



Academiejaar '07-'08

Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's
When We Were Orphans and
A Pale View of Hills

PROMOTOR: PROF. DR. I. BERENSMEYER

Masterproef voorgelegd aan de Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte
voor het verkrijgen van de graad van Master in de taal- en
letterkunde: Engels – Scandinavistiek

DORIEN HEIREMANS

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my promoter, Prof. Dr. I. Berensmeyer, for his guidance during the preparation for and the writing of this thesis. His enthusiasm for my chosen subject, his replies to my questions, his comments, suggestions and encouragements certainly improved this thesis and kept me motivated. I am also grateful to Joachim Veldeman for placing his thesis about Kazuo Ishiguro and unreliable narration and his collected articles at my disposal.

Contents

Introduction p.4

1. Memory p.7

1.1. Memory from Classical Antiquity to Late Modernity

1.2. The memory boom

1.3. Important works in the field of memory

1.4. Varieties of memory

1.5. Metaphors of memory

1.6. Memory and trauma in twentieth century fiction

2. Memory as a means of mourning in *A Pale View of Hills* p.26

2.1. Echoes of other texts

2.2. To speak about the unspeakable

3. Nostalgic memory in *When We Were Orphans* p.33

3.1. Ishiguro's reasons for using memory

3.2. Technical advantages of the use of memory

3.3. The foggy texture of memory

3.4. Memory as a theme

4. *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans*: a comparison p.46

4.1. Unreliable narration

4.2. *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans* as trauma fiction

Conclusion p.51

Works cited p.53

Introduction

“Memory can change the shape of a room; it can change the colour of a car. And memories can be distorted. They're just an interpretation, they're not a record, and they're irrelevant if you have the facts.”

From the movie *Memento*

What distinguishes human beings from other mammals, birds, etc. is hard to define. Some may say it is the ability to empathize; others may argue that it is self-awareness or consciousness. What certainly contributes to the human quality is the specific ability to recollect the past. According to G. Vingerhoets (149), *learning* is the process by which man and other animal species obtain knowledge about their environment. *Memory* is the reservoir of acquired knowledge. Over time, all kinds of thinkers have tried to discriminate among the many meanings of the concept of memory, having difficulties to define such an overwhelming topic. Warnock distinguishes between ‘*habit memory*’ and ‘*conscious memory*.’ The former refers to “skills, responses or modes of behaviour that are learned by human beings, non-human animals and even machines,” while the latter “consists of recalling or recollecting past experience” (cited in *Theories of Memory*, 3). So it seems that conscious memory may be one of those defining factors which distinguishes humans from non-humans. Although human beings are characterized by the ability to act against instinct (which most animals follow instinctively) and an own will, our memory also has a will of its own, as Douwe Draaisma suggests (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 7). People or events which were once meaningful to you, can become blurry over time and you may even forget them completely. On the other hand, it also happens that you *want* to forget something because it is too painful, but it comes back to you unexpectedly. The characteristic quality for human nature and the seeming undefinability have caused the concept of memory to be a popular topic among philosophers, thinkers and writers of all times. Already in antiquity, people were interested in the ‘art of memory’ (Yates), seeing it as an important skill for rhetoricians. Over time, it never escaped people’s attention, but since the 1990s, we can definitely see a renewed interest in memory, branching out to other concepts like trauma, Holocaust testimonies, False Memory Syndrome, collective and cultural memory.

This thesis aims at providing an overview of what the concept of memory has signified in the course of history and what it signifies today and at analysing the use of memory in two novels by Kazuo Ishiguro, namely *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans*.

In the first chapter of this thesis I will approach the concept of memory from a theoretical and general point of view and attempt to map out this extremely broad concept. The first section of this chapter gives a history of the notion of memory and outlines how thinkers in different periods treated the subject. The second section is dedicated to a discussion of the memory boom that occurred in the 1990s. Memory in general and trauma in particular became very popular topics in various fields of study during the latter half of the twentieth century. I will outline the most important reasons for this memory boom and afterwards, I will give an overview of the major theoretical works that were of great influence on the modern idea of memory and on trauma theory. The following section will be devoted to a theoretical and more neuropsychological survey of different forms of remembering and forgetting. Then I will discuss the different metaphors people have used to refer to memory, ranging from a wax writing tablet to a computer's hard disk. Finally, the last section of this theoretical chapter will focus on how memory and trauma have been depicted in the literature of the twentieth century in order to, later on, see how the two novels by Ishiguro fit into this.

All these different approaches and ideas on memory will have provided a good starting point for my analysis of Ishiguro's novels. In all of his novels up to date memory is an important factor in the development of the story, with first-person narrators who look back on their lives. Already in his 1982 debut, *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro explored the depths of memory and how people use memory for their own emotional agenda. To situate the novel I will shortly outline the intertextual sources of the story, the most important ones being the short story "Eveline" by James Joyce and Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*. The following part will discuss the role of memory and the past for the protagonist. The third chapter will deal with *When We Were Orphans*, in which Ishiguro develops the theme of memory even further, paying more attention to the special texture of memory and focusing on that special kind of memory, nostalgia. I will discuss the novel departing from three aspects of memory: its technical advantages, its foggy texture and its thematic appeal. All of these different sides of memory have been mentioned by Ishiguro as reasons for his interest in memory as a narrative device and theme in his work.

The final chapter will be devoted to similarities between the two novels. In their renderings of the past, the narrators of both novels are not completely reliable, as the reader comes to realize quite soon. Consequently, I will devote a section to unreliable narration. Finally, I will investigate how different characteristics of trauma fiction are incorporated in both *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans*.

In general, what started out as a discussion of memory in Ishiguro's novels, came to be focused more and more on trauma. I fully realize Ishiguro's work is not quintessentially trauma fiction. However, while investigating the use of memory in the novels, I was naturally drawn into the whole concept of trauma and found many aspects of trauma theory that could be identified in both novels. That is why trauma theory receives a good deal of attention as well in this thesis, but always closely in relation to the narrators' representations of their memories.

