servants under him while he remained “possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position,” examining this scene for all its ironic intricacies also seems a worthy pursuit (33).

In *A Handbook to Literature*, the novel of manners is defined as being governed by “social customs, manners, conventions, and habits of a definite social class.” It further elucidates,

In the true *novel of manners*, the mores of a specific group, described in detail and with great accuracy, become powerful controls over characters. The novel of manners is often, although by no means always, satiric; it is always realistic in manner, however. (Harmon and Holmon 303)

Even though Susan Winnett in *Encyclopedia of the Novel* bemoans the fact that there has been “little creative energy” actually “devoted to discerning what precisely the ‘novel of manners’ is,” especially for a genre that can be so diverse as to include the eighteenth century epistolary novelist, Samuel Richardson, or even the modernist writer, Virginia Woolf, it is widely agreed that at the very least it is concerned with the “conventions of manners” which is much dependant on “class structure” and the “codes of behaviour and social organization.” She also asserts that in the twentieth century, this genre has transformed to become less about the “working towards or even celebrating [of] the homogeneity of a closed society that could designate its closure through its manners,” but more about the “foregrounding and exploration of the differences” of those “forms of social closure” (946).

Inevitably, with this level of detail accorded to manners in the loosely closed society of Darlington Hall, which resembles just one of those “great houses of this country,” there can be few arguments against TRTD’s realism (115). With a writing style that is “always slightly overspecific” and “determined to leave nothing out” (Menand 3), even Ishiguro admits that he wrote the novel in the “realist mode, trying to make the setting as convincing as possible” (Jaggi 111). Concerning the film adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*, released in 1993 and starring Anthony Hopkins as Stevens and Emma Thompson as Miss Kenton, it has also been positively described as “metaphoric” in its representation of “almost documentarylike sequences showing how such great houses once functioned, ... how the servants preserved order among themselves through their own hierarchies” (Canby 1-2).

Nonetheless, Ishiguro does lament the fact that all too often, TRTD has been taken to reflect an “interesting piece of social history, a recreation of life for servants between the wars” (Jaggi 111). Truthfully, there have been several commentators, including Barry Lewis, who have criticised such realist readings of the novel that highlight “historical inaccuracies” like how the “port would never be handed round by a butler after dinner, but would be circulated clockwise by the dining gentlemen” (77). In receiving it as an accurate “texture of life,” where readers “locate it physically, as an extension of journalism or history” or a “parable of the fall of the British empire,” Ishiguro bemoans the loss in “focus on the more abstract themes” (Jaggi 111) or ‘the emotional story’ that might be “of interest to people fifty years’ time, a hundred years’ time, and to people in lots of different cultures” (Kridner 153).

Furthermore, Ishiguro too shares how several real-life former butlers have come forward to praise his rendition of the butler figure which has not “misrepresented or lampooned or anything,” problematising the ‘satiric’ or parodic nature of his adapted novel of manners, at least of some kind (151). Yet, it is also important to accentuate how this very predominant tone of professional decorum, which is always acutely aware of the social pecking order of its vicinity, so to speak, is constantly, and most times, ironically juxtaposed with the various instances of trauma and failure in the novel, not only for Stevens, but also characters like Lord Darlington, Mr Cardinal and Miss Kenton spanning over three decades. In other words, this unique, ‘elegant style’ that Ishiguro has formulated and executed in TRTD, like in most of his novels including his first published novel, PVH, signifies his use of a technically devised and highly innovative narrative strategy allowing him to seemingly effortlessly traverse the different genres of manners, realism or even domestic sentimentalism while articulating in “controlled and often exquisite cadences about traumatic events, cultural and personal” (Howard 398). What Ishiguro achieves with his polished civil tongue is an “unqualified marvel,” according to Gregory O’Dea, a reviewer of *The Unconsoled*, a “controlled, and precise writing that casts a fragile veneer of sanity over a disturbing and profound reading experience,” which will be one of the many interests of this chapter as it analyses how Ishiguro’s themes coincide with his narrative experimentation (cited in Howard 399).

At the same time, as if following in the reworked narrative conventions of the domestic novel in the nineteenth century of Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, for instance, Ishiguro too utilises a male first-person protagonist to

narrate the domestic realities of his novel. Like Dickens, Ishiguro's novel too transforms the domestic sphere, more commonly associated with female writers and readers, as well as female attributes such as "gentleness" that can "soften and humanize," into an "androgynous" space that is infused with the masculine virtues of "rigor and purpose" (Rena-Dozier 814). Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, such a technique might not seem so very uncommon amongst the likes of P.G. Wodehouse's *Jeeves* (who is actually a valet, not a butler), or more particularly, Wilkie Collin's *The Moonstone* in which the butler, Gabriel Betteredge, plays the role of the main narrator. However, in comparison to other butler novels, it is worthy to note that Ishiguro's novel is likely one of the first to express the rich, intellectual internal dialogue of this working professional, telling the story of his own rise and fall not only as a butler for Lord Darlington, whose influence ebbs and flows alongside his employee, but also as its own sub-genre and character trope. Stevens is like Jeeves in that he is a fastidious, almost supercilious, manservant who takes pride in his every duty and chore, and in his management of others, but unlike Jeeves, too often compromises on his own needs and beliefs in deference to the "great moral stature" of his employer (126). Unlike the murderous butler, Stephano, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, or the butler with a criminal record and who might be in the best position to commit a murder, Parker, in Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Stevens, again, is used neither for comic relief, though there are some tragicomic sequences, nor red herring for the plot. As such, the very centralisation of this narrative on a professional butler who spectates and supports in his gentleman employer's descent into the heart of World War II Nazi politics, and who fails to win the heart of his romantic

interest, Miss Kenton, due to his own inaction, stands in stark contrast to the expectations of the novel of manners and the sentimental domestic novel that it draws so heavily from respectively.

Subsequently, the social conditions and mores that are demonstrated in TRTD might be in a state of transition or transformation as well. While Lord Darlington and his supporters, as well as Stevens himself, are still reverent of the “old ways” (6) in which they could still have “chaps like you taking messaging back and forth, bringing tea, that sort of thing (107) and “[n]one of this universal suffrage” (198), at the same time, characters such as Mr Cardinal, Miss Kenton, the American senator, Mr Lewis, and to some extent, Stevens himself, have begun to struggle to come to terms with the needs of the future, such as the need to eliminate “amateurism” (103) and “make a toast” to “professionalism.” Furthermore, since the private space of Darlington Hall has been infringed upon by the public, political ideologies of the “decent, well-meaning,” “gentlemen amateurs,” these transgressions will inevitably impact the social conventions that are practised by the characters both on the personal and cultural levels, albeit in the form of caricature, at times (102).

In both the public and private arenas too, the tension between the rise of professionalism and the resistance against sentimentalism too runs deeply throughout the novel. At its simplest, the cutting of staff members, who may or may not be loyal to the employer, and might have been maintained “for tradition’s sake,” challenges Stevens to respond to this issue either practically or conservatively (7). In a more complex example, with regard to the close relationship between Stevens and Miss Kenton, who have lived, worked and fallen in love in the partially public sphere of Darlington Hall, Stevens feels

obligated to respond to their romantic predicament in either his personal or professional capacities. Here, it is all the more significant to point out that many of the moral dilemmas that Stevens observes, as well as encounters, are the unfortunate results of his actions and beliefs that are hinged on a flawed, though “honest” and “well-meaning” sense of dignity, honour and professionalism (102). For a supposedly upright, disciplined character like Stevens to wax lyrical about the virtues of having dignity or becoming a great butler, he seems rather eager to exonerate himself (and others like Miss Kenton) of the guilt of dismissing the two Jewish housemaids on unjust grounds. With respect to the “tragic consequences” of Stevens’ “flawed professional visions,” Rob Atkinson interprets the novel in the following terms:

On the one hand is the risk of embracing, individually or collectively, flawed perfectionist ideologies of professionalism, mirages that seduce us with the promise of either moral nonaccountability or easy moral answers. On the other hand is the risk of discarding all forms of professionalism as discredited ideology or hypocritical cant, thus despairing of meaningful professional lives. A careful analysis of *The Remains of the Day* reveals a mediating, tragic vision of professionalism, somewhere between the perfectionist and the nihilistic. (180)

As such, TRTD should be analysed more thoroughly as a novel comprising a multiplicity of genre influences upon which multifaceted layers of irony, and some semblances of satire are, as Altman proposed, ‘at play’ rather than just a straightforward “realistic historical” novel (Alter 4).

In summary, in this chapter of my dissertation, I will first analyse how Ishiguro constructs the foundation of his narrative on the conventions of the novel of manners, as well as the domestic realist novel, through the characters and various plot features of *TRTD*. Thereafter, I will examine the various moments of failure in the novel where such conventions fail to reach some form of conclusion or fruition, thus investigating how such transgressions create not only a sense of tension in the novel's thematic concerns but also in reader expectations. At work against these expectations, I would argue that Ishiguro aims to re-negotiate and re-frame what Jauss theorises are the 'horizons of expectations' in his readers, through his interrogation of the themes of professionalism, trauma and human morality in the personal, individual lives of the characters as well as the historical realities of pre-war Britain. As each character experiences failure, in the ways that Stevens fails to become a "good son" to a "good father," for instance, or even Miss Kenton in her romantic overtures towards Stevens, these instances will be scrutinised alongside Lord Darlington's, and conceivably, Stevens' own failure to recognise the political threats that imperil pre-war England too (97).

The Professional and the Personal

It is only at the end of the novel, at the end of all the chapters of Stevens revisiting, and perhaps even, reworking his past traumatic memories to try to validate his past mistakes with his seemingly highbrow definitions of professionalism or even dignity that he finally admits that he has lost all 'dignity' after all. That a complete stranger could sum up his entire life and career following in the wake of who he considers a 'great butler,' like his father, as just "part of the package," indeed, fills Stevens with not just regret,

but also, an immediate need to cover up his sadness and loss (242). As if putting on his “suit” of dignity (43) once again, as always, though he actually needs to confront a traumatic event head on, he excuses himself to the stranger: “I’m so sorry, this is so unseemly. I suspect I’m over-tired. I’ve been traveling rather a lot, you see” (243). However, it is the instant return to the familiar, to “look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically” and not come to terms with the real heart of the matter, which is “human warmth” that does not come with something so superficial such as bantering, that makes the novel all the more tragic (245). However, such paradoxical contrasts between what is said or demonstrated by the butler Stevens, and what is truly the case will be the subject of analysis in this following segment.

As such, due to the nature of the novel as multi-layered in terms of genres and juxtapositions, it is perhaps appropriate that Ishiguro’s themes and narrative techniques be dealt with in a dichotomous manner, revealing insights about the different traumatic events in Stevens’ life as a butler, but in two or more different lights or modes.

One of the first traumatic experiences to be discussed is the death of Lord Darlington, and the subsequent ownership of Darlington Hall by the American, Mr Farraday. Deciding to continue on as a butler in Darlington Hall, Stevens has to quell both suspicions doubting the honour of his former employer, Lord Darlington, whose name has become synonymous with Nazi collaborators, and by extension, his own dignity and professionalism as well. In these scenes, it can be observed that while Stevens appears to try to restore both his and his employer’s reputations, many of these redemptive acts are subverted by Stevens’ inability to come to terms with his past mistakes. Secondly, the

death of Mr Stevens senior during the international conference resembles one of the most powerfully poignant episodes for Stevens professionally as a butler, but also personally as a son. It is during this incident that Stevens makes allusions to his own standing amongst “the likes of the ‘great’ butlers of our generation such as Mr Marshall or Mr Lane” (110). In fact the false sense of humility that he endeavours to express to his readers by dismissing “those who, perhaps out of misguided generosity, tend to do just this,” is counterbalanced by his declaration at the end of the chapter that “for all its sad associations” with the death of his own father, he is still filled ‘with a large sense of triumph’ (109). Therefore, just like the various other incidents of trauma in the novel, this scene too encourages a dichotomised reading of its details.

The final trauma to be analysed in this chapter is the failure of Miss Kenton’s and Stevens’ relationship to transition from professional to personal. In several instances in the novel, it truly appears that Miss Kenton and Stevens share something more intimate than just a professional connection. However, as if in direct revolt of any sense of sentimentalism that such incidences might offer, Stevens immediately responds with overly curt or hardnosed comments said in his professional capacity, thereby resulting in the tragic failure of their relationship. On the whole, throughout this chapter, I also hope to develop further on my theories of genre transgressions and their impacts on the various themes in this novel.

From the very beginning of the novel, Ishiguro makes it a point to re-create the perfect image of a picturesque British countryside with the introduction of the country estate of Darlington Hall. Similar to David Leon Higdon’s claim, in *Shadows of the Past in Contemporary British Fiction*, which

points to the deep fascination of post-war art and literature especially “its three major manifestations of memory, tradition, and history,” Ishiguro too appears to appeal to the past with his nostalgic, idealised descriptions of Darlington Hall (6). Described as a “lovely” (105), “really posh place” (119) that hosts “large social occasions” (7) in “privacy and calm” (115) and attracts only “professionalized butlers” (51) who have “great experience and distinction” to its staff, Darlington Hall appears at first to resemble the epitome of post-war British domestic life (52). Certainly, these qualities are what convinced Mr Farraday to buy Darlington Hall as he tasks the butler Stevens to “recruit a new staff ‘worthy of a grand old English house’” (6). In fact, the “unnecessary numbers” of staff that are often retained in the past “simply for tradition’s sake—resulting in employees having an unhealthy amount of time on their hands” does indeed allude rather sentimentally to the “large social occasions Darlington Hall had seen frequently in the past” and to the days that Stevens was much depended on to execute such events (7). Nevertheless, both Mr Farraday and Stevens seem to buy equally into this illusion of Darlington Hall as a microcosm of Britain at the height of its economic and cultural power with Stevens claiming that by being a butler, he has seen “the best of England over the years... within these walls” as he has lived and worked in a “house where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered” (4).

However, doubt is immediately cast upon the centrality of this place as a purely domestic space as it has recently been taken “out of the hands of the Darlington family after two centuries” and now belongs to an American (5-6). Due to the “difficulty of recruiting suitable staff in these times” (5), especially as such obsolete professions may no longer be in vogue and that there has been

a “sharp decline in professional standards,” Stevens has even had to propose “putting sections of the house ‘under wraps’” (7) or keeping them “dust-sheeted.” Unsurprisingly, the “extensive servants’ quarters” which make up one of the less “attractive parts of the house” has to be shrouded in dustsheets as well, as if a symbol of such a moribund or declining profession (8).

Through Mr Farraday, suggestions that Darlington Hall is not quite what it seems are also raised during the visit of the Wakefields. Having “settled in England—somewhere in Kent, I understand—for some twenty years” and likely possessed of an “English house of some splendour,” their opinions might have been valued by Mr Farraday as he raises their concerns to Stevens (122-23). In the ensuing conversation that Mrs Wakefield has with Stevens, doubt continues to surround Darlington Hall when its historicity is not confirmed, but rather undermined. When Mrs Wakefield suggests that a particular arch is “probably a kind of mock period piece,” Stevens replies that this is “certainly possible.” Subsequently, when she inquires about what Lord Darlington “was like” since Stevens “must have worked for him,” he blatantly lies, “I didn’t, madam, no” (123). From Stevens’ replies as well as lie about having once worked for Lord Darlington, it ‘certainly’ shows that even if just for a fleeting moment he is beginning to lose some of his reverence for both the house and its former owner.

That Stevens tries to conceal his lie of giving Mrs Wakefield a “slightly misleading picture” of Darlington Hall with his “woefully inadequate” and peculiar notion of professionalism which has something “to do with the ways of this country,” further underscores his embarrassment and guilt. Being

reasonably unconvinced that “divulging past confidences” would permit outright lying, Stevens tries to quell Mr Farraday’s suspicions in these terms:

It does seem a little extreme when you put it that way, sir. But it has often been considered desirable for employees to give such an impression. If I may put it this way, sir, it is a little akin to the custom as regards marriages. If a divorced lady were present in the company of her second husband, it is often thought desirable not to allude to the original marriage at all. There is a similar custom as regards our profession, sir. (125)

By exemplifying the profession of a butler as a ‘marriage’ denotes an unspoken arrangement or contract between employer and employee that Stevens seems desperate to believe in to make this idea credible as a ‘custom’ that is practised in England. Worse of all, Stevens does not even realise that this lie has put into question his trustworthiness and reliability not only as a narrator, but also as a ‘great butler’ who is an embodiment of professionalism.

Elsewhere in the novel, in another conversation with “the Colonel’s batman” who has to fulfil several roles of “butler, valet, chauffeur and general cleaner,” Stevens again denies having worked for Lord Darlington as he emphasises his present-day reality of being “employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house” (119). Certainly, he claims that he has lied to “avoid any possibility of hearing any further such nonsense concerning his lordship.” Yet, he admits that he has told such “white lies in both instances to the simplest means of avoiding unpleasantness,” at the same time that he declares that he will “readily vouch” that Lord Darlington “was a gentleman of great moral stature” to the “last.” With this, it truly seems that he

is lying as well when he says that he feels nothing but “proud and grateful to have been given such a privilege” of serving Lord Darlington for “thirty-five years” (126). In other words, Stevens is an unreliable narrator not only because he has a misguided sense of professionalism and rejects sentimentalism on indiscriminate terms, without critical thought as to why he denies such notions of traditions or emotions, but also because he forces himself to believe in the former while actually acting on and expressing himself through the latter.

Additionally, Sim Wai-Chew, in his comprehensive study of the author, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, too demonstrably espouses how Ishiguro often uses first-person narration “underpinned by a distinctive authorial voice” that is “tight, elliptical, clipped and restrained,” thus bringing to life his “complex, believable characters” in a less obvious manner (105). He further elucidates,

This manner of approach – language hiding meaning for certain ends – entails a kind of character evasiveness (and growth) that Ishiguro has made very much his own. Several of his books employ forceful recognition plots where the narrator moves in a series of stops and starts towards some roughly glimpsed idea that has been troubling him or her. Genuine insight is difficult for the narrator because it involves a radical adjustment of his or her world view. (107)

This thus implies that Ishiguro not only interrogates “readers’ expectations about form, topos and motif” when he creates such lapses in expectations of the genres that are meant to inform their readers about such “social codes,” but also “reworks” these genres and “gives them a twist” in order to perform a “subversive rewriting of entrenched genres” (117). After all, Stevens, in telling

lies about himself, is reacting emotionally, as well as dishonourably, despite all his seeming exegesis on the virtues of professionalism. As a matter of fact, I would further contend that every lapse in generic tradition found in Ishiguro's writing is done not only to deliberately destabilise the stereotypical figures and textual frameworks of the novel but also to transform and 'hybridise' them.

In key instances in the novel, Stevens continues to exacerbate his perilous position as a respectable commentator on the role and profession of the butler especially where he conflates the profession of the butler, and even the position of his lady or gentleman employer, with the virtue of honour or dignity. On the one hand, he denies that dignity should be something resembling "woman's beauty," as suggested by another butler, Mr Graham, as dignity that is "self-evidently" possessed by someone by a "fluke of nature" prevents others acquiring it through "self-training and the careful absorbing of experience" (33). Also, he describes dignity as a butler's ability to "inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost" by not "being shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing." Here, he implies that a butler should personify their role, and occupy an unbiased, unreactive position when dealing with challenges. Yet, on the other hand, he also explains that when a butler does not do so, he then plays at being a butler in "some pantomime role" during which "a small push, a slight stumble, and the façade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath" (42). In order to avoid such a predicament, Stevens then recommends wearing dignity like a "suit" that a "decent gentleman" wears, which he can "discard... when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone" (43).

However, herein lies his paradoxical predicament. Both analogies of the ‘suit’ and ‘pantomime’ strongly allude to the notion of dignity as a superficial costume that one wears, a performative act that one puts on for others to see. Indeed, even Miss Kenton criticises this seemingly false construct when she accuses Stevens of always having to “pretend” (155) when he stoically stood by Lord Darlington in his dismissal of the two Jewish housemaids, Ruth and Sarah, and only sharing with her a few years later that his tacit disapproval was not only “natural” but “self-evident” (153). At that time, when Stevens decided to ask Miss Kenton to dismiss the two staff members, he does admit that his “every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal” as they had been “perfectly satisfactory,” but since he knows that “there was nothing to be gained at all in irresponsibly displaying such personal doubts,” he subsequently chose the professional, pragmatic approach and “raised the matter ... in as concise and businesslike a way as possible.” In fact, he insists that he has carried out Lord Darlington’s instruction “with dignity” by putting on his mantle of professional decency but not realising that he has compromised on his own personal morality (148). As such, with such a shallow, but more importantly, contradictory definition of dignity, it actually paves the way for such acts of ‘moral nonaccountability’ to occur, granting Stevens the flexibility to both explain away his guilt in whichever way he finds fit, as well as replace his feeling of complicity with his own self-styled version of professional integrity that nobody else quite attunes with in the novel.

For what Stevens seems to suggest here with his extreme convictions about the role of the butler allows for what Atkinson calls a “neutral partisanship.” As “neutral partisanship,” especially in the case of lawyers,

“reduces professional service to technical assistance,” it tends to “reduce moral concerns to matters of individual taste, if not idiosyncrasy” (186). When Stevens embodies his role of a butler, he does everything from within the confines of his role as a butler, including coming to terms with his being humiliated by Lord Darlington and his “gentlemen” dinner guests, but referring to these incidents as forms of “service” instead (196). Despite being called up to the drawing room after “midnight” (195) and being interrogated by Mr Spencer so as to be made into a case in point for Sir Leonard Grey that the ideals of democracy and “universal suffrage” were a bunch of “old-fashioned nonsense” (198), Stevens keeps on repeating that he is “unable to be of assistance” in response to the political matters that were asked of him (196). Even if to his readers, he gives assurances that he was “by this point well on top of the situation,” and only chooses to restrict himself to a “position” that disallows him from answering “authoritatively” because “a butler’s duty is to provide good service” and nothing more, it still seems rather disingenuous when he goes on to claim that he knows “personally” at least “two professionals, both of some ability, who went from one employer to the next, forever dissatisfied, never settling anywhere” due to their “critical attitude towards an employer” (199).

Furthermore, when Lord Darlington tries to admit to the “dreadful” indignity that Stevens has had to suffer the day before, Stevens instead repeats his apology and says that he is “only too happy to be of service” (196). “Indeed, sir,” is, in fact, Stevens’ repetitive, technical response to Lord Darlington’s justifications for utilising his own butler as an example of ordinary folk being unable to be a wise “arbitrator” or have sufficient “understanding” to “meddle

in the great affairs of the nation” (199). Certainly, Stevens adopts this conciliatory, but also almost condescending, attitude towards Lord Darlington as he boasts his ability to summarise Mr Spencer’s political ideas to his employer in these terms: “I believe, sir, he compared the present parliamentary system to a committee of the mothers’ union attempting to organize a war campaign” (198). Yet all of this is nothing but a performative gesture, a false veneer of honour and dignity shown towards his employer through whom he perceives he can serve “humanity” without having to feel responsible or culpable for the acts or beliefs that his employer eventually enacts (117). Emphatically speaking, at the end of the chapter where Stevens finally declares that it is “hardly my fault if his lordship’s life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste,” this statement further accentuates the idea that despite supposedly honouring his employer and serving him, it all the more distances him from the “life and work” of his employer for his own dignity begins and ends in the act of serving (202).

Ironically though, at the same time that Stevens emphasises his role as butler as subservient to his employer, in that “the likes of you and I” should “devote our energies to the task of serving” and being loyal to an employer “we judge to be wise and honourable,” he also reminds us that such loyalty should not involve the “mindless sort” and ought to be “*intelligently* bestowed” (200). Considering that his entire career as a butler is focused on how the professional life of a servant should be spent “standing in the shadows” as Lord Darlington converses with Herr Bremann, one of his Nazi conspirators, for instance, it seems highly unlikely that much of what Stevens has been saying about honour and dignity is fully coherent or credible (72). Truthfully, it really is not meant

to be so at all. If it were so conceivable, Stevens would not have had to suffer through the various traumatic incidents of being mockingly humiliated and yet having to uphold the propriety of his employer, or attending passively to the needs of Lord Darlington and his guests during the international conference while his own father lay dying.

Despite such demonstrations of pragmatism and stoicism, however, Lilian R. Furst still describes Stevens' recollection of these events as "carnavalesque." Not only does he haphazardly shuffle about the "trivial" with the "consequential," and the "comic" with the "tragic," but he also scrambles around the "levels of significance" of these events. Furst explains,

Stevens regards the luster of the silver as a matter of the utmost seriousness, an emblem of the standards upheld in the household and a means to impress visitors. Of his achievement in having the silver polished to the highest glitter he is extremely proud, to the point of thrusting aside the significance of the visitors. (539)

Irrefutably, with the narrative following Stevens slipping in and out of rooms and moving in between various plot points in the novel, almost like a dramatic dream sequence, it is difficult to follow the segments which should be taken seriously, or humorously, or both. When Lord Darlington tasks Stevens to speak to Mr Cardinal about his impending marriage, namely about the "[b]irds" and the "bees," the young Cardinal misconstrues his "impersonal" tone as an intention to speak about serious, political matters and assumes that he is referring to his preparation for the conference rather than marriage (82). Moreover, when he accosts Mr Cardinal in the garden next, using the topic of "geese" and "flowers and shrubs... in full glory" (88) to segue into a possible

discussion about the “facts of life,” he is unfortunately interrupted by the arrival of the French gentleman, M. Dupont, who has been “deliberately invited late” to the conference (95). In both these incidents, it might seem comedic, especially with M. Dupont calling Stevens by his title repeatedly and demanding for him to deal with his “bandages” (91) or his “unbearable” feet (105). However, it is undeniable that there is something tragic in Stevens acceding to the requests of M. Dupont, who does not even know his name, when instead he should be sitting by his father’s side as Mr Stevens senior suffers a stroke and gradually passes away. In the same way, there is something deeply tragic as well in the manner that such an important father-and-son moment has been outsourced to Stevens instead of performed by Lord Darlington, Mr Cardinal’s godfather, or even Sir David Cardinal himself, who has been “attempting to tell his son the facts of life for the last five years,” but presumably to no avail (82). These failures in playing the role of a father or son might have been concealed by the humour that surrounds them but are inexorably exposed by the social codes that mark them.

Additionally, in a later “unofficial” meeting between Lord Halifax and Herr Ribbentrop, instead of focusing on their conversation and the implications of their meeting, Stevens would rather focus on Lord Halifax being “jolly impressed” by the polishing of the silver in Darlington Hall, which according to Lord Darlington, has “put him into a different frame of mind altogether” such that it “is not simply my fantasy that the state of the silver had made a small, but significant contribution towards the easing of relations” between the two gentlemen (135). Furthermore, after taking some time to explain about Lord Darlington “receiving hospitality from the Nazis,” (136) but also being one of

the first to leave the “blackshirts” pro-German, pro-Nazi Fascist organisation after “it had betrayed its true nature,” he immediately returns to the “delight” (134) of the silver that Herr Ribbentrop is “suitably impressed” by and which thus allows him to “think back to such instances with a glow of satisfaction” (137). Nonetheless, the irony here is not just in the depiction of the silver itself, but in the rather sentimental and even naive idea that Stevens could polish silver, and through that silver, change “the course of history” (138). Yet, oddly enough, in the course of Lord Darlington falling into a trap set up by that ‘trickster,’ Herr Ribbentrop, whose “sole mission in our country was to orchestrate” Hitler’s “deception” of England, Stevens does not see any historic role in this at all (136).

As such, just as Noémie Nélis argues,

To him... intervening in his master’s affairs is not part of his duties... And yet, in a somewhat contradictory manner, Stevens does try to meddle in his employer’s affairs, since he believes that the way he carries out his duties will have “repercussions of unimaginable largeness” (Ishiguro 1989: 80). (5)

Here, Stevens is referring to his planning of the international conference, and emphasising that he is “only too aware of the possibility that if any guest were to find his stay at Darlington Hall less than comfortable,” then it might actually bring about irreparable consequences to the event (75). However, during the event itself, upon overhearing the conversation between the American senator, Mr Lewis, and M. Dupont, in which Mr Lewis divulges to the French gentleman all the gossip that has transpired behind his back thus far with words like “barbarous” and “despicable” being used by the others to describe him,

Stevens is careful “not to linger long enough... to hear anything that would give a clue as to M. Dupont’s attitude towards Mr Lewis’s remarks” because he is “obliged to explain to his lordship shortly afterwards” (96). Being unable to decide if he were indeed capable of changing ‘history’ or not, if he were limited to the confines of his role as a butler, not even a son or even a lover, it becomes evident that such contradictions in his beliefs, behaviours and personality will ultimately become his own undoing in the end.

Stevens’ reactions to his father’s failing health and weakening physical and mental capabilities appear to be treated as inconveniences not only for him, but also for the other servants in Darlington House, including Miss Kenton, especially as he is unable to fully fulfil his role as an ‘under-butler.’ Although Miss Kenton first points out his errors out of spite at being told off by Stevens to refer to his father as Mr Stevens senior, even as she has a higher rank than him as the housekeeper, the number of mistakes that Mr Stevens senior makes eventually causes many great concern. Not only does he leave the “dustpan” (54) out in the hall, or recall the incorrect placements of the “Chinamen” (56) in the house, in one grave incident that spurs Lord Darlington to ask Stevens to “reconsider his duties” and not place him “where an error might jeopardize the success of our forthcoming conference” (62), Mr Stevens senior also suffers a fall, “scattering the load on his tray... across the area of grass at the top of the steps” across the lawn (63). Almost in tragic fashion, after being handed out a piece of paper upon which his own son has written out for him a new, reduced list of duties, Mr Stevens senior is later found “contemplating the steps before him” and climbing it over several times “as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there” (67). Certainly, through Stevens’

impassive, almost aloof interactions with his own father, it seems that their relationship is nothing more than a professional one. In fact, his emotions only begin to betray him when the characters around him notice that he has been “crying” before he did:

I felt something touch my elbow and turned to find Lord Darlington.

“Stevens, are you all right?”

“Yes, sir. Perfectly.”

“You look as though you’re crying.”

I laughed and taking out a handkerchief, quickly wiped my face. “I’m very sorry, sir. The strains of a hard day.”

In a way, this scene has obvious echoes with the last scene in the novel when Stevens too cries but to a complete stranger over the tragedies of his life:

“Oh dear, mate. Here, you want a hankie? I’ve got one somewhere. Here we are. It’s fairly clean. Just blew my nose once this morning, that’s all. Have a go, mate.”

“Oh dear, no, thank you, it’s quite all right. I’m very sorry, I’m afraid the travelling has tired me. I’m very sorry.”

Nonetheless, in both instances, he apologises for his show of emotion and gives an excuse to account for this tear in his ‘suit’ of dignity, to rationalise this break in his performance of professionalism.

Where there are no tears or breaks in his façade of professionalism, however, is in his recollection of his rejection of Miss Kenton after which he reveals that he feels “a deep feeling of triumph,” like he did at the end of the international conference, upon managing to “preserve a ‘dignity in keeping with

my position” and “in a manner even my father might have been proud” (226). Although it is only after thirty-odd years that Stevens finally feels paralysing regret over his actions, or lack of action with respect to Miss Kenton’s engagement to an “acquaintance,” Stevens is at least willing to admit that “my heart was breaking” when Miss Kenton imagines with him a “different life,” “a *better* life... a life I may have had with you, Mr Stevens” (239). Yet, just like thirty years ago when he felt “downcast” at having seen, or heard, Miss Kenton cry after he shuns her for the utmost time with his professionalism, despite her apology that she had been “foolish” (226), Stevens dismisses her romantic notions once again, but at least with kindness this time: “We must each of us, as you point out, be grateful for what we *do* have” (239). However, this benevolence on the part of Stevens has not always been the case between them.

When Miss Kenton first arrives in Darlington Hall, it is established to be around the same time as Mr Stevens senior, “that is to say, the spring of 1922,” in the aftermath of the betrothal of its former housekeeper and under-butler, which Stevens “always found such liaisons a serious threat to the order in a house.” He also presupposes the complicity of Miss Kenton in Darlington Hall in his theory that housekeepers are principally “guilty” of having “no genuine commitment to their profession” and move “from post to post looking for romance.” For someone with “unusually good references,” of course, Stevens professes that Miss Kenton “was nothing less than dedicated” in her service and “never allowed her professional priorities to be distracted” (51). Yet, he admits that he was rather “taken aback” when she initially entered his quarters with a vase of flowers “to brighten your parlour a little” (52). Thus, as if in instant, instinctive response to their professionalism being threatened, Stevens

reproaches her for calling his father by his first name, William, when he is obviously, according to Stevens, superior to her in terms of aptitude and experience.

In another incident, as if to reinforce Stevens' perception that scandalous liaisons often follow in the wake of new, "pretty girls... on the staff" (156), both Miss Kenton and Stevens commiserate together over a servant-girl named Lisa, who had trained under Miss Kenton for "eight or nine months," only to "vanish from the house together with the second footman" in a "moonlight departure." Individually, they had written notes to Miss Kenton and Stevens, describing their romantic love affair and boasting "how marvellous the future" that "awaited them both" would be. Yet, Miss Kenton quickly brushes off their sentimentalism and calls the girl "foolish" as she is "bound to be let down" when she could have had a "good life ahead of her if she'd only persevered" and worked hard to "take on a housekeeper's post in some small residence" (157).

Contrary to her opinion regarding the sense of security and prestige that coincides with profession, Miss Kenton eventually appears to feel sentimentally about romance and marriage upon receiving the news of her aunt's death, and thus perhaps, pushes Stevens too far with her romantic allusions. In a particular incident in Stevens' pantry or "crucial office," or the "one place in the house where privacy and solitude are guaranteed," Miss Kenton first enters this sacred space with her usual "vase of flowers" and remarks how his room "resembles a prison cell" (164), "so stark and bereft of colour" (52). When she ignores Stevens' repeated requests for her to leave and to "respect my privacy," she indeed crosses the boundaries of professionalism when she "positioned" herself

very closely, “reached forward and began gently to release the volume from my grasp,” and then even teased him about the “sentimental love story” that he has just been reading (164).