Chapter 1: Memory

1.1. Memory from Classical Antiquity to Late Modernity

Greek philosophers and Roman rhetoricians did not agree in every way about the value of memory, but both agreed on the ideas that memory is “an active process which is defined by the two activities of collection and recollection, of storing and retrieval” (Jennifer Richards in *Theories of Memory*, 20) and that “these activities constitute the basis of knowing and understanding.” Plato believed that rhetorical training and especially writing had a negative influence on our capacity to remember and that we rather had to be educated in the art of dialectic. Only a philosophical education can enable us to remember the divine origins of our soul and thus live morally valuable lives. In *On Memory and Recollection*, Aristotle expresses the seemingly obvious that memory is about the past, in contrast to judgment and prediction, which have the future as subject, and perception, which is about the present. Aristotle already remarked upon the difference between habit and conscious memory, although he did not call them that. He considered ‘remembering’ an action which many animals can perform, but only humankind can ‘recollect’, which is a conscious and deliberate action. To the Roman rhetoricians, memory was an indispensable asset and it was intensely trained at schools and universities. It was seen as a craft that had to be developed in order to make a more successful public speaker or politician. Roman handbooks on oratory stressed the importance of memory to be able to recall all the arguments necessary to defend a case and to refute the arguments made by the opponent. One of the recommended techniques in those handbooks was the place system, of which a detailed report is given in, for example, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (*Rhetoric to Herennius*) (c. 100 BC). This method involves the imagination of walking through a house you know very well and then mentally attach the items that need to be remembered to different objects in the house. During the speech, you imagine making the same walk again, thus recollecting the different items in the right order. This method was used by Roman orators, of which the most famous is Cicero, who in his *De Oratore* (55 BC) explains the importance of oratory to society and state and the five pillars of oratory, being invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Lawyers preparing oral pleas nowadays still take these five aspects into account. Another classic theorist for rhetoricians is Quintilian, who devoted much attention to the technical aspects of rhetoric in his *Institutio Oratoria* (*On the training of the orator*, c. AD 93). He is especially worth mentioning because of his

distinction between ‘the process of recalling content’ (*memoria rerum*) and ‘the rote-learning of speeches, the remembering of words’ (*memoria verborum*), also sometimes referred to as ‘grammatical memory’ (*Theories of Memory*, 22).

For an extensive account of the meaning of memory in the Middle Ages, we must turn to Mary Carruthers’ *The Book of Memory*. While nowadays, we mostly praise originality and imagination, medieval people were especially appreciative of superior memories.

The difference is that whereas now geniuses are said to have creative imagination which they express in intricate reasoning and original discovery, in earlier times they were said to have richly retentive memories, which they expressed in intricate reasoning and original discovery. (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 4)

Carruthers has devoted much of her study to medieval memory techniques, also with the help of Jan M. Ziolkowski in *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. In the general introduction to this book, the difference between *memoria verborum* and *memoria rerum* is also expanded on¹. In the early monastic tradition, *memoria* was considered an ‘art of reading,’ mainly influenced by Quintilian’s proposed techniques. Writing was conceived as an “ethical dialogue between memories, the sharing and preservation of communal wisdom” (*Theories of Memory*, 23) in contrast to our contemporary view on writing as primarily an act of creativity and originality. In the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, we can see a revival of the rhetorical memory and textbooks proposed all sorts of variations on architectural sites for the place system. According to Frances A. Yates, the main strand of Dominicans, “descending from the scholastic emphasis on memory,” is the most important strand in the history of the subject of memory. She mentions two Dominicans, Johannes Romberch and Cosmas Rossellius, who both wrote books on memory². They both claimed to be very useful to all kinds of professions and meant to make the Dominican art of memory generally known.

In his introduction to the section on memory in the Enlightenment and Romantic period in *Theories of Memory*, Michael Rossington starts off by discussing John Locke, who had a big influence on the concept of memory in Romanticism. “In his *Essay Concerning Human*

¹ “*Memoria verborum* is remembering every word of a segment of text by associating each syllable with a particular visual cue. [...] *Memoria rerum*, much the more generally useful technique in rhetorical *memoria*, consists in remembering the chief subject matters of a sermon (for example) by associating each one with a summary image.” (*The Medieval Craft of Memory*, 10)

² Romberch, Johannes; *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae* (1520). Rossellius, Cosmas; *Thesaurus artificiosae memoriae* (1579)

Understanding (1690, Book II, Chapter 27),” he “famously identified the self with memory.” He saw one’s identity to be completely determined by his or her memory and someone who did not remember anything of his or her past had in fact no identity, or, and this may seem less logical, no sense of self. Locke was an empiricist who derived knowledge and made conclusions based on experiences and sensations. To him, somebody without the ability to record memories could have no sense of self. In ‘Of Retention,’ Locke defines memory as the second way of Retention, “the Power to revive again in our Minds those *Ideas*, which after imprinting have disappeared, or have been as it were laid aside out of Sight. [...] This is *Memory*, which is as it were the Store-house of our *Ideas*. “³ In contrast to the earlier theorists of memory, Locke believes rote-learning is counter-productive because the strength of our memory does not depend on training, but on a happy constitution.

From Locke, we go on to David Hume, who was born five years after Locke’s death. What is characteristic of David Hume’s account of memory in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), is, according to Michael Rossington, his “repeated pairing of the term with ‘imagination” (*Theories of Memory*, 70). Hume argues that the ideas of memory are stronger and more lively than those of imagination, but that the relationship between the two is sometimes dubious since memories can lose their vividness and can thus be mistaken for fictions of the mind or imaginations can grow so strong and convincing that we come to see them as true memories. Rossington truthfully remarks that Hume anticipated the nowadays popular topics of false memory or the problem of reconstructing the past through witnesses. The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel introduced some new terms into the discussion of memory. In *Encyclopaedia* (1830), Hegel makes the distinction between memory and recollection, as did Aristotle, and the one between memory and imagination, as did Hume. But unlike Hume, Hegel sees imagination as a helping hand in the reconstruction of memory. He also differentiates between *retentive memory* (“the retention of the meaning of names, of our ability to remember the ideas objectively linked to language-signs”⁴), *reproductive memory* (“In the name, Reproductive memory has and recognizes the thing, and with the thing it has the

³ From *Philosophical Works* by John Locke. “[...] *Retention*, or the keeping of those simple *Ideas*, which from Sensation or Reflection it hath received. This is done two ways. First, by keeping the *Idea*, [...] for some time actually in view, which is called *Contemplation*.” The other way of Retention is *Memory*.

⁴ Hegel; *Encyclopaedia*. Cited in *Theories of Memory*, 86.

name, apart from intuition and image.”⁵) and *mechanical memory* (which is the highest form of memory, *Gedächtnis*).

When trying to cover the period of late modernity the most important names that come to mind are Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin. Marx and Nietzsche were mostly concerned with historical memory. Marx believed a social revolution could only take place if the people looked to the future, not to the past, so they had to turn against memory. Nietzsche, on the contrary, deemed the past very useful: “either the classical past could be used to justify and reinforce the present culture by suggesting an identity and continuity between past and present, or the past could be used to criticize the present by stressing the difference and distance between them.”⁶ To him, the past and the present, or memory and forgetting, are closely linked and both are needed in equal measure to secure the health of an individual, a people or a culture⁷. In *Matter and Memory* (1874), Henri Bergson makes a distinction between two different kinds of memory that is reminiscent of Warnock’s distinction between habit and conscious memory. While Bergson’s *habit memory* more or less refers to the same concept as Warnock’s, his *pure memory* “refers to the survival of personal memories in the unconscious.” (*Theories of Memory*, 93) Bergson influenced Marcel Proust, who, in turn, has been extremely influential on our idea of memory, as well as on Kazuo Ishiguro’s work, as he has told himself in an interview: “It was a real revelation that you didn't have to present like a solid scene followed by another solid scene, [...] That in fact you can actually mimic the fluidity of the mind, particularly when it's remembering, and you can just have a fragment of a scene that dovetails into a fragment from another moment that's 30 years separated from it” (Ishiguro, AsiaSource Interview).