Almost predictably, the moment that Miss Kenton leaves his pantry, Stevens goes on this long explanation as to how love stories are required for “one’s normal intercourse with ladies and gentlemen” as a form of “scholarly study” (167). Despite gaining “a sort of incidental enjoyment from these stories,” it is still inexcusable for Stevens to have been caught red-handed doing so especially as Miss Kenton has caught him out in his “off duty” hours and therefore convinces him that their relationship has now lost its “appropriate footing” (168). Striving thus to re-establish their “professional relationship on a more proper basis” by cancelling their “meetings over cocoa in her parlour” and instead leaving “written messages at one another’s doors” (174), Miss Kenton has to resort to seeing an “acquaintance” in her off days and getting herself married to a man who she barely loves in order to get back at Stevens for his abandonment in her greatest time of need after her last remaining family member’s death in the world. Unfortunately for Stevens who still believes that Miss Kenton has not been affected by her own aunt’s death, and still desires to be a “devoted professional” who “has no wish for a family,” he could not seem to come to terms with Miss Kenton’s change of heart (170).

While it might appear at first glance that only Stevens epitomises a dual, contradictory nature, with his belief that professionalism needs to be personified at the same time that it is worn, Miss Kenton too struggles with her sentimental nature, which is shown through her petty actions such as forcing Stevens to send her a “written note” instead of talking to her after he insists on

reminding her of the tasks she needed to do, as well as her pride in earning her right to be known as a respectable and professional housekeeper (80). Like all the other major themes in this novel, particularly that of loss, trauma and regret, their failed romance too takes place in the fringes of the novel and only claims centre stage at the end when Stevens, and even Miss Kenton, reaches a tragic epiphany about their lives: that it is indeed “too late to turn back the clock,” and both will have to live out the remainder of their days, so to speak, with their individual regrets (239).

In summation, throughout the various traumatic events that occur in the novel, and through the numerous genre transgressions that emerge from these moments of trauma, Ishiguro utilises the tension that arises from these difficult, discomfiting situations to articulate not just the perils of a rigid, pedantic belief and value system such as that equated to professionalism, pragmatism and even sentimentalism as portrayed in *TRTD*, but also the challenges of coping with loss and trauma whether as an individual, community or nation. After all, Stevens is an unreliable narrator not simply because he lies about his past experiences working for his morally ambiguous employer, Lord Darlington, or that he manipulates his definitions of professionalism in order to rationalise his repeated rejections of Miss Kenton, but because to do so is entirely human, and to be unreliable is what makes Stevens a convincingly human character that readers can be expected to empathise, and more importantly, identify with.

Chapter Two: *Never Let Me Go* as Dystopian Science-fiction

If there were only one truth in *Never Let Me Go*, it would be the inevitable, inescapable certainty of failure. Variouslly described as a dystopian science fiction novel, historical metafiction, or boarding school story, but hardly circumscribed as such, NLMG offers the polyphonic, multi-layered tale of three clones named Kathy H., Ruth and Tommy D. as they grow up in “Hailsham House” (48), in one of the most “privileged estates” (2), work on their “last task from Hailsham” or an “essay” project in the Cottages (113), then finally, live out the last of their days in “recovery centres” such as those found in Dover or Kingsfield where Tommy and Ruth respectively “complete” after giving away four organs, more or less, before dying and fulfilling their roles as “donors” (216).

Certainly, these pleasant-sounding, though double-dealing, euphemisms such as ‘privileged estates,’ ‘recovery centres,’ as well as ‘carers’ and ‘donors’ are purposeful misnomers meant to persuade both the readers and characters of the virtues of the “humane, cultivated environments” of the organ donation programme when it is neither voluntary nor venerated (258). Although Hailsham and other estates like “Glenmorgan” and “Saunders Trust” are constructed and promoted as social experiments to convince society that clones are nothing “less than human” (261) through the showcase of their “sensitive and intelligent” (259) art that could not only “reveal” their souls, but also “prove you had souls at all,” its “little movement” ultimately fails (258). Instead of engendering empathy, their art and very existence breed fear and

hostility, requiring clones to be “kept in the shadows” since they are “reared” and “[aren’t] really like us” (261), and “[deserve to be] treated so badly” (260).

In fact, in a prominent plot resolution scene in the novel, in which Tommy and Kathy confront the founders of Hailsham about their donations, neither its “head guardian” (18), Miss Emily, nor its patron and owner of “the Gallery” (172), Madame Marie-Claude, could offer them a way out of the programme. In meeting Miss Emily and Madame, the two clones hope to “apply” for “deferrals” (152), which was a rumour they heard in their time in the Cottages, through which “you could ask for your donations to be put back by three, even four years” as long as “you *qualified*,” “were a Hailsham student” (151), and could prove that you are “really in love” (252). Instead, they are conferred only further disappointment and despair as eventually, Miss Emily reveals that these mythical deferrals are nothing more than a “wishful rumour” that does not “exist” (257), and that, even back in Hailsham, she had tried to “stamp it out good and proper” (255). Just like Hailsham, its name evocative of a false hope, a pretentious sham, the Gallery too is nothing more than a fake repository of their best “paintings, poems, [and] all those things” (251) that were “most marketable” (37) to Hailsham students, which cannot even be used as proof that they are nothing “less than fully human” (260). As Miss Emily and Madame resign to their fates, with Miss Emily’s “figure in the wheelchair... frail and contorted” (253) almost suggestive of her own dependence on the organ “donation programme,” the clones too naturally accept their stipulated roles of ‘donors’ and ‘carers’ once again (262). Although Tommy goes “bonkers” upon finding out that deferrals are a lie, “raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking out” (272-73) at the same time, he

gradually returns to his life as a donor in Kingsfield, even “smiling” and shaking hands with the “doctors and nurses” or “whitecoats” as “the notice came for his fourth donation” (276).

Throughout the novel, Kathy too looks forward to “finishing at last come the end of the year” (2), and getting a “chance to rest—to stop and think and remember” (35), when she stops being a carer and becomes a donor herself, “in whichever centre they send me too” (284). Their fates as clones have already been sealed, after all, since the moment of their creation as “[s]hadowy objects in test tubes” (259), as “[p]oor creatures” in all the “schemes and plans” of the organ donation programme, and not even doublespeak can save them from the truth of their ultimate and irrevocable demise (252).

Evidently, the prevalent and insidious use of doublespeak in the novel not only emblematises its narrative as a science fiction trope, reminiscent of George Orwell’s ‘newspeak’ or ‘doublethink’ as utilised in his novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but also evokes its themes of repression as well as subversion that are often associated with this deceptive use of language. Though the term is often wrongly attributed to him, in *Politics and the English Language*, Orwell does make an assertion about how “political writing is bad writing,” in the ways it serves to mask, suppress and misrepresent reality for its readers, which is indeed redolent of the role of doublespeak. Doublespeak, as it were, “will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the most important service of partially concealing meaning even from yourself” (260). Such that to an observer, “one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy” who is “mechanically repeating familiar phrases” of

“euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness” that begets misdirection, circular logic and obscuration. Explicating further, Orwell explains,

A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself... And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity. (261)

In other words, doublespeak is ideological in nature and commonly utilised in the “defence of the indefensible,” sanctioning the immoral but necessary with reasons that are otherwise “too brutal for most people to face” (261). When Ishiguro uses such benevolent, selfless terms like ‘donors’ instead of clones, who are in essence, mere hosts for the “vital organs” that they will soon “donate” before they are “even middle-aged” (79), or even ‘guardians’ rather than watchful wardens of the clones of Hailsham House, which is cut off and enclosed by the “horrible,” “scary,” “terror” of the woods, doublespeak seems to have become a narrative device to articulate several stories at once (48-9). Indeed, similar to Edward S. Herman’s contention in *Beyond Hypocrisy*, he too argues how in the world of mass media, the deliberately euphemistic, ambiguous and obscure “misuse of words by implicit redefinition” can also ironically explicitly lay bare the contradictory impulses of the text to hide through the re-packaging and “selling” of “indistinguishable, if not downright noxious, goods as exceptionally worthwhile” (1). Herman further elucidates,

What is really important in the construction of a world of doublespeak is the ability to lie, whether knowingly or unconsciously, and to get away with it; and the ability to use lies and choose and shape facts selectively, blocking out those that don't fit an agenda or program. (3)

Incontrovertibly, this 'world of doublespeak' inhabits the narrative of NLMG on several levels.

On the level of plot, or the fictional plane, despite her claims that "[c]arers aren't machines" and that they "don't have unlimited patience and energy," Kathy appears exactly like a 'dummy' or a 'machine' as she 'mechanically' betrays the donors under her charge by unceasingly reassuring them that their donations and completions are but natural aspects of their short, borrowed lives, knowing exactly when to "comfort" or "leave" them, or "tell them to snap out of it" (1). Furthermore, she claims that she has performed her duties as a carer exemplarily and finds it 'exceptionally worthwhile' to "keep up the good work" (205) and help the donors remain "calm" and feel "less agitated" notwithstanding their "fourth donation" and for "exactly twelve years" too (1). Like other carers who are "waiting for the day they're told they can stop and become donors," Kathy too feels proud when she is able to "get my voice heard" when she speaks on her donor's behalf especially when "things go badly" during donations, and "keep[s] things in perspective" such that she can feel that she has done her "all" (205-06). At the same time, however, she also betrays herself and her own feelings of hope when she predictably accepts her fate as a clone, a donor, despite her initial fight for a

“deferral” (264) with Tommy, as she “turn[s] back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be” at the end of the novel (285).

At this juncture, it seems rather instructive to consider the “dilemma of care” as pointed out by Anne Whitehead in her particularly remarkable reading of this final scene in the novel as delineated in her article, “Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*.” Here, she suggests that Ishiguro “stages the act of reading itself as an event, so that the reader’s experience of finishing the book powerfully re-enacts Kathy’s own closing action of moving on and leaving the past behind.” Through this shared activity between the narrator, Kathy, and her readers, the reader is therefore made to “occupy an uneasy position, and is thereby confronted with a powerful and unresolved dilemma of care or empathy.” Coupled with Ishiguro’s use of “second-person address” at various instances in the novel, which is a narrative “device commonly used in Victorian fiction to enhance sympathetic connection,” this scene thus acts to “unsettle the reader, and to call into question how or where [he or she] is indeed positioned in relation to Kathy” (58). As such, even on the level of plot, the readers are possessed of a deep, unsettling feeling of futility and complicity with the world of NLMG.

On the implicit, or rhetorical level as well, Kathy too seems completely complicit in the organ donation programme particularly as she was once a student in Hailsham. Like most clone characters in the novel, she appears to not only conform to the habits, manners and utterances expected of them, but also fear to be seen doing or saying anything less. When Kathy expresses her discomfiture at being affiliated with the outcast Tommy back in Hailsham, especially in the ways that she treats his “private talk[s]” (83) or “public

situation[s]” with her as deeply embarrassing or disconcerting though they register like normal conversations between two “thirteen”-year olds, this indeed illustrates her show of compliance to the norms and behaviours expected of them (11). Similarly, Kathy is quick to reject the accusations of Moira B., who was recently “expelled” by Ruth’s inner group called Miss Geraldine’s “secret guard” (52) that supposedly work to avert the kidnapping plot of their most “favourite” guardian in Hailsham (45). When Moira shares with Kathy that “the whole secret guard thing” is “stupid” like “they’re still in the Infants” (52), Kathy is discernably “hostile” and resentful of Moira for suggesting to her to “cross some line together,” beyond which is “something harder and darker” and would mean a breach of “loyalty” towards Ruth, because she is obviously afraid to be witnessed as behaving anything less than the norm (53).

Yet, these very childhood fears that Kathy’s memories hope to mitigate or make peripheral seem to torment her even more dreadfully in her adulthood. As an adult, and as a carer, though she could not recall the precise details of Miss Geraldine’s kidnapping plot, she still “[feels] convinced... that the woods would come into it” (47). Embodying all the negative consequences of incongruity or even delinquency, the woods thus exemplify for the students the worst outcomes for a clone should one suddenly decide to escape Hailsham, or simply satiate one’s curiosity about the world beyond. In one of these “horrible stories,” a male student had opted to “run off beyond the Hailsham boundaries,” only to be found “tied to a tree” with one’s “hands and feet chopped off.” In another cautionary tale, a female student had “climbed over a fence just to see what it was like outside,” but immediately “wasn’t allowed” back in despite her “pleading” and “pining,” suggesting that “something” bad had happened to her,

causing her death and cursing her to become a “ghost wandering about the woods, gazing over Hailsham” (48). Here, there is little doubt that the woods hemming in Hailsham are to be treated with fear and are used to symbolise the unfamiliarity and danger of the world outside, the world beyond the clones who are currently held in isolation and captivity. With its elevated position “at the top of the hill that rose over Hailsham,” and which not only “cast[s] a shadow over the whole of Hailsham” (47), but also exudes a “presence” that could be felt “day and night,” “looming in the distance” and reminding the students of the ‘horrible stories’ of all the clone children who had died within its confines, the woods thus “played” on their “imagination” especially in the “dark, in our dorms as we were trying to fall asleep” but instead “worrying about the woods” (49). Unsettlingly, however, the threat of the woods resides not only in the imaginary, creative faculties of the students, but also the subliminal, subconscious messages by the guardians as well. Here, ‘the world of doublespeak’ thus occupies the deeper, metaphorical level of the narrative, creating both tension as well as dissonance in terms of the plot, characterisation and motivation, but most important of all, with regard to the narrative devices and genre stereotypes as utilised by Ishiguro too.

In an unconscious slip of the tongue, in one of Miss Lucy’s poetry classes that has segued into a history lesson about the “electrified” fences surrounding prisoner of war camps in World War Two, she might have responded truthfully to a student’s macabre, and deeply ironic, joke about “living in a place like that” where it might seem “strange” and “funny” to be able to “commit suicide any time you liked just by touching a fence” without actually meaning it. Innocuous as the joke may be, Miss Lucy’s duplicitous

remark does seem rather insidious as she comments, “It’s just as well the fences at Hailsham aren’t electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes.” Although Kathy gives the impression that she has “heard her clearly enough,” heard her allude to the very physicality of the danger that awaits them beyond Hailsham, she still refrains from clarifying further (76). It is pertinent to note that the same reserve restrains Kathy and the rest of the clone students and stops them from asking Miss Lucy earlier about the reasons why it is “so much worse” for them to smoke too (66).

In another Freudian slip, so to speak, by Miss Emily in her explanation to Roy J. about getting “tokens” for each of their “best pictures” and “best work” (28) as chosen for Madame’s Gallery, she explains to him that the tokens are less important than the “most distinguished honour” of having been “selected” by Madame (37). To add to that, according to Tommy, Miss Emily also “let[s] slip” or “drop” the notion that “things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff... *revealed what you were like inside*. She said *they revealed your soul*” (173). It is indisputable that this ‘soul’ represents to Tommy the inimitable, inalienable identity of the clones, such that the existence of the Gallery forms the foundation that supports the truth of the mythic deferrals later in the novel, which can then bestow upon them their unique status as individuals, as beings with “inner selves,” who are thus free to fall in love (252). Without the Gallery, the clones are mere copies. Without Hailsham, without its illusory currency of ‘tokens,’ or its feigned experience of a boarding ‘school,’ their lives are mere copies as well, copies like those other clones who did not “just want to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham” as if it had been their own “childhood” (3).

Indeed, while there are actually sufficient opportunities for Kathy and the other clone characters in the novel to confront the foreboding futures and ominous realities of their roles in the organ donation programme, like the proverbial deer caught in the headlights, they are portrayed to freeze in the face of imminent danger. Quite exceptionally, their despicably doleful experiences rarely incite outright rebellions or flights of emancipation quintessential to science fiction clone narratives. Some of these narratives might include popular clone films such as *The Island*, which tells the action-packed story of escape and revenge of two clones who have been bred for organ harvesting and surrogacy, or even *Moon*, that conveys a similar story of suspenseful escape and vengeance against the corporation that forced a clone, and many other clones of the same original, to live a solitary life on the far side of the moon, mining helium-3 and terminating each clone after a three-year lifespan. Though not strictly a ‘clone’ narrative, and still evocative of the theme of ‘doubles’ or ‘copies,’ the speculative, family fiction of Jodi Picoult’s *My Sister’s Keeper* chronicles the story of the legal and medical emancipation of a saviour sibling created by *in vitro* fertilisation just so to save an existing child who already suffers from leukaemia. Intriguingly, what Ishiguro offers his readers in NLMG too harkens them back to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, to the awakening of the monster as he becomes conscious, not of his own humanity as he has always been “content to reason” (159), but of his monstrosity instead, driven to malice due to the “disgust” (143) and rejection he suffers from both the society and his own “cursed, cursed creator” (149).

Yet, in all these narratives, the ‘clone’ or ‘copy’ characters often seek an active mode of struggle and assertion in a bid to visibly separate themselves or

make themselves distinct from the other clones or copies. In Ishiguro's own clone narrative, however, I would argue that the struggle is an internal, and seemingly passive one, through which the clones are actually already awakened to their 'monstrous' status as 'clones' or 'organ donors,' and are contending with the narrative itself, working against the worldview itself that has already been planned out for them for their entire lives and deaths, as well as their very existences.