Proust’s *A La Recherche du temps Perdu* (known in English as *In Search of Lost Time* or *Remembrance of Things Past*; 1913-1927) is primarily known for the madeleine episode - where the eating of a madeleine cake soaked in tea, brings back childhood memories to the protagonist - and for the distinction it makes between voluntary and involuntary memory. In psychology, the Proust phenomenon has come to stand for the particular ability of odours (while the passage written by Proust, is actually more about *taste*, as Draaisma points out (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 44)) in bringing back memories vividly and

⁵ idem

⁶ Smith, Douglas; Introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche, Oxford World’s Classics (1999)

⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich; *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1874). Cited in *Theories of Memory*.

suddenly. Psychologists do not actually agree if the Proust phenomenon really exists. There is also some dispute about the characteristics of the memories: are they especially early memories, or memories only accessible through odours, or memories which come back to you for the very first time? The Proust phenomenon is of course hard to test because odours connected to memories are very personal. Nevertheless, it may be true that “nothing is more memorable than a smell,” to put it in Diane Ackerman’s words.

Walter Benjamin is mainly relevant for the discussion of memory because of his essay *On the Image of Proust* in which he revises some of Proust’s concepts and then goes on to reflect himself upon memory and forgetting. Freud’s *A Note upon the “Mystic Writing-Pad”* (1925) proposes a new metaphor of memory. In earlier times, the paper and the wax tablet were the most common metaphors of memory, but Freud claims these do not adequately describe the special features of memory and therefore, he proposes a ‘mystic writing-pad’ with two separate layers which represent the conscious and the unconscious memory. I will elaborate further on this in the section on metaphors of memory. Freud has been very important in the field of trauma. Together with Josef Breuer, he wrote *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896) in which they tried to explain why and how hysteria occurred. Freud also coined the term *screen memory* (Deckerrinerung) which is a memory of something that is unconsciously used to repress recollection of an associated but distressing event, often from childhood. Freud died in 1939, shortly after the German invasion of Poland which marked the start of World War II in Europe. World War II and the Holocaust in particular would later become extremely important subjects in all discourse about memory and trauma, as I will be explained in the following section.

1.2. The memory boom

During the twentieth century, and in particular since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a renewed and increasing interest in memory, a phenomenon which has been called by scholars the ‘memory boom.’⁸ Various factors stimulated an increased discussion of memory in many different fields. Those stimuli have been political and technological ones, as well as philosophical and scientific.

Commemorating events such as the Holocaust has motivated people to reflect upon the topic of memory, he suggests. The fall of communism in 1989 made communities want to

⁸ Cf. for example Jay M. Winter.

emphasize their national identity. Identity politics and nationalism took off. People want to remember what happened to their ancestors as a form of ethnic pride or tribute. Winter points out that the information technology developing so quickly as it has done, also helps explain the recent success of the memory boom. The means of recording witnesses have expanded so much that it has become easier to preserve their stories and come into contact with them. This possibility of recording testimonies permanently, has often caused journalists to be very eager to get witnesses to testify. This has provoked a conflict between the necessity to have the most tragic stories told in an attempt to prevent such things from happening again, and the empathy we feel for victims and the urge we feel to leave them in peace. An example of a subject of this debate is *Shoah*, a film by Claude Lanzmann about the Holocaust, without any historical footage, only testimonies by, among others, survivors of concentration camps. There is one particular scene where a barber, Abraham Bomba, is being interviewed. Although many agree that despite the horror, or precisely because of this very horror, such stories need to be told and preserved in order to remember what evil can do, one watching the film, can not help but wanting the interviewer to leave Mr. Bomba, who is obviously struggling to answer, alone. In a response to *Shoah*, one of the pioneers in the field of trauma, Dominick LaCapra, suggested that “the very limits of art’s autonomy are tested on not only historical but ethical grounds insofar as art addresses limit-cases that present live, emotion-laden, at times intractable issues” (LaCapra, 234). However, LaCapra does not deny the film’s importance nor Lanzmann’s achievement.

Also contributing to the booming of memory as a topic, were, according to Winter, higher education and affluence. “Rising real incomes and increased expenditure on education” have caused the number of students to increase and the subjects of study to diversify. On top of that, the modern media are extremely important in allowing various stories of memories reach the general public. The wars of the twentieth century have provided opportunities where family stories can be set in bigger, more universal contexts. Family chronicles have always intrigued people, and this urge to commemorate the wars has made it possible to set these family stories in a wider, historical context. “The ever widening time gap between the traumatic historical events of the Holocaust and the present” (Henke, 78) and the fact that soon there will be no eyewitnesses alive anymore, have also increased the urge to encourage commemoration tremendously.

Finally, the latter half of the twentieth century, saw the recognition of traumatic memory and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. After the first World War, accounts of soldiers suffering from shell shock, started to emerge; stories which returned after the following World War and after the Vietnam War. Only after the Vietnam War, psychologists reached a consensus that soldiers from the different wars of the twentieth century were generally suffering from the same ‘disease.’ However, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is not limited to war survivors only, also victims of a sexual assault can suffer from PTSD. The realization that “among us, within our families, there are men and women overwhelmed by traumatic recollection” (Winter), contributed to the memory boom. Another factor, not mentioned by Winter, but by Rossington and Whitehead (*Theories of Memory*, 6), was the debate about False Memory Syndrome (FMS) in the early 1990s. The term refers to the phenomenon that some adults who belatedly remember being sexually abused as a child, may in fact never have been molested. Parents who believed their children suffered from FMS, started the False Memory Syndrome Foundation in 1993. These events started a debate about the reliability of recovering repressed memories and the problem of suggestion in recovered memory therapy.