Meanwhile, it is worthwhile to note that Ishiguro has plainly disclosed the conceptual underpinnings of his use of the clone narrative in NLMG. In his interview with Film Independent, he clearly expresses his intentions in these terms: "I was never interested in looking at that story of brave slaves who rebelled and escaped [...] I'm fascinated by the extent to which people don't run away." Yet it is all the more significant to stress the possibility that even as the clones do not 'run away,' this does not mean that they have never thought to 'rebel' or are any less 'brave.' In contrast to critics such as Patrick R. Query and Bruce Robbin, who have delved intimately into the exploited, oppressed lives of the clones, I would attest to the deeply psychological and profoundly creative resistance of Kathy, as well as the other clone characters in the novel. As they strive to re-write and re-envision their lives through the constant revisiting and even revising of their everyday experiences of Hailsham, the Cottages, or even the recovery centres, they therefore demonstrate their struggle against the invasive, pervasive narrative of the organ donation programme through the only means they know how—through the reconstruction of their own memories. Even though it is undeniable that the readers will naturally "wish" for the clone characters to confront their own "passivity," I would at

least agree with Query that Ishiguro's aim is to accentuate instead "the questions the students do not ask and the risks they do not take" (156). Assuredly, these jarring 'questions' left unanswered and 'risks' left unexplored powerfully, and almost plaintively, allude to the notion that this is no typical clone narrative.

Furthermore, Robbins too highlights the "dark satire of the welfare state's anger-management program" (297) that occurs in NLMG, spurring Kathy to prioritise her spurious "professional success" and "modest professional advancement" despite her own "imminent end" (291). Anger is an "entirely appropriate response" to the "social injustice" that the clones suffer from in the novel, but such overt expressions of aggression, or any other emotion for that matter, are regularly remedied and rectified, especially in the 'raging, shouting, flinging' form of Tommy who never quite fit in with the rest of the clones in Hailsham (298). Again, it is thus pertinent to make the distinction here that NLMG is far from the archetypal escapist or emancipatory stories that occupy popular science fiction imagination, and is indubitably more complex when compared to the likes of *The Island* or *Moon*, as well as less vindictive when juxtaposed with *Frankenstein*. Thus, as an alternative to asking 'questions' that the clones already claim they "knew" the answers to, or taking 'risks' that have already been proven to them to be futile by the 'horrible stories' of the 'woods,' Ishiguro's clones seem to intuit that the only way out for them is inward rather than outward (80).

Evidently, in the case of Miss Lucy, who visibly possesses the Final Girl attributes of a "boyish girl" who "does look something like a female hero" (Clover x), with her "almost bulldoggy figure" and "chunky neck" that makes

her look “really strong and fit,” she is quickly withdrawn from being a teacher at Hailsham and is seemingly plucked out from between the pages of the novel, simply because she is an unsuitable heroine for this story (24). After several truth-telling sessions with the clone students of Hailsham and almost inciting a change in the worldviews of the students, in particular, Tommy, who eventually shares with Kathy how he “can’t rush back into it with Ruth” since they are “going to be leaving [Hailsham] soon” and their lives are no longer “like a game any more” so they have to “think carefully” (108), Miss Lucy’s dismissal and departure is abruptly announced, almost as if by accident, by Miss Emily who takes over one of her classes and broadcasts her removal quite remorselessly: “Miss Lucy had left Hailsham and wouldn’t be returning” (112). Unequivocally, in NLMG, Ishiguro narrates a more passive, internally profound form of deliverance from the psychological, and to some extent even physical, prison of Hailsham, as well as the other behavioural and corporeal mechanisms associated to it, to the personal, interior realities of the everyday lives of “Tommy, Ruth, me, [and] all the rest of us” (3).

In telling the human stories of these clones through the inhuman, or rather, inhumane experiences of these characters, Ishiguro thus defamiliarises his readers to the verisimilitudes of living, loving and even dying as flawed, fallible creatures, such that the qualities of humanity, human memory and creativity, can become significant again in our critique of being human. In other words, I would postulate that the act of reminiscing in NLMG, in deliberately obsessing over the quotidian, or the almost soporific, private and domestic lives of the clones, is in fact an act of deliverance, a promise of emancipation, a gesture to retell the clone story through a realist mode of interpretation of a

tragically human ‘soul’ as it meets its own mortality, and more human than its ‘normal’ creators, perhaps, as they attempt to attain immortality. Such that while the ‘normals’ might have their bodies, and their ‘vital organs’, they will never have their minds or their ‘souls’ that are carved out of their ordinary, daily memories of Hailsham, in all its raw, visceral detail. At the end of the novel, Kathy almost ironically and defiantly declares, “Once I’m able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I’ll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that’ll be something no one can take away” (285). Ultimately, I would also contend that Ishiguro too seems to employ several elements of Waugh’s metafiction in his re-structuring and re-framing of the conventional trappings of the popular modes of science fiction and boarding school story, just so that he can unravel and remake them in his retelling of the human story vis-à-vis personal trauma and moral courage but through something considered ‘less than human.’

The Human in the Inhuman

Interestingly, in nearly direct contrast to how Ishiguro presents the underclass of clones residing in “government ‘homes’” (263), or the supposedly enlightened or ‘privileged’ clones living and studying in Hailsham as if they were the more favoured, or fortunate, of the clones in the novel, Jean Baudrillard, in *The Final Solution: Cloning Beyond the Human and Inhuman*, instead describes the clone narrative as a “collective fantasy” upon which humans long for a “return to a nonindividuated existence and a destiny of undifferentiated life,” of “indifferent immortality.” Thus, in regretting our individuality and repenting of our individual “liberation, emancipation, or

individuation” from a “nostalgic” and “inorganic” point of origin, Baudrillard claims,

Liberty is hard to take. Life itself, finally, may be hard to take, as a rupturing of the inorganic chain of matter. In a way it is the revenge of the species, the revenge of the immortal forms of life that we thought we had overcome. (14)

Here, he seems to argue that the clone narrative is one of longing and nostalgia, of which readers are able to discard “its own diversity, its own complexity, its own radical difference, its own alterity” (15). Certainly, Ishiguro’s novel suggests otherwise and reverses the clone narrative to emphasise its very ‘diversity,’ ‘complexity,’ ‘radical difference’ and ‘alterity.’ Just as Myra J. Seaman points out regarding the story of the clone or the “posthuman,” it instead offers “another kind of emancipation, promising the self—typically conceptualized in the form of the brain or mind—freedom from the limitations of the body” (258). Yet, from the perspective of the clones in Ishiguro’s novel, only the humans who have received the organ donations of their own clones could have his or her mortality subverted, while the clones themselves, due to the ever-present physical threat of harm, of premature deaths as donors or even as escapees in the ‘woods,’ are unfortunately restricted to the ‘kind of emancipation’ of the ‘self’ in the ‘form of the brain or mind.’ Indeed, one of the most sobering realities for the clones of Ishiguro’s narrative is that, even in the ‘brain or mind,’ there are just too few outlets or pathways for them, and no matter which route they take, all routes seem to point them back to Hailsham.

As such, even while they are living in the Cottages, and come very close to meeting Ruth’s “possible,” “model,” or original of a “normal person...

getting on with his or her life” in a seaside town in Norfolk, with the exception of Ruth, Kathy and the rest of the clone students are reluctant to contend with the notion that they are ‘less than human’ after all (137). This reluctance, of course, is despite the fact that all of them already somewhat know about the life of carers and donors that await them after the Cottages. In a flood of emotion, Ruth exclaims,

We’re modelled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps
[...] That’s what we come from. We all know it, so why don’t
we say it? A woman like that? Come on. Yeah, right, Tommy. A
bit of fun. Let’s have a bit of fun pretending. That other woman
in there, her friend, the old one in the gallery. Art students, that’s
what she thought we were. Do you think she’d have talked to us
like that if she’d known what we really were? (164)

Quite evidently, Ruth’s outburst lends credence to a particular “possibles theory” that Kathy recounts just before their excursion into the seaside town, in which Ruth’s possible is working in an office, and living the life of Ruth’s almost plebeian, quotidian “dream future” of becoming an office worker and working alongside other “dynamic, go-ahead” types (142). Throughout the whole sequence, while the other clones seem to be perfectly satisfied remaining in a self-imposed “trance” of not knowing or understanding their identities or lives as clones or copies of other ‘normal’ people, while watching Ruth’s possible working in the “self-contained world” of her office, and peering in from the outside, from behind a “big glass” as well as running away in “giggly panic” when someone “noticed” them and “broke the spell,” Ruth, however, is thoroughly re-awakened (157). Intent on getting “close, much closer than we’d

ever really wanted,” Ruth makes sure to gather “*some* insight” into who she is “deep down” inside and learns “something of what your life held in store” for herself as she meets her possible (164). In fact, she comes to realise that the other ‘possibles theory,’ the one of rejection, of assuming it is “stupid to be concerned about possibles at all,” is not just wrong, but lays bare their insular and conceited attitudes towards their own existences all this time. In unquestioningly and proudly, even, accepting their fates as clones, as well as believing that the possibles are just an “irrelevance” or a “technical necessity for bringing us into the world,” this same belief has actually made it impossible for “each of us to make of our lives what we could,” for each of them to wield their own real sense of agency and autonomy (138).

Indeed, much of this unwillingness to face up to the realities of their double lives as clones, as well as clone students, is actually the expected outcome of such a deeply entrenched and methodically ensconced system of beliefs as well as worldviews that the clones grew up on in Hailsham. From the time they were “Infants” (19) to the year that they become “Senior 5s” (41), which is the year that they allegedly graduate from Hailsham to enter into the Cottages, or into a kind of semi-adulthood where they are able to think about “finishing” their “essays” (195) and “start” their “training to become a carer,” every stage of their life and development thus far has been plotted for them (200). In fact, the curriculum through which they learn about their own donations too appears to have been deliberately designed and carefully disseminated to them throughout their growing up years in Hailsham such that they “were always just too young to understand properly the latest piece of information” (80). Also, the peer pressure around them makes it all too easy

for the clones to dismiss some of these ideas despite not knowing more than they actually let on, thereby creating a greater vacuum of knowledge than before. Even beyond the Cottages, in the recovery centre at Dover where Ruth resides, before which Ruth claims she had been a “pretty decent carer” and that “five years” as a carer had been “enough” for her, she gradually asks her friends Tommy and Kathy about the roles of clones after becoming a donor or carer, but then heard no response: “After all, it’s what we’re *supposed* to be doing, isn’t it?” (225). Therefore, in some ways, the setting and framework of the boarding school story do resonate well with Ishiguro’s aim to confine the clones to an infantilised state of being in Hailsham, and an extended adolescence in the Cottages, which therefore, reinforces not only the reluctance on the part of the clones to grow up, to wake up from their dormant state of awakening, but also intensifies their inability to navigate a world after Hailsham.

Meanwhile, Beverly Lyon Clark does uphold that many of the “norms” of the school story is actually set by the singularly significant work to the genre entitled *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes. In a “canonical school story,” its narrative would take place in a British boys’ public school in which the arrival of an “ordinary good-natured boy” who is at first, “in awe of the older boys,” but later, becomes “a creature of awe himself” would determine the plot of the story. Throughout the narrative, his prowess in sports, and in defeating the “school bully” as well as “suffering a wrongful accusation but staunchly bearing the blame,” will be showcased, while at the same time, his spirit of competition is “balanced against” his feelings of “peer solidarity” such as through “not telling tales” especially to adults or figures of authority.

According to Clark, specifically in the works before Louisa May Alcott's *Little Men*, it is the "exclusion of females" that "undergirds the genre" of the school story (323). With Alcott's "regendering of the school story," however, "the school's clientele is expanded to include girls" and female characters, such as the tomboy Nan, attempt to "push beyond traditional gender roles" such as to aspire to have a "public career as a doctor" (328). Furthermore, Clark too highlights how "adults" are not the "only sources of knowledge" in the narrative and "pays lips service to the authority of children while nonetheless steering them toward the views of adult authorities" (332).

Interestingly, Giselle Liza Anatol brings attention to these same narrative features of "the initiation of the protagonist into school rites; a bully (and the defeat of the bully); a hero who is nearly led astray but is saved by a good friend; a godlike headmaster; and codes of honour" that continue to persist in the modern-day school story, even that as conceived by J. K. Rowling, in her version that incorporates the mystical elements of magic and fantasy (xviii). This notion of the school story as conceptualised in the *Harry Potter* series is further explored in a chapter in Anatol's edited work, *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays*, in Karen Manners Smith's essay "Harry Potter's Schooldays: J. K. Rowling and the British Boarding School Novel." Here, Smith underscores the "rule of three" policy that "historically operated in many boarding schools," and that assumed kept children safe and discouraged boys from becoming unnaturally close. Furthermore, this triumvirate rule typically comprises a pair of friends that "become inseparable" at first, and which will later "adopt" a third friend who will possibly change, or even deepen, the former relationship (74). Also, "bullies and bigots" in the school story genre

“do not merely harass heroes” but also present opportunities for the heroes to defend their “weaker comrades” (77). Providing further grounding to the framework of the school story, Smith goes on to explain, how teachers and school leaders are “indispensable adjuncts” to the school story, and are “often the only representatives of the adult world in this fiction, which is limited to school terms and only peripherally mentions parents.” Additionally, such figures of “final” authority are commonly presented as “wise, fair-minded, and inspiring,” and are “exemplars of goodness and integrity, providing blueprints for the moral life” (78). Despite these powerfully influential authority figures, heroes still tend to possess a “rule-breaking spirit” to demonstrate a “test of character, gumption, and originality” (79). In a similar vein to Stefanie Fricke, who claims that NLMG “traditionally chronicles life at English boarding schools” and exhibits many of these topographical features of the ‘canonical school story,’ yet it is vitally important to consider Ishiguro’s use of the genre as a narrative device and not as a simple emulation of the familiar school story that most readers would have come into contact with (31-32).

At the same time that Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, might constitute the ‘rule of three’ policy, their character values, actions and histories do not comfortably or naturally fit into this ‘rule,’ and their relationships too are often fraught with tension, competition and unease. For one thing, Kathy and Ruth are not the most ‘inseparable’ of “best friends” (4). Due to her “strong” personality and social influence over the many clone characters, Ruth can be construed simultaneously as both bully and confidante (5). As the “leader” of the “secret guard,” for instance, Ruth could allow in a new member or even expel one, and even Kathy has been ejected for insinuating that she knows Ruth

is no “chess expert” when she “packed up” her chess set and “walked off” after being unfairly told off by Ruth that she has “slid” her “piece up to hers in too straight a line” instead of in an “L-shape” (50). Furthermore, not only is Kathy envious of Ruth’s romantic relationship with Tommy, going as far as to interrogate her if she would “hurt him again” if she helped to “persuade him” to “get back together” with her (102), or to become the only one to stand up for Tommy since “no one said anything” and only she has “tried to bring it up once” herself despite the “pranks that had been played on Tommy” with even Ruth blaming Tommy for not being able to “change his own attitude,” Kathy is also jealous of Ruth’s self-assured personality and popularity (13). In the case of the “pencil case” that Ruth openly intimates is “a gift from Miss Geraldine,” possibly hinting that it carries with it “some little mark of favour Miss Geraldine had shown her” (55), Kathy goes out of her way to prove that it had come from the “Sales” instead and puts up a “bluff” that she had checked the “Sales Register” (61) to “see all the things people have bought” (57).

Considering that even Laura, one of the more amicable characters in the novel, who wittily describes Tommy’s “tantrums” as him “rehearsing his Shakespeare” (8), but yet has “fallen out” with Ruth as Kathy does and “parted” not “the best of friends, back in the Cottages,” this enmity that Ruth engenders in the people around her certainly underscores her problematically dual nature (207). Between Kathy and Ruth, this antagonism endures their time in the Cottages too, during which Ruth has, according to Kathy, bifurcated into “two quite separate Ruths.” While “one Ruth” is constantly “trying to impress the veterans,” who are the older clones in the Cottages, and “wouldn’t hesitate to ignore me, Tommy, any of the others, if she thought we’d cramp her style,” the

other “Ruth” reminds her of Hailsham, of the friend whom she could “just pick up with her where we’d left off the last time” (127). As such, it is clear to see that the friendship between Kathy and Ruth is borne out of an intense competition, with neither being overly intimate nor detached with each other.