The problem of the reliability of memory has also been an issue in Holocaust testimonies. Douwe Draaisma reports on the case of Demjanjuk (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 131). In the Polish extermination camp of Treblinka, there once worked a Ukrainian guard, nicknamed Iwan the Terrible. In the 1970s, John Demjanjuk, working as a mechanic for a Ford auto factory, came to be suspected of being this guard. An investigation was started and survivors of Treblinka were questioned and confronted with pictures of Demjanjuk. After some time most of the witnesses claimed to be absolutely certain that Demjanjuk was in fact the man they knew as Iwan the terrible. But their testimonies were not thoroughly recorded, and their identification was often based on suggestive interrogation and repeated confrontation with pictures of Demjanjuk. With doubts raised about the identity of Iwan the terrible, CBS documentary makers tried to find the real Iwan the terrible, who turned out to be a certain Iwan Marchenko. Consequently, Demjanjuk was *not* the Iwan of Treblinka, however, they established that he *was* a war criminal. He had worked in the German extermination camp of Sobibór. Demjanjuk was tried in Israel, but the Supreme Court judged that there was reasonable doubt about his guilt and he was acquitted due to spoliation of evidence. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992) by Dori Laub recounts the testimony of a survivor of Birkenau who

remembers the uprising of Jewish prisoners in 1944, destroying, according to her, four chimneys. In reality, only one chimney was demolished. This makes her testimony more or less worthless to historians, because it is not an “accurate representation of the past” (*Theories of Memory*, 6). But to Laub, it illustrates the significance of the rebellion to the survivor. In the discourse about Holocaust testimony, more and more importance has been attached to rendering *a* version of the past. All testimonies are important because they tell a story. Trauma theory stresses the importance of alternative versions. Via witness testimony you gain knowledge about experience, rather than facts. You get access to how it felt rather than to how it actually happened, which may be equally important. Another notable work in relation to FMS and Holocaust testimonies, has been *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939-1948* (1996), an autobiography supposedly by Binjamin Wilkomirski who recounted his experiences in a concentration camp. Three years after publication, it turned out that the author was in fact Bruno Grosjean, a Swiss who had never been a prisoner. Some are convinced that Grosjean intentionally committed fraud and thus trivialised the Holocaust and all its victims, while others believe that he is self-deluded and really thought he was a Holocaust survivor.

In Holocaust studies, “memory is both foregrounded and problematised” (*Theories of Memory*, 7). As for example in the accounts of Buchenwald and Dachau survivor Bruno Bettelheim (1903-1990), related by Draaisma (*Waarom het leven*, 144). He was a psychoanalytic and noted down his memories of the camps. In 1943, he published a psychological analysis of how humans experienced, functioned in and reacted to the extreme conditions of a concentration camp. Bettelheim investigated how memory started to fail while being a prisoner. First of all, there was no way to make or keep any notes in concentration camps so he had to remember everything by heart. Secondly, there were more physical reasons like malnutrition, exhaustion, lack of vitamin B and the consequent dazedness, which caused the brain to deteriorate. There was also the constant feeling of “it does not matter, I am not going to survive this anyway.” One did not really feel the need to remember things, and often even immediately wanted to forget having witnessed horrific events. Forgetting became part of the whole psychological manipulating strategy of the guards. For prisoners, it was very important they *did not see* and *did not know* anything. Attracting attention was enough to get them killed instantly, so everyone always tried to blend in the crowd. On top of that, the guards appreciated it if you explicitly showed that you did not notice anything; you had to look away when they were beating up someone.

Looking away was some sort of self-preservation as well: sometimes you could get so caught up in your emotions that you ran to the rescue of another prisoner, which would surely get you killed on the spot.

The theories of traumatic memory can be easily applied to various events and wars in history, but the Holocaust has always been at the centre of much of the study in this field. Consequently, some of the works that have been most influential in the field of memory, deal specifically with the Holocaust.

1.3. Important works in the field of memory

I will now go on to give a survey of the works that have become milestones in the discourse about memory in the later twentieth century. But first, Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), whose most important works are *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) and *La Mémoire collective* (published posthumously in 1950), and who explored the social structures of memory, needs to be mentioned. Halbwachs' work has been important for recent ideas on commemoration and public memory. He pays attention to the special circumstances of remembering and to those aspects that most often are not of any interest to historians (Rossington in *Theories of Memory*, 135). During the first half of the twentieth century, the attention gradually shifted from individual to collective memory. 'Collective memory' refers to remembrances formed by society and culture. Halbwachs claimed that "there are no individual memories at all, since all memories [...] are only meaningful within the social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) of the groups [...] to which an individual belongs" (Henke, 81). Halbwachs' work was very influential on two texts that played an important role in the booming of memory as a topic of study: *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) by Yosef Yerushalmi and *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984) by Pierre Nora. Rossington and Whitehead claim these texts present a too clear-cut contrast between memory and history, preferring memory as the pure and primitive form of history and seeing them almost as opposing entities.

The German couple Jan and Aleida Assmann gained international fame for their study of the cultural memory, providing a link between memory, culture and groups. They drew further on Halbwachs's focus on memory as a social phenomenon. In *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (1999) Aleida Assmann distinguishes two forms of remembering: *functional memory* and *storage memory*

(Funktionsgedächtnis and Speicher-gedächtnis). The functional memory constitutes collective identity and takes its information from the storage memory (Ketelaar).

Trauma theory became really popular from the middle of the 1990s. Trauma and memory theory have been influenced a great deal by Freudian psychoanalysis. At first, trauma only referred to a physical injury, but ever since Freud and Pierre Janet, trauma has increasingly been used to refer to a psychological injury. Significant for trauma theory, was Freud's and Breuer's study of the causes of hysteria, first using the model of child abuse, afterwards using the new model of the train collision. Freud argued that at the moment of an accident, the mind is incapable of dealing with it and it blocks it away as a kind of self-defence mechanism of the human mind. Only later, when there is a reduced state of consciousness, the trauma comes back to you. The model of the train collision was also used, many decades later, for her discussion of trauma by Cathy Caruth. She said that at the moment of impact, the trauma is not registered. The mind just blanks out. This is the mechanism of dissociation: victims feel like they are just a witness, they do not completely experience the trauma at the moment. The publication of *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), edited by Caruth, was a huge milestone for trauma theory. "Caruth provided a model for thinking through the connections between the individual and collective historical experiences, such as war and genocide" (*Theories of Memory*, 7). With this volume, which was followed by *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996), she created a renewed interest in trauma theory and emphasised the "trans-disciplinary nature of trauma" (Whitehead, 5), combining work by scholars from different fields, such as literary theory, sociology and psychiatry. Dominick LaCapra has been another pioneer in the field of trauma. He has occupied himself mostly with the study of repression of trauma, linked to whole communities. His most important works in trauma theory include *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994) and *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2000), in which he warns against empathising too much with victims of trauma. Over-identification can sometimes lead to 'surrogate victimage' (LaCapra, *Writing History*, 211), which may be what happened in Benjamin Wilkomirski's case.

The concept of memory has of course not only been of interest to writers, but to scholars from different fields, many of whom have attempted to identify the various ways of remembering. I will give an overview of these different varieties in the next section.