Nevertheless, both Kathy and Ruth appear overly concerned with rules and appearances, especially when these involve their ‘favourite’ guardians such as Miss Geraldine and Miss Lucy. Both of them choose to “[punish] Marge K. so cruelly” when she had, to them, appeared rude towards Miss Lucy (67), while Kathy remembers “feeling furious at Polly for so stupidly breaking the unwritten” or “unspoken rule that we should never even raise the subject” (38) of the Gallery in the “presence” of the guardians (29). Oddly enough, very few of the authority figures in the novel are ‘exemplars’ or role models that embody the ‘wise, fair-minded, and inspiring’ characteristics that Smith and Clark suggest they should possess in a ‘canonical’ school story. As if fragile, fragmented entities that are either afraid of failure, or prone to make them—whether it is one of the guardians, such as Miss Geraldine or Miss Lucy, the head guardian, Miss Emily, Madam Marie-Claude, or even old Keffers, the “grumpy” caretaker of the Cottages—all these individuals are regarded by the clones with a kind of awestruck admiration or fearful prospect, and always from a distance (114). After all, they are “different” from them, from these “normal people,” and it “unnerved” and “*embarrassed*” them when they have to observe the people around them, especially their guardians, “change” or turn “awkward” whenever the topic of “donations” arose (67). Incidentally, many of these socially awkward occurrences usually implicate Miss Lucy, who divulges to Marge K. that she had smoked for “two years” and thus resulted in Marge K.’s

subsequent punishment by the other female students (66), and who had also told Polly T. that Madame takes their “things” away for a “very important reason” that she hopes one day will be “explained” to them (38). In fact, in one major incident with Tommy, it is these very “things” or artworks that she has once told Tommy not to be concerned about that she discloses her dire mistake. She confesses that she has done him a “big disservice” in “telling him not to worry about being creative” (105), but now “there was no excuse for my art being so rubbish... Negligible... Or incompetent,” since his art is important both for “evidence” as well as for his “own sake” or development (106). Yet, prior to this event, Ruth, Kathy and the other clones have already found out about how Madame is “afraid of us in the same way someone might be afraid of spiders,” as they observe her become utterly paralysed as they lie in wait and then swarm out “all around her, all at once,” but remaining “perfectly civilised” while they watch her “shudder” with “real dread” at the thought of them and their “hands brushing against” hers (33-4). Even the “gentle, soft-spoken” (17) Miss Geraldine, who is virtually perfect as a guardian, and is well-liked and depended upon by the clone students as someone they “turned to” when they are “upset,” seems like she is overcompensating in her overtures of kindness and compassion towards them, going as far as to embellish the truth in her commentary of Tommy’s ‘rubbish’ art (24). When Tommy draws a picture of an “elephant standing in some tall grass,” the “sort of picture a kid three years younger might have done,” he may have done so as a “kind of joke,” or to “get a laugh,” or even just to “cause a stir” (17). However, in trying her “best to look at the picture with kindness and understanding” and going “too far the other way” by “actually finding things to praise” while “pointing them out to the

class,” it is crucial to note here that it is her very magnanimity that inadvertently gives birth to the hate and “resentment” that will eventually grow and proliferate against Tommy in Hailsham. All around him, the other clone children have decided that Tommy “wasn’t keeping up” purposefully and deliberately in order to gain the attention that he desires, and from their ‘favourite’ guardian, no less, and therefore they give it to him in the form of “sneers and giggles” as well as other kinds of “persecution,” such as leaving him out of “games,” refusing to sit with him during meals or ignoring him altogether (18).

In the figure of the head guardian, Miss Emily, however, she does provoke a sense of reverence and esteem amongst the clone students since they are “pretty scared of her.” They believe her to be “fair” and “[respect] her decisions,” and while her presence is “intimidating,” she makes them “feel so safe at Hailsham” (37). If anything, the role that Miss Emily as the figure of a ‘headmistress’ in the novel could not fulfil is one of ‘providing blueprints for the moral life’ for the clones in Hailsham, for if she had succeeded to do so, she could very well have had a rebellion on her hands. Even though she does deliver “long speeches” to the students, and make promises to a distant, absent audience that may have “coerced” her into giving up on Hailsham, these words are lost on them for her speeches are quite “unfathomable,” as if a “fog” had thus befallen them and left them feeling “bewildered and awkward.” Instead, all they could elicit from these speeches are her censures of their bad behaviour that gave them “a real sense of feeling bad” in their “misuse of opportunity” as “special” and “privilege[d]” students of Hailsham (41). In fact, much later in the novel, it is Miss Emily who admits and reveals to Kathy and Tommy that

she has finally failed to stand up against the ‘coercion’ to “close” Hailsham especially with the Morningdale scandal that has rejuvenated fears of children or “students” with “enhanced characteristics” such as superior “intelligence” or “athleticism, that sort of thing” that could entirely replace society (261-2). Despite this failure, she stands by her decision to set up and support Hailsham, and other houses like Glenmorgan and Saunders Trust, and rejects the “idealistic,” “*theoretical*” ideas of Miss Lucy, who “had to go” all those years ago, and who had “no grasp of practicalities” and “thought you students had to be made more aware” of your own conditions and donations (265-6). Miss Emily proclaims,

You see, we were able to give you something, something which even now no one will ever take from you, and we were able to do that principally by *sheltering you*. Hailsham would not have been Hailsham if we hadn’t. Very well, sometimes that meant we kept things from you, lied to you. Yes, in many ways we *fooled* you. I suppose you could even call it that. But we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods. (266)

From these words alone, there is irrefutable evidence that points to the supposed claim of the burden of knowledge and the responsibility that Miss Emily, together with Madame Marie-Claude, believe they took on for the clone students such that they can still have ‘Hailsham,’ such that they can still have their ‘childhoods.’ While Miss Emily and Madame might have still trusted in their decisions to ‘shelter’ the clones after their meeting with Kathy and Tommy, with Madame sharing her final memory of Hailsham and of Kathy

“dancing by herself” to the “old kind world” and “pleading” for it to “never let her go,” even as a “harsh, cruel world” is “coming rapidly,” Tommy refuses to accept their actions as his own (268-9). “I think Miss Lucy was right. Not Miss Emily,” stresses Tommy to Kathy as he makes Kathy stop the car that she was driving back to his recovery centre in Kingsfield, and “disappear[s] into the blackness” of the “bushes” and the “impenetrable thicket” near the road and lets out several guttural “screams,” but of course, by then it is too late for them to change their course of fate (271). By then, Miss Emily’s failure to provide for her clone students the ‘blueprints’ for the ‘moral life’ has indeed become their failures as well, as they too have failed to lead their own lives outside of Hailsham, outside of the Cottages as they continue to be “fearful of the world around us, and—no matter how much we despised ourselves for it—unable quite to let each other go” (118).

Indubitably, it is both puzzling and frustrating that all of the characters, especially the clones, tend to only allude to, or even completely evade and circumvent any details related to the organ donation programme, as well as their roles as donors and carers, without directly addressing the unethical nature of the creation of clones purely for the harvest of their organs, and in a gradual, drawn-out process, no less. Despite that, upon further examination of such instances, ‘the world of doublespeak’ seems to percolate deeply into these passages and pervade these scenes with multiple interpretations and meanings, especially as all of them have been treated and processed through the nostalgic, sentimental but yet truth-seeking mind of Kathy H. For after all, what awaits them once they have genuinely understood the truth about their lives as clones, as organ donors to the ‘normals,’ and not even as ‘students’ but ‘poor creatures’

to the founders of Hailsham, is nothing other than the unwelcoming, unrepentant outside world of the ‘woods.’ Indeed, this is represented by the very same ‘woods’ that had killed young clone boys ‘with the hands and feet chopped off’ as well as turned clone girls into ‘ghosts,’ and which have ‘coerced’ the last ‘guardians’ of the “old kind world” found in Miss Emily and Madame into closing down the last bastion of hope for the clones called Hailsham (270). As such, in light of these diminishing possibilities, these closing off of escape routes, all the more is there a need for Kathy to turn inwards instead, to deconstruct the official narrative of the organ donation programme, and to recollect all that she can about Hailsham, its students and its guardians, as if a redemption story written against the inhumanities that have been done onto her and her kind, including those who have ‘fooled’ her under the pretext of ‘sheltering’ and protecting her ‘childhood’, and measured out of her memories that ‘no one can take away.’

In fact, it is just as Rebecca L. Walkowitz proposes in her article “Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature” that I believe Kathy’s internal struggle can have a greater reach and impact than just her memories and her mind, and which is through her readers. Foregrounding the connections that readers draw between what they have read and perceived in the novel and their own lives, she further elucidates,

Seeing clones as humans is not the point. Instead, we are urged to see humans as clones. That is, we are urged to see that even humans produced through biological reproduction are in some ways copies; and that human culture, full of cassette tapes and television programs... is also unoriginal. It is by seeing the

likeness between human originality and the novel's unoriginal objects... that we recognize the large networks of approximation and comparison in which individuality functions. (226)

In enabling the readers to both empathise as well as identify with Kathy's traumatic but also 'human' experience, it is as if Kathy had spun an autobiographical, "self-penned life story" in which her narrative is able to be "scrutinised" for its "authenticity" as she "bear[s] witness to a traumatic event, an historical moment, or a perceived social injustice" (McDonald 74). Moreover, by choosing to re-tell and re-invent the boarding school story of Hailsham, as well as the Cottages, Kathy provides her readers with a "fruitful forum by which the narrator's agency in a complex power structure can be framed, questioned, and understood" (78). Certainly, throughout the novel, as Kathy reminisces and revisits the conversations and interactions she has with her fellow clone classmates, who become future donors, carers, and some of them, even her lovers, she also re-analyses past situations and interpretations of events, which often reveal some new detail of an old memory that she might not have thought about before. Perhaps it is also because of these frequent reassessments of her past that the usually obedient, compliant Kathy finally finds the courage to confront her former guardians, Madame Marie-Claude as well as Miss Emily, for she has undoubtedly demystified enough of the organ donation programme, the roles of donors and carers, and even Hailsham, such that she now only has the mythic deferrals left to unravel.

In direct contrast to the above, however, Mark Jerng describes Ishiguro's clone narrative as a story that instead "reverses the narrative trajectory of individuation." He explicates,

Ishiguro does not reveal the human as unfolding and developing from a given inert potentiality. This is a much more disturbing story because it withholds the reader's desire for emancipation: the clones do not rebel and thus 'become human.' Rather, they learn to make sense of their lives as clones. (382)

This sentiment is shared too by other commentators who have similarly lamented the tragedy of the clones in Ishiguro's novel since they are unable to "simply run away, resist, or protest" (382). To Ivan Stacy, this paralysis or passivity imputed to the clones is depicted in their failure to "bear witness to their own condition" (238). On the one hand, there is a certain "lack of obvious, coercive disciplinary power in *Never Let Me Go*," and the clones "do not appear to be visibly marked in any way" so that they are "normalized, and hence accepted by society and by the clones themselves." Here, I would also point out that the clones themselves regulate, supervise and police each other's behaviours in order that certain norms, standards and expectations are practised and met. In the bullying incident, in Hailsham, involving Marge K. who asks their much admired guardian, Miss Lucy, if she "had herself ever had a cigarette" (65), and therefore, did "something really embarrassing to us during the day," they subsequently "twisted her arms and forced open her eyelids until she saw the distant outline" of the 'woods' "against the moonlit sky, and that was enough to ensure for her a sobbing night of terror." (49)

In some ways, this incident is somewhat replicative of Tommy's "phase of being teased and taunted" despite his "size and strength," as well as "temper," because he does not fit in with the rest of the seemingly perfectly moulded, civilised and well-behaved clone students (82). After being sent to

“Crow Face,” or “stern Nurse Trisha” (11), for a gash on his elbow that Christopher H. warns him from which he could be “unzipped,” and from where a “kidney” or a “liver” could “slide out,” just like when it came the “time” for their donations (86), Tommy goes as far as to “tie a splint on the arm to keep it rigid through the night” as he is unaware that Christopher H. has just pranked him (84). Through both these bullying incidents that are incidentally stereotypical of the boarding school novel, the subversive threat of the reality of organ donations is unsettlingly close by and close to being acknowledged, in the form of the ‘distant outline’ of the woods and the uncannily told joke about body parts being “dumped... on someone’s plate” respectively (86).

Yet, bearing in mind the suggestion that the clone students might have already been made aware of the realities that await them, albeit in a piecemeal manner, this sense of awareness problematises such straightforward interpretations of the ‘woods’ being a mere symbol of childhood terrors. In PVH, Ishiguro too utilises the metaphor of the ‘woods’ to invoke the deeper, underlying anxiety and haunting memory of the suicide of the main character’s daughter, Keiko, who had hung herself. In a remarkably traumatic scene, the main character, Etsuko, frightens a child, Mariko, as she sits under a “willow tree” in the “moonlight” and asks her about the “damp and muddy” rope that Etsuko had dragged behind her as it got caught around her foot (83). Here, the ‘woods’ thus becomes a means for Etsuko to transfer her sense of complicity in her daughter’s suicide, at the same time that she confronts but also elides it in her memory. In NLMG, the clones too seem terrified of the ‘woods,’ but also something beyond the ‘woods,’ where the threats of losing limbs, or organs even, as well as leaving Hailsham while “pining to be let back in” appear to

worry them incessantly (48). Such that, perhaps, it is the act of bullying itself, of forcing Marge K. to open her ‘eyelids’ to these horrifying realities, and not them, that saves them from having to ‘bear witness to’ these atrocities and allows them to rework the narrative of such a fear into another of peer pressure instead.

Similarly, the thinly veiled joke of Tommy ‘unzipping’ from his elbow that transforms into a “running joke among us about the donations” (85) reveals more about Tommy’s figurative role as playing the fool, than playing “stupid” (104). In laughing at Tommy and mocking him for his fear at being ‘unzipped,’ even going as far as to watch him “strap up his arm in a splint” without letting him in on the joke, this incident only further underscores the other clones’ own fears at facing up to their own roles as organ donors (84). Even the lurid, morbid joke that the clones make about “‘unzipping’ bits of themselves” like body parts in the form of food, in an effort to “[put] each other off” their meals, the clones seem to be purposefully ‘putting each other off’ or deliberately deferring the topic of their donations as well (85). In “Playing the Fool,” Mark Edmundson expounds on the role of Shakespearean fools as “subtle teachers” or “reality instructors,” who “tickle, coax and cajole their supposed betters into truth, or something akin to it” and most often coming close to “playing the part that Socrates, himself an inspired clown, played on the streets of Athens,” or embodying “the spirit of April Fools’ Day to an inspired zenith” (3). It is thus pertinent to note too that later in the novel, after finding out the truth about the mythical deferrals being a farce, Kathy does suggest to Tommy about how his “rage” could have actually been symptomatic of his profound awareness about the donations being inevitable. To this highly probable proposition, Tommy

replies, “But that’s a funny idea. Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn’t” (273). However, the truth remains that all the clones have always known about “donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven,” and thus what both Tommy and Kathy allude to here seems to be a deeper, more discerning knowledge of the donations, knowledge that there is really no escape, no opportunity for them to become more than just organ donors (80).

On the other hand as well, amongst the clones, Stacy too highlights how, in their failure to ‘bear witness,’ there tends to be “an avoidance of explicit communication with the circulation of unreliable beliefs,” where any “opportunity to attest to their status, its implications, and its accompanying fears, is not generally taken,” particularly as “moments of emotional honesty between the clones being relatively rare” (242). Even in those moments that the characters do refer to the organ donation programme directly, sometimes blatantly, their show of senseless pride at being “good student[s]” (26) or “very special... Hailsham students” (41), or even “good donors” (94) and “good carers” (280), as well as their unnatural disdain towards being looked on in pity or discomposure especially by their guardians in Hailsham, prevents them from truly addressing or coming to terms with the unjust and exploitative nature of the use of their bodies as if mere hosts for the “vital organs” that they will soon “donate” before “you’re even middle-aged,” until it is too late (79). While still attending Hailsham, for instance, in a particular scene in which Miss Lucy divulges the truth about their donations in a paroxysm of despair, she articulates,

The problem, as I see it, is that you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. But I'm not. If you're going to have decent lives, then you're got to know and know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. [...] You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. (79)

Responding to Miss Lucy's effusive disclosure in a rather indignant manner, however, many of the students simply deflect the issue and declare the counterclaim, "Well so what? We already knew all that." It is intriguing that while Kathy accedes that "all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly," she too seems to avoid scrutinising donations in all its gory, grisly detail and simply accepts them as a matter of fact, or a fact of life (80). Such brazen, barefaced truths, but actually also lies, that do not attempt to conceal the fact that donations *will* happen to them, and that they *will* eventually donate their organs before they are 'middle-aged' is, indeed, a form of doublespeak as well, but which functions not by concealment but by normalisation and abstraction. In other words, just as Herman earlier contends, Ishiguro has created a 'world of doublespeak' in NLMG, which carefully and deliberately maps out, constructs and homogenises the details that 'fit' with the 'agenda or program' of organ donations, such as knowing about 'donations in some vague way,' and at the same time, purposefully abstracts or generalises

information that does not cohere. Therefore, almost in uncanny fashion, Kathy too confesses feeling like “we’d heard everything somewhere before” and that “nothing came as a complete surprise” when it comes to the “basic facts about our futures” as organ donors, which “the guardians [manage] to smuggle into our heads” (81). Nevertheless, I would contend that this apparent ambivalence when it comes to the truth of their donations seems to stem from the clones’ own ‘telling, and not telling’ of their own experiences of being clones and organ donors, despite their professed knowledge of the organ donation programme. From being overly concerned with all aspects of school life, whether in terms of bullying, competing for the affections of their ‘favourite’ guardians or even studying and creating ‘art,’ to making seemingly intransigent jokes about donations, the clones themselves have re-casted and re-scripted the guardians’ scheme to ‘tell, and not tell’ and made it their own design.

In conclusion, NLMG exemplifies thus the final ‘artwork’ of the clones in itself, Kathy’s last attempt at her own unexpected, muted agency and rebellious creativity as she reveals her soul as it is wrought through Hailsham, the Cottages, and her ‘twelve’ years as a carer, while being made to watch her best friend, Ruth, as well as her lover, Tommy, die before she does, and in only having her memories of Hailsham, in whichever way she wishes to remember it, with her as she too meets her mortality not only on her own, but also on her own terms. NLMG too is an experiment in metafiction for Ishiguro, especially in the ways that he employs the popular stereotypes and conventions associated with the boarding school story and the science-fiction clone motif, both to entice his readers with such seemingly familiar narrative structures and to surprise them in the moments that he breaks away from these expectations.

Through such rifts in the narrative, Ishiguro introduces elements of dissonance in his use of genres: for example, Kathy, Ruth and Tommy never quite comfortably satisfies the ‘rule of three’ policy in the boarding school story because they are not truly in a school, and yet at the same time, their clone story depicting their exploitation and eventual ‘emancipation’ is not wholly untrue either. Ishiguro, in setting up and framing his novel in this manner, is able to borrow certain thematic and topographic features of these commonly cinematised and visualised genres from the popular imagination. However, throughout NLMG, Ishiguro also aims to differentiate such features from their familiar counterparts in his readers’ imaginations and expectations, and in doing so, simultaneously draws in and drives on his readers to further invigorate their readings and understandings of both the boarding school and clone narratives. All in all, Ishiguro does so in order to call into question the feeling of familiarity itself—the familiarity of living every day, falling in love, and even dying—so that through the experiences of his tragically isolated and exploited clone characters, his human readers will be able to experience once again the easily forgotten and rarely interrogated feeling of being free not just from physical restraints, but also, social and psychological ones too.

Chapter Three: *The Buried Giant* as Medieval Fantasy

Romance

Though lamentable, much of the criticism levelled against Ishiguro's latest novel, *The Buried Giant*, does seem rather judgemental than analytical, ranging from his disavowal of his own "qualities—precision, elliptical understatement and indirection—that lent his two masterworks, TRTD and NLMG, a tensile strength," to his 'refusal to put on the mantle of fantasy.' Yet, in Gaby Wood's interview with Ishiguro, he claims,

I've written all these books about individuals struggling with their personal memories and not knowing when to hide from their past and when to confront their past for some sort of resolution. But what I really wanted to do was to write about that kind of struggle at the societal level. Most countries, when you look at them, have got big things they've buried. (2)

Interestingly, Ishiguro also imparts about how he has always felt encouraged to "get away from a straight social realist way of writing," but as Wood accentuates, he also often has to struggle with being taken "too literarily" for this is how "readers" tend to read and interpret narratives, mistaking his novels for "documentary" representations of Japan in *An Artist of the Floating World* or of butlers in TRTD (5). As such, by progressively pushing the envelope of his narratives in terms of their genres and settings, he has forged for himself a means to "work largely through emotions" in his books (6). Like Todorov's conception of genre that can cut across time, culture and history, Ishiguro's TBG too tries to experiment with the medieval fantasy mode by exploring how

the past and the present reality, or even the future, can be re-made and re-forged depending on the perspective that it is viewed from, the intention of the perspective that it is viewed with. In his review of TBG, Alex Preston declares how it is “clear that something profound” is being said in the novel, “some deep allegory constructed” (2). The metaphorical ‘buried giant’ represents, to Preston, human history being “swept over any number of genocides, from Armenia to Rwanda,” similar to how the characters in the book, and in some ways, pre-historic Britain itself, have had to contend with the inexplicable mass fragmentation and disappearance of the ancient Britons in the time that Roman rule dwindled and Anglo-Saxons first arrived in the fifth century (3).

According to Jonathan Shaw who explores the possible modern-day theories of this mysterious historical event, he clarifies,

There are no signs of a massacre—no mass graves, no piles of bones. Yet more than a million men vanished without a trace. [...] When the Anglo-Saxons first arrived... —whether as immigrants or invaders is debated—they encountered an existing Romano-Celtic population estimated between 2 million and 3.7 million people. Latin and Celtic were the dominant languages. Yet the ensuing cultural transformation was so complete, says Goelet professor of medieval history Michael McCormick, that by the eighth century, English civilization considered itself completely Anglo-Saxon, [and] spoke only Anglo-Saxon [...] This extraordinary change has had ramifications down to the present, and is why so many people speak English rather than

Latin or Celtic today. But *how* English culture was completely remade, the historical record does not say. (31)

It is pertinent to point out that it is both the “uncertainty of what actually happened” between the warring Britons and Saxons, as well as the “distance from contemporary events that attracted Ishiguro” to this specific period of lost and ambiguous ‘historical record,’ of which known history, at least, already knows its victor (Clark 2). In an interview with Oe Kenzaburo, Ishiguro professes,

Somehow, in terms of the really important things happening in the century, in historical terms, if we are writing from a position like Britain, or Sweden, or France in the latter part of the twentieth century, we are writing from somewhere very far away from where the main events are taking place, and we somehow lack the natural authority of writers who are living in Czechoslovakia, or East Germany, or Africa, or India, or Israel, or the Arab countries [...] But just in terms of the great intellectual debates that seem to be central to the latter part of the twentieth century, there is the feeling that perhaps we in England are in the wrong place to view the big battles. (121)

Coinciding in some aspects with certain ‘big battles’ in recorded history, however, such as the Arthurian legend of the “famous” (231) Battle of “Mount Badon,” which was thought to have occurred in the late fifth or early sixth century and which resulted in the suspension of the Saxon invasion for decades and documented in *Historia Brittonum*—a purported record of the indigenous British people written in the ninth century and commonly attributed to a Welsh

monk named Nennius—TBG seems to borrow from popular historical and literary imagination surrounding medieval England, and deny any claims to authentic historicity, since there is just no such concrete history to fall back on (118). For example, though already deceased before the main plot of the novel, King Arthur as a force to be reckoned with according to Nennius, who writes that “nine hundred and forty” Saxons “fell by his hand alone” with “no one” but the “Lord Jesus Christ” providing him “assistance,” is also revealed to act as a sort of historical marker even as Arthur’s own narrative is regarded as a folkloric and literary invention (35). Not only that, one of his most famous knights, his nephew and a Knight of the Round Table in Arthurian legend, Sir Gawain, is likewise featured in TBG, though as an “aged,” experienced and sinewy soldier who is “charged by that great king many years ago” to “slay” the fictional she-dragon, Querig (69).

Even on the subject of quests, which should occupy the “narrative center of medieval romance” (Zgorzelski 199), particularly of the Arthurian kind, which should offer its readers an “unswerving sense of purpose and adventure” as well as “examples of heroism, self-reliance, and primitive spirit that were considered crucial for the development of boys in particular,” this matter is still open to debate and interpretation in TBG (Bryan 32). On the one hand, the main protagonists who embark on a ‘quest’ in TBG are the frail, elderly figures of Axl and Beatrice, who depend very much on the goodwill of strangers but are also just as susceptible to others’ spitefulness. On the other hand, the ‘primitive spirit’ of the ‘quest’ in TBG seems to insinuate something primal and ancient, and raw in its power to harm and malign, which is *au contraire* to the pure, unadulterated and sometimes even guileless ‘spirit’ of

‘adventure’ that populates many popular fantasy fiction. Nevertheless, TBG does at least traverse both the “literal and figurative” planes of the narrative, travelling from an “interior geography on to an exterior one” where pilgrims “seek enlightenment” and “knights seek symbolic objects” (Zgorzelski 202). While the elderly couple venture out of their homes to look for their missing son, and to recover their lost memories, both the Saxon warrior Wistan and the Briton knight Sir Gawain seek to eradicate the primal threat of the she-dragon Querig.

Other anachronistic elements that are reworked and reimagined in the novel include the character of the Saxon warrior, Wistan, who faces off with and defeats several ogres as well as the aforementioned dragon, as if purposefully evocative of the trials of the quintessential hero, Beowulf, who also prevails over a dragon in the heart of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem known by the same name and produced in the late tenth or early eleventh century. In a similar vein, though in the novel, it is one of the main characters, Axl, or “Axelum or Axelus” (69) as he was known in the warring period, or even the “Knight of Peace” (232) by the Saxons themselves, who brokers a peace treaty between the ancient Britons and Saxons with his “mighty law” called “The Law of the Innocents” (233), this truce seems to have been inspired by the real-life *Lex Innocentium* or *Cáin Adomnáin*, which was an ancient Irish equivalent of the modern-day “Geneva Convention” as promulgated by “a gathering of secular and clerical authorities” in the year 697 at the Synod of Birr (O’Dwyer 14). Although this edict presented one of the first systematic attempts to assuage the savagery of warfare, including the prevention of the destruction of church property, as well as the killing of innocent women and children, and

even rape, in TBG, it is a decree that appears to have been forged in the most desperate of times as it is very quickly dissolved after a tragic violation of the ruling that involved Britons under King Arthur committing a “slaughter” of a “sea of Saxons” (233) who have been “left unprotected” after their “solemn agreement not to harm them, now all slaughtered by our hands, even the smallest babes” (231). Compelling the fictional King Arthur to take immediate action, in a hopeless bid to prevent the impending conquest of the Saxons, he thus turns to extraordinary, or rather, supernatural methods to stop the invasion and orders Merlin, “a servant of the devil” but with “powers... often enough spent in ways to make God smile” (282), to cast a spell on the she-dragon, Querig, such that her breath is “cursed with a mist of forgetfulness” that affects almost everyone in the book (48). Hence, through mystical means, another period of peace ensues. But this peace is one that is “built on slaughter and a magician’s trickery” (311), with Wistan, the Saxon warrior, even interrogating the Briton knight, Sir Gawain, “By what strange skill did your great king heal the scars of war in these lands that a traveller can see barely a mark or shadow left of them today?” (120). Certainly, such an acute reference to a specific event in the supposedly forgotten narrative history, in which Wistan calls it a “strange thing” when “a man calls another brother who only yesterday slaughtered his children” (121), is intended to hint at a later plot point that Wistan is actually one of the rare characters in the novel, who “has a gift to withstand strange spells” and is therefore immune to the ‘mist of forgetfulness,’ but is also meant to allude to the known historical fact that during this period ‘more than a million men vanished without a trace’ (308).

As if to resonate with the popular, oft-said axiom that history is indeed written by the victors, the Saxon warrior, Wistan, and his “protégé,” a Saxon boy, Edwin, survive the ordeal with Queriq and swear vengeance upon all Britons (189). Promising to raise Edwin, who to him has “a true warrior’s spirit given only to a few,” Wistan also endeavours to equip him with “a will far cleaner than mine” and with “no mercy,” such that “his heart” will not “admit no soft sentiments as have invaded mine” especially as his “years” amongst the Britons have “enfeebled” him and turned him “from the flames of hatred” (324). Before parting ways with the main protagonists of the story, Axl and Beatrice, Wistan also share with them how he believes that the death of Queriq is “to make ready the way for the coming conquest” of the “Saxon armies” that not only reside “in the fenlands,” where their numbers might be “meagre,” but also those who live side by side with Britons, in the “Saxon communities... each with strong men and growing boys” that lie in “every valley, beside every river.” Even though Beatrice argues that this conquest would be deterred by the “bonds between our peoples” as “your kin and mine mingle village by village,” Axl instead agrees with Wistan and points out that “custom and suspicion have always divided us” (323). He also further laments,

Who knows what will come when quick-tongued men make
ancient grievances rhyme with fresh desire for land and
conquest?”

“How right to fear it, sir,” Wistan said. “The giant, once
well buried, now stirs. When soon he rises, as surely he will, the
friendly bonds between us will prove as knots young girls make
with the stems of small flowers. Men will burn their neighbours’

houses by night. Hang children from trees at dawn. The rivers will stink with corpses bloated from their days of voyaging. And even as they move on, our armies will grow larger, swollen by anger and thirst for vengeance. For you Britons, it'll be as a ball of fire rolls towards you. You'll flee or perish. And country by country, this will become a new land, a Saxon land, with no more trace of your people's time here than a flock or two of sheep wandering the hills untended." (324)

As sure as Wistan has vowed that he would mould Edwin into a Saxon warrior who can fulfil his "duty to hate all Britons," history itself has helped the Saxons realise their retribution by proving this conquest to be true, and virtually erasing the ancient Britons from historical record altogether, along with their mystical 'mist,' to such an extent that there is very little that Axl and Beatrice, or even the heroes of Arthurian legend, can do to change its unrelenting course (328). In other words, TBG incarnates what Walter Benjamin describes as the "Angel of History," in Chapter IX of his work entitled *On the Concept of History*, because while "we see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet." Inspired by the work of Swiss-German artist, Paul Klee, in particular his drawing of *Angelus Novus* or New Angel, which Benjamin purchased in 1921, he puts forth the argument that the historical process is but an interminable cycle of hopelessness and despair with the "Angel of History" turning his "face... towards the past," and his "back" on the future, while remaining suspended in a "storm" of "progress." Indeed, even in Ishiguro's novel itself, history is deemed as an "evil," "circle of slaughter" that "would

never be broken” since the “lust for vengeance” lurks “deep,” and is always further “forged instead in iron,” violence and retaliation (232). In this way, it thus does seem that a forgetting of the past or a ‘burying’ of the ‘giant’ of historical memory, as it were, is both enviable and necessary “in order to prosper,” as Nathaniel Rich in “The Book of Sorrow and Forgetting,” argues, but yet at the same time, the feasibility of such a thing is as shown in the novel simply impossible (4).

Beyond such commentary, however, on the historicity of TBG—its characters and events, and themes of individual as well as collective amnesia—I would contend that Ishiguro’s novel too could be described as a narrative of false starts, of false memories. In choosing to recount his tale through the familiar, recognisable tropes of the medieval romance and fantasy, Ishiguro overturns the expectations of his readers not only through his reworking of these genres but also through his revisiting of such controversial figures and events in Britain’s past. With such vivid and relentless efforts to bring forth the instability and unreliability of memory, Ishiguro seems to leave his readers with a painful, inexorable reminder of how memory can fail, both individuals and even societies, leading to much devastating impacts. In his interview with Book Browse, Ishiguro remarks how the “texture of memory” is often “blurred at the edges, layered with all sorts of emotions, and open to manipulation” (2). Without one’s obsessive, almost compulsive, agency to inscribe it, or erase it, as is the case of the ‘mist of forgetfulness’ that is imposed by Arthur and Merlin, and is protected to a point of mania by the monks under a certain “Father Jonus, whose wisdom’s well known” (143) as well as the “she-dragon’s protector,” Sir Gawain, history too is bound to repeat itself in a ‘circle of

slaughter' (304). Nonetheless, this agency is brought to bear by 'a magician's trickery,' suggesting that it is a temporary salve and a false solution to "justice and vengeance" (322), which cannot be sated with just 'stirring' the 'giant' or building a "monument to kin slain long ago" (323). For a long-term resolution lies not in 'mists' and 'buried giants,' but rather in "putting" our "most cherished memories" before the "boatmen" without disguising the "truth," and overcoming this near impossible task of laying bare the 'texture of memory' and proving the "real nature" of our "bond" and desire to move on towards a future together (46).

Despite all these assertions, Ishiguro still leaves his readers with an ambiguous ending. When the elderly couple, Axl and Beatrice, eventually meets this 'boatman,' who plays the roles of the narrator and even a character, for a second, and final, time in the novel, he interrogates them as they have now regained their 'cherished memories' after the felling of the dragon by Wistan. While promising the couple that they will both go to the "island" that "the two of you will dwell on... together, going arm in arm as you've always done" (342), he actually betrays them and only brings Beatrice to where their son "waits" (330). Moreover, Axl seems complicit in this treachery as he evades the boatman's "search for his eye" and avoids looking "his way" as he "wades on past" him towards the "shore" (345). Certainly, this deceitfulness on the part of the husband, Axl, as well as the boatman reveals the failure of the couple to demonstrate their "unusually strong bond of love" that the boatman already forewarns, and in some ways, foreshadows, in an earlier, unplanned meeting with them as "rare" (43). The making of history, like memory, necessitates the keeping of one's own counsel, after all—whether as individuals, communities

or countries, history is an interpretation of the past that might not be easily shared with or commonly agreed upon by others. Faced with this quandary, this insolvability for even individuals to be willing to compromise on the illusion, or the ‘magician’s trickery,’ that they tell themselves to be able to keep on living each day, what more can a country do but to sustain such illusions and ‘bury’ more ‘giants’ for the sake of ‘progress.’