1.4. The varieties of memory

Psychologists and neuropsychologists have sometimes distinguished separate kinds of remembrance, often giving another name referring to the same concept. Draaisma says that in the broad sense, memory is everything you bring from your past into your current life. But our memory is very much subdivided in different compartments. He says that, in total, we can distinguish 256 different kinds of memory. All of our senses, for example, have their own type of memory (Draaisma, interview with Humo). One distinction we all know about, is the one between *short-term* and *long-term memory*, which represents the difference between active use of information and a passive reservoir of knowledge. Long-term memory is what we mostly refer to in day-to-day conversation when we use the term memory. The two major divisions made by cognitive psychologists are *implicit* and *explicit memory* (Vingerhoets, 170). Our *explicit memory* stores information about auto-biographic events (*episodic memory*, for example: “I remember my birthday party last year.”) and factual knowledge, not connected to any certain time or place (*semantic memory*, for example: grammatical rules, the meaning of the word ‘tree’ or the fact that Monday is the first day of the week). Explicit memory is called that way because it can be measured by means of some tests, but it is sometimes also called *declarative memory* since we are able to express the information in declarative statements. The counterpart of explicit memory, is *implicit memory*, which contains information that unconsciously can affect our behaviour or thoughts. Implicit memory is subdivided in primitive learning processes, *procedural memory* and *priming*. Priming is the faster recognition of a certain stimulus when you have experienced it already earlier. The philosophical equivalent for procedural memory is the earlier mentioned *habit memory*, and refers to skills like riding a bike. When our procedural memory fails us, we say, for example: “I don’t remember *how* to drive.”

The terms ‘episodic’ and ‘autobiographical’ memory are often used interchangeably, but Brewer says they are two separate things. Brewer defines *autobiographical memory* as “memory for information related to the self” (Brewer, 26), and not all episodic memories are autobiographical. Episodic memory also includes, for example, that I remember that someone read to me a list of words and that one of those words was ‘curtain.’ We would not naturally refer to this kind of memory by using the term ‘autobiographical memory.’ One part of autobiographical memory is *personal memory*. A personal memory is a recollection of a particular episode from an individual’s past, while other autobiographical

memories, which are not personal memories, also include the fact that I remember that I was born on a Sunday, although I do not have a real recollection of it.

Not really relating to the self, there is also the *flashbulb memory*. The term was coined in 1977 by the psychologists Brown and Kulik. It is the memory of when you first received the news of a shocking, consequential, possibly historical, event. The memory does not only include the message itself, but also information related to the circumstances in which you received the message: who told you the news, where you were, what you were doing and so on. Examples of events about which many people have flashbulb memories, are the assassination of President Kennedy and the attack on the Twin Towers in New York. In an attempt to explain why we remember so many details in a flashbulb memory, and not, like with ordinary messages, only the message itself, Brown and Kulik suggested the *now print* effect. Draaisma (*Waarom het leven*, 70) summarises that at a moment of extreme emotion, the brain activates the *now print* system and much more details are saved than normally. Brown and Kulik saw this as a primitive remnant of a survival instinct, prior to the development of speech. If you suddenly end up in a situation where you need to process information with radical consequences, it is important that you can register as many details as possible. Draaisma doubts this explanation because people who suddenly end up in a life-threatening situation like a robbery, often only remember insignificant details afterwards and are not able to give a detailed description of the criminal. Neisser suggests that the complete nature of flashbulb memories is probably due to the way we handle them. When it comes to a shocking event, we often talk about it later and relate to others when, how and where we heard about it. This repetition causes the event to be registered in such detail by our mind. One assumption we make about flashbulb memories is that they are very accurate. We often think: "I still remember exactly what I was doing when I got the news." After the explosion of the Challenger, in 1986, Neisser and his colleague Harsch questioned over a hundred students about their whereabouts when they heard about the disaster. They questioned them again almost three years later. Most of them remembered at least some details of their exact whereabouts wrongly, which contests the assumption that flashbulb memories are very accurate. A researcher of autobiographical memory, Martin Conway, does not agree with Neisser's 'downgrading' of the flashbulb memory. According to Conway, it is not just because we repeatedly talk about it, that we remember more details about it; the mind really takes a mental picture at the moment of receiving the news (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 68).

When your memory fails you, you are of course *forgetting*. Many things we forget right away. Afterwards, information disappears much more slowly. The speed at which we forget is extremely variable and highly depends upon the extensiveness of the initial memory. Of all different kinds of memory, our autobiographical memory is most susceptible to disruption (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 268). In general, there are two kinds of amnesia: *retrograde amnesia* affects the memories prior to the injury, while *anterograde amnesia* prevents the storing of any new memories after the injury. We are used to thinking that remembering excludes forgetting, and vice versa. But Draaisma illustrates that the distinction is not that simple. What about the remembrance of something you have forgotten, for example? Sometimes you know you have forgotten something, you just can not remember what. What about the expression: “it’s on the tip of my tongue?” When a word is on the tip of your tongue, you often know the first letter or how many syllables it has, but you can not *quite* remember the exact word. The implicit memory is another example of the blurred line between remembering and forgetting. In an experiment, people with anterograde amnesia had to practice reading texts in mirror writing. The patients forgot the reading sessions and thought every morning they were doing the exercise for the first time, but their skill at reading in reverse improved just as quickly as with healthy patients.

Pierre Janet, a French psychologist and neurologist and active in the field of trauma, opposed *traumatic memories* against *narrative memories*. Traumatic memories involve involuntary flashes of memory. They are stored in the mind in a different form than other memories. Narrative memories are stored in the mind like a story. You cannot simply tell traumatic memories in a story. Pierre Janet considered turning traumatic memories into narrative ones as part of the working-through process. Once you have done that, you can begin to mourn. In relation to this, I also need to mention Freud’s concept of *Trauerarbeit*, or ‘work of mourning’. Victims need to verbally re-enact their traumas, in order to work through them. I will return to these strategies of dealing with traumas in the discussion of Ishiguro’s novels.

1.5. Metaphors of memory

When talking about the human mind, and memory, we have always come up with all kinds of different metaphors to describe them. These various metaphors have evolved in time, often in relation to new insights in psychology and medicine and new developments in

technology, thus often stressing a different aspect of the working of memory. In classical antiquity, the human mind was often compared to a scroll or a wax writing tablet, as for example Cicero did in his *De Oratore* (*On the Orator*). The metaphor of the writing tablet is the source of the term *tabula rasa*, literally meaning a ‘scraped tablet,’ which is ready to be written on again. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, *tabula rasa* is a loan-translation of Aristotle’s *pinakis agraphos*, literally meaning ‘unwritten tablet,’ a term he used in his *De Anima* (*On the Soul*). Another related metaphor is the one of the storehouse or the inventory (Carruthers). When you remember something, you just need to go to the right corridor and pull out the right file. The Bible refers to memory as ‘the tablet of the heart,’ for example in the proverb (Proverb 3:3) “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” The heart was long seen as the seat of emotions and identity. During the Middle Ages, the focus on the heart remained. “Medieval monks described an internal ‘scribe’ writing a book of memories in the heart, while secular poets portrayed lovers ‘reading’ their own hearts” (Jager, *Metaphors*). Eric Jager suggests that as books and reading were democratized and no longer exclusively available to scholars, the book of the heart as a metaphor became familiar to the common people as well. In early modern times, with the invention of the printing press, the metaphors of hand-writing disappeared and the book of the heart came to be pictured as a “printed volume, suggesting a more mechanical self.”

To return to the metaphor of the book of the heart, gradually, the heart came less to be seen as the seat of the soul due to new medical insights about its function as a pump that circulates the blood through the body. That position was taken over by the brain as our understanding of that organ increased thanks to physicians and philosophers and likewise, the metaphor of the book of the heart was replaced by the metaphor of “the book and volume of my brain,” as Jager quotes from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

In 1925, Sigmund Freud returned to these classical metaphors of inscription in the already mentioned *Note upon the “Mystic Writing-Pad”*. He considers the metaphor of the paper, as for example Locke’s “Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all Characters, without any *Ideas...*,” deficient since it suggests that any memory, like any writing on the paper, is permanently registered by the mind. Similarly, he deems the model of the wax tablet incorrect because it implies that the mind cannot record any permanent memories. So Freud suggests the ‘mystic writing-pad:’

Now some time ago there came upon the market [...] the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad.’ [...] It claims to be nothing more than a writing-tablet from which notes can be erased by an easy movement of the hand. But if it is examined more closely it will be found that its construction shows a remarkable agreement with my hypothetical structure of our perceptual apparatus and that it can in fact provide both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it. (Freud, cited in *Theories of Memory*, 115)

Writings on the first layer of the writing-pad can be erased, while the second layer keeps a permanent copy of them. Thus, the mystic writing-pad is comparable to the mind. Freud also used the metaphor of archaeological excavation for remembering, but this metaphor has had some critique because it suggests the excavation of historical facts and does not leave much room for interpretation or false memory syndrome, for example.

Although the book as a metaphor for the self or the mind has survived, many other metaphors have come to be used over time, most of them derived from new technologies. Jager mentions the clock, the steam engine, the electric dynamo and the internal-combustion engine, which, he argues, “helped popularise an even more mechanical picture of the mind” (Jager). After the invention of photography in the first half of the nineteenth century, the photograph became the obvious metaphor for memory. It was the most accurate and permanent way of capturing an event, image or person. People wanting to remember some special occasion or the way somebody looked at a particular time, started taking pictures to help them revive their memory at a later time. Our memories consist of a series of “snapshots of reality,” as Bergson put it⁹. Expressions like ‘I still have a clear picture in my mind of that day’ have become common since then. But photographs are *very* accurate. They give us every single detail of a person’s appearance at a single moment, something we cannot possibly remember ourselves so clearly afterwards. The metaphor of the photograph has shaped our idea of memory as some sort of machine which stores exact copies, which the term ‘photographical memory’ still refers to (Jager). Obviously, a photograph is not a very accurate metaphor for memory, not only because photographs are too accurate, also since our memories *move*. People walk and talk in them, it rains or it is windy, cars and plains pass by. In short: things happen. Memories do not stand still like a frozen picture. Douwe Draaisma includes a chapter on this in *Why Life Speeds up as you Get Older*. The chapter is called *Why do we remember forwards and not backwards?* as a

⁹ Bergson, H. *L’Evolution créatrice* (1907). Cited in Draaisma, D. *Waarom het leven sneller gaat als je ouder wordt* (2001).

literal quote from Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) who wrote an article on this in 1887. In an attempt to describe adequately the way time moves and pondering upon the question why memories always move forward, Bradley used the common metaphor of time as a river and events as things that flow on the current. Draaisma argues that this is in fact an inadequate metaphor since a river does not really have a direction in itself; only when you compare the river to an outward object like a person or a tree, can you say which way it flows. Evidently, film is able to reflect this movement of time. The invention of film goes back to 1895, when the brothers Lumière held their first screening of projected motion pictures. The earlier quote by Bergson is actually a reflection of his on the paradox that our experience of reality consists of a series of separate perceptions, but at the same time, we are able to develop a sense of movement. So Bergson realized film was in fact a very useful metaphor because it uses separate frames to create the illusion of movement and that is exactly what the mind does as well.

The most popular contemporary metaphor is obviously the computer. The hard disk seems an adequate representation of memory. As Jager says: “with personal computers now standard equipment in millions of homes and offices, people commonly speak of “accessing” their memories, and a Time magazine cover several years ago pictured the human head as a computer.” (*Metaphors*) Scientists have thankfully used the model of the computer to analyse and represent the mind. Authors of books on psychology often include computer jargon to make up original titles or simply because the neuropsychological jargon uses computer language, for example *The Conscious Mind: Programming the Brain-Computer* by Brenner and Wise or *The Cerebral Computer (An Introduction to the Computational Structure of the Human Brain)* by Robert Baron. In the first chapter of *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas about the Mind*, Douwe Draaisma argues that the computer is the modern day equivalent of Freud’s mystic writing-pad. The computer is “a quasi-‘mental’ device which can absorb, delete and reproduce information” (Draaisma, *Metaphors*, 21). He goes on to mention Erdelyi, who proposes a simple programmable pocket calculator instead of the mystic writing-pad. The information visible on the display is ready to be deleted and replaced by other data, and other information is saved in the memory.

However, William L. Randall argues, in his remarkable article *From Computer to Compost: Rethinking our Metaphors for Memory*, that among other things, these metaphors lack the “ability to capture [...] the subtle ways in which memory actually feels

to us as we age; its accumulative dimension across the years; and the creative, even fertile, quality that it arguably possesses.” While the computer is very useful to make comparisons referring to different aspects of the memory such as the problematic retrieval of deleted ‘data’ or the accessing of different ‘files,’ there is a mechanical quality to it that fails to apply properly to all aspects of the human mind. Randall believes a more organic metaphor like the compost heap could be a good alternative. While at first, this may seem a bit far-fetched, he actually makes a convincing point. This suggestion of the compost heap metaphor does not apply to every kind of memory, however. When it comes to procedural memory (like playing the piano) or semantic memory for example, the computer remains the most suitable image. The compost heap relates to autobiographical memory. Randall presents some ‘composting terms’ as alternatives for concepts as *encoding*, *storage* and *retrieval*, namely *laying it on*, *breaking it down*, *stirring it up* and *mixing it in*. In an interview, Draaisma agrees with Randall that the hard disk is one of the least successful metaphors ever, mainly because the information stored on a hard disk, can be retrieved easily and unchanged, while our memories are susceptible to changes, malformations, interpretations, etc. He says that “our memories are memories of memories” (Draaisma, translated freely from the interview with Humo). Draaisma also suggests an organic metaphor, but instead of a compost heap, he proposes the rain forest. The metaphor of the rain forest adequately illustrates the constant change in our mind: just as everything in a rain forest constantly grows and decays, cells and networks in our brain are added or die off.