Buried Histories, Awakened Memories

In the world of *The Buried Giant*, both its characters and communities find themselves constantly living on edge, bracing themselves on the threshold of remembering and forgetting due to the pervasive threat, but also paralysing comfort, of the magically transfigured breath of the she-dragon, Querig, that produces a ‘mist of forgetfulness.’ With such frequent bouts of individual memory loss as well as historical and communal amnesia, the characters at times feel enervated and incapacitated by what they do not know, or cannot recall, while at other times, they might be provoked to find out what they have lost to the mist. Exacerbating these unusual circumstances is the custom that most people in these communities “rarely” discuss the “past—even the recent one” as it has “somehow faded into a mist as dense as that which hung over the marshes” even if it is not considered “taboo” (6). In the beginning of the novel, for instance, Axl tries to convince Beatrice, along with “three neighbours,” of the memory of a “woman with long red hair,” who is not only “so skilled at healing,” having made available her medical services “[w]henver anyone injured themselves or fell sick,” but is also “regarded as crucial to their village” (7-8). Despite being someone who is a “kindly soul,” who had recently checked in on the elderly couple to see if they “weren’t cold or hungry” just “a month

ago,” and reassured them against the “children calling us names” (8) as well as the injustice done onto the couple who “spend our nights without a candle,” Beatrice only chastises him for making up this “dream woman” without remembering her or caring about her disappearance (9). In another incident concerning a young girl named Marta, who had gone “missing” on a daring “adventure” (10) since she pays no heed to the “hair-raising tales of what could happen to wandering children,” Axl seems alone in his recollection that the “uproar” (12) in the “Great Chamber where everyone congregated at night” was over her disappearance (5). Yet, when the young girl finally returns and points out to Axl that the “raised voices” are not about her, showing her nonchalance at the community having forgotten about her, especially as they become more and more distracted by the arguments that have arisen due to two shepherds’ tale recounting “the appearance of a wren-eagle in their country,” Axl discovers that “it was only with a supreme act of concentration” that he “held on to the thought of little Marta at all” (11). Here, it is pertinent to note that at the same time that the crisis of the individual has been marginalised, driven to the edges of even Axl’s attention and memory, a seemingly communal one has taken centre stage instead.

Furthermore, though their conflict seems to stem from their inability to remember, coupled with the historical possibility that written records were uncommon then, this tension also appears to have been brought about by their feelings of *déjà vu*, of having experienced or heard something like the shepherds’ sighting of a ‘wren-eagle’ before, but not quite, and yet unwilling to concede that such feelings are ambiguous, untrustworthy and misleading, at best.

On the one hand, this communal conflict that ended with its members ‘dividing’ and taking sides, without even interrogating the veracity of the claims of various individuals such as the two shepherds being dishonest in their ‘unfounded’ reports of a ‘wren-eagle,’ or the same two shepherds raising the same false alarm ‘the previous spring,’ emphasises how easily individuals with enough social capital and support can actually shape, or even distort, history and memory *ex nihilo*. Certainly, this is especially significant because while there is no such means to even scrutinise all these claims due to the magically induced mist, the allegorically inflicted loss of memories for the amnesiac community, its individuals continue to argue, reason and make decisions as if the past were still accessible to them. On the other hand, however, it also accentuates the potentiality of the narrative to be read and interpreted as a kind of liminal space, inside which the transitory influences of the past are forcibly placed in flux and pitted against one other, even if not immediately felt or seen, and from which future possibilities and certainties are then derived.

In *The Rites of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep’s foremost anthropological study of the threefold nature of rites—including rites affiliated to the coming-of-age or betrothal—he proposes that rites should be “subdivided” into three distinct types: rites of separation, transition rites and rites of incorporation (11). According to van Gennep, while rites of separation, which engender the “separation from previous surroundings” or even a “previous world,” are more important in funerals, rites of incorporation, however, are more crucial in ceremonies such as the “new world” of marriage (20). As transition rites are most prominent in events like pregnancy and initiation, van Gennep thus refers to them as “liminal (or threshold) rites” that deliver or traverse from one world

to another (21). Delving deeper into the conception of liminal spaces and the nature of liminality, Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process* elucidates,

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (95)

Indeed, in the liminal world of TBG, both Ishiguro’s characters and thematic concerns are initially destabilised, made to struggle and then are finally transformed by their precarious journey through the ‘ambiguous’ and ‘indeterminate’ narrative, negotiating the realms and expectations associated with not just the genres of medieval history, romance and fantasy, but also the modes of remembering the past and forging the future, which can be treacherous in themselves. As such, throughout the novel, the readers are immersed in a fantastical, mystical world inhabited by “ogres” (3), “fiends” (59), “wren-eagle[s]” (10), “dark crows and ravens” (166), “devil dog[s]” (221), “beelzebubs” (189), and of course, “dragons,” but at the same time, these fantastical beasts do not always turn out to be active threats but rather passive agents of disloyalty and deceit of the various characters in the book (134). When the motley band of travelling companions made out of Wistan, Sir

Gawain, as well as the elderly couple, Axl and Beatrice, eventually arrive at the top of the hill in “Merlin’s wood” (196) to meet with the she-dragon, Querig, which has been described as a “dragon of great fierceness” (69) by Beatrice, as well as “too wild to be tamed by any man” by Sir Gawain, they are instead greeted with great disappointment (134). In reality, Querig is so old, and “so emaciated” that she looks like “some worm-like reptile” with skin that is “a yellowing white, reminiscent of the underside of certain fish,” and “remnants” of “wings” that form “sagging folds of skin that a careless glance might have taken for dead leaves.” As for her eyes, they are “hooded in the manner of a turtle’s, and which open and close lethargically according to some internal rhythm” such that it is only this “movement” and the “faintest rise and fall along the creature’s backbone” that constitute the “only indicators that Querig was still alive” (310). In some ways, this misshapen and debilitated form of the she-dragon seems redolent of her ‘protector,’ the decrepit, “thin, if wiry” figure of Sir Gawain himself who is “no threatening figure” (113). Therefore, that both Sir Gawain and Querig share the same fate of getting cut down by Wistan is not just suggested, but expected.

Yet, interestingly, even before this meeting with Querig, there are already several references in the novel that conceivably cast doubt over her threat. For one thing, Querig’s presumably innocuous power lies not in its physical form but in its “breath” that “fills this land and robs us of memories” (168). It also manifests itself through the seemingly mild symptom of a “fine,” “wretched mist” (49), which gradually divulges its more insidious nature through the “deformed figures” of “ogres” that might “carry off a child into the mist” (3), as well as the lost, even stolen, memories of most of the characters in

the novel through the “mischief” of the mist (292). However, through all these symptomatic conditions of the mist, the figure of the she-dragon, Querig, mostly remains unheard, unseen. When Wistan discloses to Axl and Sir Gawain about the “reports at home of Lord Brennus’s ambitions to conquer this land for himself and make war on all Saxons now living on it,” he also unveils Lord Brennus’s plan to “capture” the she-dragon “Querig to fight in the ranks of his army” as his “fierce soldier” (134). Yet, through the later revelations of the novel about Querig’s truly weakened and deteriorated state, it thus becomes obvious that neither Brennus nor Wistan has ever witnessed the “beast” (69). Indeed, the liminal state of the narrative that anticipates and even emphasises the possibly threatening physicality of the dragon figure in the novel, like something out of a medieval fantasy story, deliberately sets its readers up for disappointment in order to create tension and ambiguity in the role of the dragon as a symbol of evil or danger in itself.

By the same token, the Elder Ivor, who is one of the village elders of the Saxon village that Axl and Beatrice briefly stayed in on their journey to find their son, shows his scepticism not only of Sir Gawain’s quest to slay the dragon, since “the old fool has never given that she-dragon a single moment of anxiety,” but also of the danger that the she-dragon poses as he believes that Querig is “often blamed for the work of wild animals or bandits” though she “rarely leaves the mountains now.” Hence, he believes “Querig’s menace comes less from her own actions than from the fact of her continuing presence.” For Querig’s ‘menace’ is a threat that lays dormant in the undercurrents of the narrative and seldom rears its head as a physical force to be reckoned with or to be defeated by knights and warriors, yet all the while secreting “all manner of

evil” like a “pestilence” throughout the novel (69). In fact, it is only after it is slain by Wistan, who caused the “dragon’s head to spin into the air and roll a little way before coming to rest on the stony ground” that its threat fully ‘stirs,’ and surfaces, inciting vengeance and violence with the ‘conquest’ of the Saxons over ‘all Britons’ (320). As a symbol of suppressed memories and histories now, which was once cursed to remain silent on all the treachery that had taken place between the Saxons and Britons, as well as between the different characters and individuals, it is only when Querig dies that its true role is finally awakened—its true role as an ‘angel of history.’ As an icon of progress that is terrifyingly indifferent, even ignorant, of the future, its death too signals its full complicity with and consciousness of the past, watching it ‘sweep over’ and pile up like ‘rubble’ interminably before her ‘feet,’ and forging ‘progress’ in these burdened, blighted terms.

With respect to the “liminal passenger” or character in a state of liminality, Sarah Gilead claims how such a figure is momentarily “freed” from “role-playing structural boundaries,” but is “bereft of group privileges and attributes,” and thus develops “negative” traits of “passivity, powerlessness, humility.” Despite such ‘negativity’, however, liminality brings about a “transformative power both for the passenger and, potentially, for his culture,” and invokes a “symbolic realm of values, meanings, and forces” that represents the “symbiotic counterpart of social structure” (183). Intriguingly, beyond the enfeebled form of the she-dragon Querig, many of the other fantastical beasts that make up this novel are often alluded to in a ‘passive’ manner too, whether through indirect third-party accounts or brief, short-lived confrontations which end with their swift demise. When the Saxon boy, Edwin, is kidnapped by

“fiends,” which are “no ordinary ogres” (58) as they are clever enough to “set a trap” that killed “three men” (59) and torture the boy by putting him in a “rickety” cage and releasing their hold on a leashed dragon in “its infancy” just to tease and frighten the boy with its “teeth and claws” while communicating in unreadable, untranslatable “grumbling sounds,” this incident is re-told only through Edwin’s recollection (97). Furthermore, before the might and cleverness of the ogres could be ascertained, the warrior, Wistan, promptly defeats them, and brings to Edwin’s village his “trophy” of the “head of a thick-necked creature severed just below the throat” with an “eerily featureless face: where the eyes, nose and mouth should have been there was only pimpled flesh” (71). Indeed, when it comes to the ogres, the readers do not actually have direct contact with them as if they were mere ‘symptoms’ of the mist and Querig’s breath. In another incident, Axl observes that an ogre is “dying a slow death” (275) for over “two days” and is “still not dead” (276) when the couple comes across some children who live “very high in the mountains,” and have extended their “hospitality” to them (269). Certainly, in both these scenes, the ogres’ threat has been suppressed to underscore the tyranny of seemingly harmless, even helpless, characters and communities, as if they were the true beasts in the novel, as if their own selfishness and aggression have made manifest these monsters. After all, once the villagers find out about the “ogre’s bite” and begin to fear for their own lives being imperilled by the boy Edwin who “will before long turn fiend himself and wreak horror here within our walls,” it is his own “companions” and “family members” who now throw “stones at the door” of the barn that he is locked up in and demand for him to be “brought out and slaughtered” (81), despite previously sending “twelve

strong” and “brave men” to rescue him (59). In the same way, when the children are told by Bronwen, who is deemed as a woman of the “wise arts,” that perhaps by removing the “curse” of the she-dragon Querig, they might break the “spell” that she had cast to “make our parents forget us, so they’ll not come home” (277), they do as the woman tells them and “[poison]” their own goats so that they could bring down Querig themselves (277). While they mean no “wickedness” (276) and claim their innocence in the poisoned goat harming an ogre, it still seems ignoble of them to harm their own “best” goat in the first place (274). Indeed, these ambiguous representations of both ogres and humans thus highlight the ‘transformative power’ of the liminal state of the novel, bringing doubt to the monstrosity of the human characters in the novel instead of the monsters themselves.

Moreover, upon closer scrutiny of the passage recounting the flight of Axl, Beatrice, Edwin and Sir Gawain from the treacherous, murderous monks under Father Jonus, a “revered” and “wise” (68) abbot who is “famed for kindness and wisdom” (163), and who has diagnosed Beatrice’s pains as “normal and to be expected” (171), it demonstrates how their fears actually lay beyond the dark “tunnel,” beyond the “angry” (190), “fierce dog” (191). Several times throughout their journey underground, Sir Gawain enters into the darkness of his own mind, as well as regrets, when he mumbles on about his time as “Arthur’s knight” (178), and waxes lyrical about the “great Arthur, who taught me to face all manner of challenge with gladness, even when fear seeps to the marrow.” At the same time, he also criticises Axl for hinting that he doubts his prowess and valour as a knight, and interrogates him,

What is it you suggest, sir? How dare you? Were you there? *I* was there, sir, and saw all with these same eyes that fix you now! But what of it, what of it, friends, this is a discussion for some other time. (180)

When Beatrice next begins to envisage a “small child long dead” that her foot had “touched” and that she saw before Axl’s candlelight “passed,” Sir Gawain is also quick to respond and warn the couple about this tunnel where “[m]any things” are “best left unseen.” Unfortunately, however, just as Sir Gawain has presaged, even though Axl, Beatrice and Edwin has witnessed a “sleeping” bat with a “pig-like face,” and a wound that was “peculiarly clean, as though someone had taken a bite from a crisp apple,” Beatrice has instead seen a dead “baby” and she is “sure of it” (182). It is without a doubt that the long-forgotten memories and anxieties of both Sir Gawain and Beatrice seem to now haunt and creep up on them the longer that they remain in the darkness of this underground, which thus awakens their formerly lost regrets of being Arthur’s nephew, and loyal knight, as well as Querig’s protector, and of being a mother to a son whom she has long forgotten respectively.

In fact, it is Sir Gawain who first denies the “bed of bones” where the “creature” or bat was found in that Axl points out to him later. Once again denigrating Axl and condemning Axl’s phantom allegations that he has betrayed them and endangered them willingly, Sir Gawain at the same time admits his former complicity with the monks, but also his later attempts at atonement:

What are you suggesting, sir? Skulls? I saw no skulls! And what if there are a few old bones here? What of it, is that anything

extraordinary? Aren't we underground? But I saw no bed of bones, I don't know what you suggest, Master Axl. Were you there, sir? Did you stand beside the great Arthur? I'm proud to say I did, sir, and he was a commander as merciful as he was gallant. Yes, indeed, it was I who came to the abbot to warn of Master Wistan's identity and intentions, what choice had I? Was I to guess how dark the hearts of holy men could turn? Your suggestions are unwarranted, sir! An insult to all who ever stood alongside the great Arthur! There are no beds of bones here! And am I not here now to save you? (183-84).

Yet, as soon as he confesses and brings to light his duplicitous actions and lies, Sir Gawain seems to embark on a path of reconciliation with his past, which process cannot be staunched. In time, Sir Gawain acquiesces with Axl that these "chambers" (185) beneath the monk's "fort" in the hills (153) do resemble some kind of "ancient burial place" (185). He also eventually associates these "skulls of men" with "our whole country" that might boast a "fine green valley" or "pleasant copse in the springtime," but yet underneath its "soil, and not far beneath the daisies, and buttercups come the dead" of the "remains of old slaughter" of which he has grown "weary" (186). It is crucial to observe how this analogy between the bone-laden underground lair of the "devil" (221) or "monster dog" (321) and the violent but concealed history of ancient Britain is made by Sir Gawain in the midst of the "bewitched" (187) boy Edwin singing his "lullaby" (185) in a "conspicuous" voice (186). Embodying the grudge-bearing nature of the retributive justice of history that Querig encapsulates, and which he transmits through the "dragon's bite" that he

suffered in the hands of the ‘fiends’ earlier and which Sir Gawain later confirmed with the couple, the Saxon boy Edwin seems obsessed with the arrival of the ‘monster dog’ (189). With his ‘lullaby,’ it truly appears as if he has called forth this “creature escaped from the Great Plain itself” (190), where “fast-moving mist or sudden darkenings in the sky” augment the “power and mystery” (34) related to the “dark forces” of that place where all types of “assailants—human, animal or supernatural” (31) and even “demon[s]” reside (32). Indeed, Sir Gawain is unduly convinced that the ‘monster dog’ is a “dragon spawn” that “hungers for the boy” (191) since his dragon-tainted “blood” has driven him to “seek congress” with the she-dragon (189). Such that in the moment that he ‘slaughters’ the ‘monster dog’ with one swift swing of his sword, Sir Gawain is as a matter of fact ‘slaughtering’ his ties with the concealment of his past, and therefore, also the secret of his protection of Querig, since his own ‘buried giant’ of his past has been awakened. To Beatrice as they leave the “lonely grave” (184) full of even more “skulls,” Sir Gawain finally hints at his part in the “slaughter of infants” (189) a long time ago:

What do you suggest, mistress? That *I* committed this slaughter?
 [...] So many skulls, you say. Yet are we not underground?
 What is it you suggest? Can just one knight of Arthur have killed
 so many? [...] Once, years ago, in a dream, I watched myself
 killing the enemy. It was in my sleep and long ago. The enemy,
 in their hundreds, perhaps as many as this. I fought and I fought.
 [...] I hardly know how to answer you, mistress. I acted as I
 thought would please God. (188).