1.6. Memory and trauma in twentieth century fiction

In the previous sections I have discussed the view on memory by philosophers from Antiquity until late modernity, the surge of memory as a topic in the latter half of the twentieth century, mostly related to Holocaust and trauma theory, published non-fiction on the topic, the division of memory into different varieties by neuropsychologists and other scholars and its metaphorical representation developing alongside technology, but now I would like to go into the treatment of memory in twentieth century fiction. Since literature has always been a reflection of contemporary interests and mentalities, naturally an interest in memory by all these scholars and common people, would be reflected in works of fiction as well. I will not attempt to give an overview of the use of memory in twentieth century novels because there is barely any novel that does not make use of memories. Instead, I will sum up a couple of characteristics of art dealing with trauma and I will

shortly discuss post-modernist fictional representations of memory and trauma. A problem with trauma theory is that it often leads to over-generalisation. I do not claim that Ishiguro's work is exemplary of trauma fiction. However, when focusing on memory in Ishiguro's novels, characteristics of trauma fiction seem to surface and that is why I believe it relevant to pay attention to trauma fiction. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will investigate how these characteristics of trauma fiction are visible in Ishiguro's novels.

Postmodern techniques of story-telling have been used to represent trauma symptoms¹⁰. As Anne Whitehead says: "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms" (Whitehead, 3). Repetitions can be seen as a reflection of acting-out. Victims relive their trauma again and again, in their dreams or imagination and this can often be seen in the language of these works as well. Thus it emphasizes the negative aspect, but repetition can also establish a certain catharsis, says Whitehead. Then it corresponds to LaCapra's notion of 'working-through' and Freud's 'mourning.' This puts the emphasis the therapeutic function of narratives. Focalization is often experimented with, illustrating how victims often distance themselves from their traumatic experiences, as if they were only a witness. Witness or victim, troubled minds render troubled stories. Consequently, trauma fiction often gives a confused impression, full of lacunae and inconsistencies. It is difficult to derive, from the textual hints, *the* past. Instead, the reader derives different versions. Trauma victims find it very hard to reach any closure and thus novels dealing with trauma are often characterised by open, undecided endings. It is often hard to conclude from the textual clues if the characters overcome their trauma and recover or if they continue to carry their trauma with them. The reader is sometimes left with an ambiguous, unsatisfied feeling at the end. This recurrent plunge into the past is also presented in the chronology which is anything but linear, but more disrupted and unsettled. Very important for the understanding of trauma art is its therapeutic function. Traumatic memories are almost impossible to express verbally, but in order to overcome their trauma, victims need to turn their traumatic memories into narrative memories. This is of course paradoxical because in order to heal, victims need to speak about what they can not speak about. But the therapeutic function is obvious when you consider the many non-fictional renderings of trauma.

¹⁰ Partly based on my notes of Professor Philippe Codde's course on post-memory (spring 2008, Ghent University).

Anne Whitehead argues that trauma fiction cannot be disconnected from “three interrelated contexts” (Whitehead, 81). Those contexts are “postmodernism, postcolonialism and a postwar legacy.” Firstly, postmodernist techniques go against the idea of history as mere fact and focus on the “complexity of memory.” Trauma fiction emphasizes the difficulties that arise when trying to represent trauma and memory in language. Secondly, postcolonialism has focused on how contemporary works are “influenced [...] by the complex legacies of colonialism,” Whitehead continues. It has paid attention to how history is marked by different groups or ideologies. Postcolonial fiction then, has tried to depict the more personal side of history. It pays attention to the private memories and ‘marginal’ stories which are often disregarded or generalised in history. Trauma fiction and postcolonial fiction share a “concern with the recovery of memory and the acknowledgement of the denied, the repressed and the forgotten” (Whitehead, 82). Finally, contemporary fiction has paid a great deal of attention to war and its repercussions. The First and the Second World War, the Holocaust and the Vietnam War are frequent topics. Trauma fiction often includes supernatural or fantastic elements or “disruptions of the real” (Whitehead, 84) in order to accentuate that the real can no longer “be expressed in a conventional realist mode.” Whitehead also points out the frequent intertextuality present in works of trauma fiction. These intertexts are often referred to in order to enable the reader to anticipate the development of the plot.

Chapter 2: Memory as a means of mourning in *A Pale View of Hills*

“Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here.”

From *A Pale View of Hills*

“Memory is a complicated thing, a relative to truth, but not its twin.”

From *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver

In *A Pale View of Hills*, his debut of 1982, Kazuo Ishiguro explores the depths of the past. Etsuko is a Japanese woman, living in England. Her youngest daughter Niki has temporarily come over from London to visit her. The reader soon learns that the eldest daughter, Keiko, has recently committed suicide, but Etsuko’s musings never really focus on that traumatic event. Her meditations soon go back to her past in Japan, particularly “one summer many years ago” (*Pale*, 11), when she developed a short friendship with Sachiko and her disturbed daughter Mariko. While Etsuko reminisces about her past in Nagasaki, the reader comes to doubt some of Etsuko’s representations of that past. Gradually, the stories of Etsuko and Keiko on the one hand, and of Sachiko and Mariko on the other, are intermingled.

2.1. Echoes of other texts

The plot of *A Pale View of Hills*, the story of Sachiko to be precise, has two major intertexts: the short story “Eveline” by James Joyce, included in his collection of short stories *Dubliners*, and the opera *Madame Butterfly* by Puccini (which was actually based itself on a short story by John Luther Long). “Eveline” tells the story of a young woman who wants to leave Ireland and her father and brother behind in order to begin a new life with Frank, a sailor, in Buenos Aires. Not only is Sachiko’s lover also called Frank - Shaffer wittily calls this an ironic choice of names since “neither man appears to be frank about following through with his promises” (Shaffer, 19) - she too hopes to move abroad and be happy there. They both seem eager to escape their responsibilities as a relative: Eveline’s mother has died and she has to take care of her father, who is often drunk or abusive, and her brother and it is clear Sachiko often considers Mariko as a burden. *Madame Butterfly* is a Japanese geisha who is marrying an American sailor, lieutenant

Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton. The endings of both stories are different, however. Eventually, Eveline feels guilty and decides not to leave with Frank. In *Madame Butterfly*, after Pinkerton has returned from a three-year stay in America, Butterfly discovers he has married an American woman. Butterfly kills herself, leaving their daughter Sorrow behind. The eventual outcome of Sachiko's story is never given, but by using these intertextual sources, Ishiguro suggests the unhappy ending. Because Sachiko seems so desperate to leave with Frank, it seems unlikely she decides to stay, like Eveline did, so the reader guesses Frank will probably fail to fulfill his promises.