Perhaps as a means to further uncover these ‘dreams’ of the past that he has had and which have ‘transformed’ him to become more able to come to terms with the atrocities of his past, Sir Gawain demonstrates this newfound courage in the two chapters that follow entitled his first and second “reveries”. In the first of these chapters, Gawain recounts his meeting with Axl in a previous life, in his former capacity as a friend to the Saxons, who “won their trust where first there was only fear and hatred” but then became “a liar and a butcher” after “Arthur’s victory” (232) slaughtering “babes” and breaching the “mighty law” that could “bring men closer to God.” Here, not only does he make references to the “boatman” as well as the “questions” (233) that this figure of death and judgement will ask, but also to the vengeance of the “dark widows” (221), one of them named Edra, who sought revenge on a “Saxon lord” for “what he did to my dear mother and sisters,” foreshadowing the impending conquest of the Saxons after Querig’s execution by Wistan, and the cyclic nature of ‘slaughter’ throughout history (228).

Most significantly, the parallels found in the various liminal spaces of the lairs of the ‘fiends’ and this ‘monster dog,’ and even the “device” in the “barn” of the monastery, should be noted for their ‘transformative power’ that not only interrogates the ‘values, meanings, and forces’ of the ‘social structure’ of the communities surrounding the proximity of these spaces, but also recasts and redefines them. After receiving the ‘bite’ from the ogre or dragon while in captivity of the ‘fiends,’ the Saxon boy Edwin casts aspersions on the loyalties of the villagers and calls into question their sympathies for him as they are torn between protecting and killing him. The ‘bite’ has also changed the value system within Edwin, who now follows his saviour, the warrior, Wistan, and

later promises to fulfil his pledge to ‘hate all Britons.’ As for the ‘device’ that permits the monks to serve their “penance” (165) or “pious ritual” (159) by offering their bodies up to the “dark crows and ravens” as if a “sign of God’s anger” (166), or “foul demons” and “agents of the devil,” according to the monks who have lost their faith in Querig’s protection, especially Father Jonus and Father Irasmus, respectively, it has also caused the monastery to divide their allegiances as soon as it is discovered by the travelling companions made out of Wistan, Axl and Beatrice, as well as the boy Edwin (141). For the monks who still maintain their innocence, however, in the face of the tragedies of the past that Querig’s breath has conveniently, but also sinisterly, concealed for them as they betray the travelling companions to the ‘monster dog,’ these monks including Father Brian still believe that these “mountain birds” (159) “may yet be agents of God” (141). Despite that, upon the discovery of the liminal space held in place, and in tension, between the monks and the she-dragon, Querig, or more appropriately, the historical past of the ancient Saxons and Britons, nothing can be left unchanged. Especially after the slaying of the ‘monster dog’ by Sir Gawain, who has his past ‘reveries’ completely roused by the experience, even Axl, Edwin and Beatrice are ‘transformed’ by the incident too. “Sir Gawain, were we not comrades once long ago?” asks Axl of the aging knight, who quickly dismisses him and beckons him to go to their “cherished son” by seeking out a “bargeman” to take them down a “river” with a “fast tide... flowing east” as if he were already privy to the consequences of their memories being ‘stirred’ and encouraging them to get away from the possibly weakening and receding ‘mist’ as fast as possible (195-96). For after all, with Edwin returning to Wistan’s side and becoming his guide to “lead him to

Querig" (189), this only quickens the warrior on his "mission to slay the dragon Querig" himself as "charged" by his own king (129). In other words, in all three scenarios, the resolution of the liminal spaces as marked by the removal of the boy from the Saxon village, the death of the 'monster dog' underneath the monastery and the discovery of the 'device' that made explicit the allegiances of the monks, thus represent the much needed impetus to shift from the ambiguities of the past in the novel under the influence of Querig's breath to the further uncertainties of the future, at least.

Meanwhile, popular medieval fantasy tropes that have been upended in the novel too signify liminality. In the figure of the couple Axl and Beatrice, in their representation of the stereotypical Arthurian adultery plot, its iconological status has been toppled not only by the advanced age of the couple, as well as their poverty, but also their ambiguous place in the novel that has mostly 'forgotten' Beatrice's act of adultery, and can only depict its impacts on their current situation and relationship. In fact, it is only revealed that Beatrice has had an affair in the final chapter of the novel, during the 'boatman's' interrogation of Axl as he recounts a "memory" that "brings particular pain." In the time before Querig, within a possibly short span of time, Axl discovers that Beatrice has been "unfaithful" to him, and because their son was a "witness to its bitterness," he thereafter left, "vowing never to return" despite the couple eventually re-uniting. When news that their son was "taken by the plague" (339) arrives, Axl has "forbade" his wife to "go to his grave" in a fit of cruelty, "foolishness and pride," and "a darker betrayal than the small infidelity" so as to "punish" Beatrice for her adultery (340). A greater punishment, perhaps, is Axl's final betrayal as made distinct and indisputable by the 'boatman' whose

gaze Axl avoids as he leaves behind his wife on his boat and returns alone to shore. This last scene is indeed tragically reminiscent of Sir Thomas Malory's fictional portrayal of King Arthur's charge to put his adulterous wife, Queen Guinevere, to an "iron stake" around which a "great fire" would be made and upon which she "should be burnt" (Chapter VI). Yet even more heartrending is the sobering reality that there is no Sir Lancelot to save Beatrice, no "knight in right or in wrong" to rescue her, thereby dispelling any typical notion of medieval fantasy or chivalric romance in Ishiguro's narrative (Chapter VII).

Rather strikingly, however, one of the few narrative elements of the Arthurian romance genre that actually endures in Ishiguro's novel is the destructiveness of Beatrice's adulterous affair that also sets off the chain of events in the plot of the novel. Just as the Queen Guinevere of Malory's fictional account has commented of her own illegitimate liaison with Sir Lancelot, "for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed" (Chapter IX), Beatrice too "blame[s]" herself for Axl's inability to forgive her for her transgressions, which only fills him with "deep sorrow" and even moves him to "small tears in his eyes" as soon as he realises he still could not forgive her despite spending all that time together, despite surviving such a long, arduous journey of forgetting and remembering together too (337-38). In *Dangerous Liaisons* by Patricia Clare Ingham, she explicates,

The tradition of the Arthurian adultery plot, the famous story of the destruction of Arthur's utopian brotherhood on account of the illicit loves of his wife, offers the ultimate version of romance tragedy. Destructive female desire proves to be one of the most common motifs of Arthurian romance. The tradition persistently

narrates the ignoble suffering and frequently the guilt of its female characters. Guinevere, Morgan le Fey, and others emerge in the critical tradition, and frequently by the end of the romances themselves, as deadened and deadly; their deadliness, moreover, endangers relations among their heroic sovereigns, fathers, and lovers. (138-39)

Ironically, however, in Ishiguro's novel, it is only in the final chapter that the readers are made aware of the 'romance tragedy.' Certainly, by exposing the personal tragedy near the ending, Ishiguro thus means to contradict the assumed associations with the 'common motif' of the Arthurian adultery plot and to destabilise the sense of resolution in the novel. The 'stirring' of the 'buried giant' of the past has just begun, after all, and now the ending naturally points the readers back to the beginning of TBG where the first contact with the couple is made. Novel but yet more virulent, more malicious interpretations and perspectives abound of their relationship and even circumstances, with Axl very early on questioning himself while his wife still slept, "Had they always lived like this, just the two of them, at the periphery of the community? Or had things once been quite different?" (6) Among other things, even his initially sweet and naïve term of endearment, 'princess,' for his similarly elderly wife, which is oft repeated throughout the entire narrative can be interpreted as pretentious now, forced and constrained, and of course, disingenuous. Nevertheless, this re-visiting and re-envisioning of the plot, characters as well as dialogue from the very beginning of the novel appears to underscore Ishiguro's beliefs about the persistent, ambiguous and 'polyphonic' nature of history, notably so in moments of trauma or tragedy.

At the same time, Ishiguro too leaves his readers in the doomed, ineluctable hands of the ferryman in the novel, who has apparently made an unplanned appearance much earlier on in the novel by “some curious chance” (46). According to Radcliffe G. Edmonds, III, in *Myths of the Underworld Journey*, he elucidates,

Charon, appears in Greek literature, the figure of the ferryman of the dead is mentioned in a number of earlier sources, both literary and artistic. So familiar does Charon become as the means to cross over into the realm of death that his ferry becomes a metonym for death itself... Whereas in some stories, Charon is savagely eager to transport any soul that comes to him, in others he demands payment for his services. (127)

It is significant here to mention that while Ishiguro’s ‘Charon’ or ‘ferryman’ figure seems reluctant to ‘transport any soul,’ having allowed the couple to continue on their way to find their son in their first meeting, and even equipping them with some clues as to the consummation of their journey, he still requires ‘payment for his services’ in the form of the untarnished truth. Ishiguro’s ‘boatman’ thus explains,

[W]e boatmen have seen so many over the years it doesn’t take us long to see beyond deceptions. Besides, when travellers speak of their most cherished memories, it’s impossible for them to disguise the truth. A couple may claim to be bonded by love, but we boatmen may see instead resentment, anger, even hatred. Or a great barrenness. Sometimes a fear of loneliness and nothing

more. Abiding love that has endured the years—that we see only rarely [...] Good lady, I've already said more than I should. (46)

Yet, Ishiguro's boatman is a character onto himself, as he willingly helps the couple Axl and Beatrice to 'cheat' death, so to speak, when he insinuates to them that they might be the very people who are 'bonded' together by 'resentment, anger, even hatred' rather than 'love.'

Furthermore, he allows them a peek into their future, or the future of a 'boatwoman' figure as the readers will discover later in the novel, in their first meeting as the travelling couple had sought some shelter from rain inside a "villa" that "must have been splendid enough in Roman days" (35). Described as a "bird-like old woman—older than Axl and Beatrice—in a dark cloak," this boatwoman sits opposite the standing boatman in a "spacious room" (36). The boatman, however, is a "thin, unusually tall man" (37), who is actually being tormented and taunted by the boatwoman as she repetitively threatens to kill a rabbit that she holds in her hands with a "large rusted knife" and then arbitrarily changes her mind at the last moment (38). Sharing with the travelling couple that the villa is his "special place to go" on his "rest days" since it is "filled with precious memories," the boatman laments that this place has now become haunted by the boatwoman who mocks him "hour by hour, night and day" by hurling at him "cruel and unjust accusations," as well as execrating him with "the most horrible curses" (39-40). Yet, Axl is shrewd enough to point out that while the "boatman seems honest," this boatwoman figure might "have just cause to come here and spend her time as she does." In response, the boatwoman agrees that she would rather be "in the company of my own husband" (41), but upon her own meeting with this very same boatman some

time ago, she claims that this very same, “sly” (43) boatman has “tricked” her, “[taken] away my husband and left me waiting on the shore” (41). Again, as if a foreshadowing of the events that will be unfurled in the last scene of the novel, the boatman points out in his defence:

This lady is reluctant to accept it, but her bond with her husband was simply too weak. Let her look into her heart, then dare say my judgement that day was in error. (42)

As the boatwoman “sulkily” acknowledges the ‘judgement’ of the boatman by leaving his home and disappearing, almost instantly, into the “tall nettles” outside, she only appears again much later in the narrative (44). Nonetheless, this image of the ‘bird-like’ boatwoman who has been left behind on the ‘shore’ and is betrayed by the boatman, or her husband, or even both, resonates very much with Beatrice’s own experience with her husband and the same boatman, except that Axl chooses to stay on land instead of her.

Certainly, such resemblances, despite the minor differences, are intended to signal to the travelling couple of the impossibility of their journey to end in blissful harmony, but also its inevitability as they trudge on over hills, as well as into the underground, no matter the atrocities that they had committed, nor the future tragedies that they might perpetuate. In fact, while in the company of the boatman as they stood within his liminal vicinity, transposing between the real and allegorical worlds of the narrative, Axl even catches glimpses of the past which was full of “wars and burning houses” that the boatman has reminded him of when he speaks about houses being “burnt to the ground” and becoming “no more now than a mound or two beneath grass and heather” (45). Such haunting memories of trauma and tragedy are

irrepressible, indeed, and have become precarious and subversive in this narrative of forgetfulness.

Much later in the novel, however, when Axl and Beatrice appear to meet the boatwoman again, they come across her “boat” while they are both inside “baskets” (244) and floating downstream through “sludge-like water” (247). As Axl peers into her boat, he does not remember the boatwoman at first and only recognises the “unusual nature of her garment—a patchwork of a number small dark rags” that “tugged at his memory,” but her presence that portends death and deceitfulness still remains. Noticing Axl in her boat, she asks him for his help as she has “fallen and hurt” herself but Beatrice reminds him not to “forget” or “leave” her (249). In the instant that Axl tries to lean “forward” and “touch” the boatwoman, a familiar, “rusted knife” (250) that was in her grasp all this while, falls to the boards and attracts the pixies that have been resting in a “wooden, lidless box.” Initially mistaking them for “dying fish” and “skinned rabbits,” they are almost overwhelmed by the innumerable pixies that suddenly lay siege on them and turn Axl into an unwilling “swordsmen” armed with a hoe even as he was previously known for his “skill” for “diplomacy and, when required, intrigue” (251). Almost forgetting about Beatrice, he is only reminded of her when the boatwoman asks him to release or “leave her to us” (252) especially as “there’s no cure to save her” (254).

Although the ‘cure’ that the boatwoman alludes to here points nearly directly to the “pains” (53) that Beatrice has suffered throughout the narrative, which Axl has noted caused “something different lately in her gait... as though she were nursing a secret pain somewhere” (16), “as if she were cushioning some pain” (30), Father Jonus explicitly tells them that Beatrice is healthy

despite the “blood in her urine” and even encourages them to “go to your son with nothing to fear” (171). With this much treachery and dishonesty in the novel, it really does not matter if the boatwoman was telling the truth or that Father Jonus was lying to protect Beatrice from the truth. The figures of the boat people in Ishiguro’s novel are but guardians or sentries perhaps of death, or of the future, whose ‘payment’ requires the unconditional truth and unadulterated integrity of all their ‘passengers’ else they will push them on their journey again towards discovering these very realities. As such, the role of the boatman in Ishiguro’s novel is not just as a ‘metonym’ but also a liminal, transitional marker for the characters and readers to understand their paths before them, and remind them of the need to change their assumptions, even belief systems, as they traverse from one part of their life to another, from one part of their past to the future. Beyond just the characters in the narrative too, Ishiguro seems to hint at the possibility that the boatmen exist as historical markers as well. Always at the margins of the narratives, and on the edges of the liminal spaces of the novel, the boatmen are witnesses to the great waves of history, appearing just as the travelling couple departs on their fated journey to regain their memories, and which eventually brings about the death of the mystical Querig as well as the vengeful conquest of the Saxons, and as they go their separate ways, with Axl being too afraid to “cross to the island” before his time or even forgive his wife for her moment of indiscretion (342).

In other words, *The Buried Giant* is a novel that offers a rich tapestry of possible narratives, which can be read on the individual, historical and even allegorical levels. Nevertheless, it is always concerned with the traumatic experiences of the past being re-casted, and re-moulded, to fit a particular

reading or interpretation, but which cannot remain quiet or ‘buried’ for long as the destabilising forces of history, its plurality and polyphony, will always ‘stir’ and work to challenge such presumably permanent casts and moulds to ‘progress’ ahead and forge a future, no matter how bleak a future it is. Last but not least, TBG represents Ishiguro’s attempt at experimenting with and problematising conceptions of medieval fantasy and history. Through the morally questionable figures of King Arthur, Merlin, Sir Gawain and even the elderly couple, Axl and Beatrice, who would have escaped judgement and lived liberated from their past if not for the slaying of Querig, as well as the spiteful, revenge-seeking characters of Edwin and Wistan, who time has proven to be the victors of this medieval fantasy story, Ishiguro is able to challenge the assumptions of not just history, as well as the supposedly impartial nature of historical record, but also memory. Human memory, after all, is susceptible not only to influences from its past, its past traumatic experiences and emotions, but its present circumstances as well.

Conclusion

A year ago, *The New Yorker* published a poignantly written article, “Do Teens Read Seriously Anymore?” in which David Denby explores the impacts of the digital culture on the reading habits of teens. While most teens have become “attached to screens” and have read “more words than they ever have in the past” especially of “scraps” and “pieces of information from everywhere and from nowhere,” reading anything serious has become a “chore.” Screens have taken the place of books, but yet, Denby exuberantly declares, “Literature will survive, too, *somehow*.” Perhaps, with the popularly acclaimed screen adaptations of *The Remains of the Day* (1993) and *Never Let Me Go* (2010), and the up-and-coming adaptation of *The Buried Giant*, which film rights have been picked up by the renowned producer Scott Rudin, Ishiguro’s polychromatic, multi-generic novels hold the answer. Whichever the medium, it might even have become more critical now to delve into the intricacies of genres, their influences on narratives as well as their hybridity. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed how Ishiguro’s use of popular genres as literary devices has allowed him to utilise a unique repertoire of narrative techniques that both play out and play with reader expectations, while ultimately, reworking and reflecting them back onto their narratives, and transforming them. Indeed, with his experimentation of genres, Ishiguro might have actually found a singular way of connecting with his contemporary audiences, not only by overturning their expectations of genres, but also remembering to entertain them with his inventive stories as well.

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