Barry Lewis points out that there are also similarities with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). The similarities lie in the "psychological doubt" (Lewis, 29). In *A Pale View of Hills*, it is suggested that Keiko's host might be hunting Etsuko's home in England, and Mariko repeatedly claims to have seen a woman by the riverside in Nagasaki. As Sachiko explains later on, this may be a remnant of a woman whom Mariko witnessed killing her child. These doubts about whether the "apparitions" are "real or hallucinations" (Lewis, 29) remind Lewis of *The Turn of the Screw*, where a governess comes to see the ghosts of former servants of the household and begins to think the children whom she is taken care of are evil. The reader is never really able to come to a conclusion about whether the governess is crazy, if the apparitions of the former servants are real or imagined and if the children are really possessed. The motif of ghosts, and in relation to that the one of suicide, is reminiscent of the tradition of Japanese ghost stories as well.

2.2. To speak about the unspeakable

In much of his work Ishiguro touches upon the same subjects. All of his novels up to date are told by a first-person narrator who reminisces about his or her life, except maybe for *The Unconsoled*, where the protagonist Ryder is mostly troubled by the odd present circumstances, which are nevertheless influenced by his past. Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills* frequently makes remarks about her failing memory. The reader sympathizes with the character because of these admitted flaws.

It is possible that my memory of these events will have grown hazy with time, that things did not happen in quite the way they come back to me today. (*Pale*, 41)

In a way, Etsuko's confessions of her unreliable memory paradoxically make her seem more reliable. The reader often feels that a narrator who admits there may be flaws in his

or her story, will not consciously deceive or lie. But gradually, the reader realizes that this is merely an attempt to disguise her self-deception. Etsuko's feelings of guilt over her daughter's suicide and her grief have given her reasons for telling a story which deviates from the truth. The subject of Keiko's suicide is never fully expanded upon. It seems that that is an event too painful to talk about. Nevertheless, it is exactly what is at the heart of the entire story, although the reader comes to realize this only afterwards. Etsuko is traumatized: she has not yet come to terms with her daughter's suicide. The novel revolves around the way in which this character tries to cope and leave the past behind. Etsuko's plunges into the past are an attempt to talk about the unspeakable. Suffering from her trauma, Etsuko needs to arrive at working-through. She has to turn her traumatic memories into narrative memories, but since she is not ready to speak bluntly about her daughter's suicide, she uses another story. As Ishiguro says: "The meanings that Etsuko imputes to the life of Sachiko are obviously the meanings that are relevant to her [Etsuko's] own life" (Ishiguro, interview with Mason). The reader gets a "highly Etsuko-ed version" of Sachiko's story. In a discussion of the "uncanny *Doppelgänger*" in *A Pale View of Hills*, Mike Petry suggests Etsuko may be "inventing her own double – or *alternative self* – in order to be able to talk about her own disquieting memories" (Petry, 55). But he says that in the end the reader realizes Sachiko is no double of Etsuko's but rather "one side of [Etsuko's] split personality" (Petry, 57).

Etsuko experiences feelings of guilt about her daughter committing suicide because she took her away from Japan to move to England, but Keiko never became happy in England. Etsuko admits her relationship with her eldest daughter was quite strained; the relationship between Keiko and every member of the family was quite strained, for that matter. Before her death, Keiko had been living for six years on her own in Manchester, and "for the two or three years before she finally left us, Keiko had retreated into that bedroom, shutting us out of her life" (*Pale*, 54). The mother-daughter relationship between Sachiko and Mariko is just as strange. At various occasions Sachiko displays neglect and disinterest towards her daughter, for example when Etsuko warns her that Mariko was fighting with other children and is possibly hurt, but Sachiko says: "But as you see, I'm rather busy just now. I have to go into Nagasaki. [...] If you have nothing else to concern yourself with, Etsuko, then perhaps you'd care to look after my daughter for the day" (15). At times she is even extremely cruel towards her child, drowning Mariko's beloved kittens before leaving for Kobe, although they could easily leave them behind or in someone else's care. This

behaviour is quite inconsistent with remarks by Sachiko such as “what is of the utmost importance to me is my daughter’s welfare” (86). It seems the neglect Sachiko displays towards her daughter, could be a reflection of the reason why Etsuko has an uneasy conscience about the way she treated her eldest daughter. Shaffer remarks that the fact that Etsuko and Niki as well feel guilty about Keiko’s suicide is shown in their uneasiness with Keiko’s old room (Shaffer, 25). On the second day of her visit to her mother Niki asks if she could sleep in the spare room because her old room is opposite to Keiko’s and “it gives [her] an odd feeling, that room being right opposite” (*Pale*, 53). The reason for Niki’s “unsettled conscience” is not so obvious, but Shaffer attributes it to “survivor’s guilt” and to the fact that she did not attend her sister’s funeral, possibly as a kind of revenge for Keiko not attending Niki’s father’s funeral previously, although Niki contests this accusation.

Shaffer claims both Etsuko and Niki display defence mechanisms, a concept from Freudian psychoanalysis, which allow an individual to temporarily escape from a situation which is too difficult to cope with at that moment. The defence mechanisms displayed in the characters of *A Pale View of Hills* are projection and rationalisation. According to Shaffer, Niki “functions chiefly as Etsuko’s rationalizing voice.” Niki says what any reasonable human being would say to the mother of a child who committed suicide: you are not to blame. Niki says out loud what Etsuko can not bear to say to herself because she does not believe it: “And you did everything you could for [Keiko]. You’re the last person anyone could blame” (176). Etsuko projects her feelings of guilt about neglecting Keiko and placing her own happiness over her daughter’s onto the story of Sachiko and Mariko. Throughout the story more and more similarities between Sachiko’s life and Etsuko’s come to the surface. Sachiko wants to leave Japan for America in order to start a new life there, and she is not really concerned about Mariko’s wishes. Etsuko left Japan after divorcing her husband Jiro, but the daughter from that marriage, Keiko, never adapted to English life. I believe that is also why we do not get to know the outcome of Sachiko’s story, whether she gets to leave for America with Frank or whether he abandons her: it does not matter. Etsuko only tells the story because of its relevance to her own story. Eventually, Etsuko left Japan and she fears that if she had not, her daughter might still be alive.

Trauma is not only present in the character of Etsuko, but also in the figure of Mariko. From the beginning it is clear that she is a strange and troubled child, not responding to

question nor reacting to reprimands (*Pale*, 26). Near the end of the second chapter Etsuko and Sachiko go out looking for Mariko who has gone missing. They find her “lying, curled on her side, knees hunched” (41). Mariko repeatedly talks about a woman whom she sometimes sees near the river. After a while the girl’s mother offers a possible explanation for her daughter’s psychological problems: at the end of the war they were living in Tokyo where the situation was awful and “everyone who lived in Tokyo saw unpleasant things. And Mariko did too” (73). Once, Mariko saw a woman in the river, having just drowned her baby. They later heard the woman committed suicide after having killed her baby. Not only would this explain the hallucinations Mariko has of a woman, this would also make Sachiko’s drowning of the kittens, while her daughter has to witness it, even more cruel, because it would obviously remind Mariko of witnessing that scene.

Although *When We Were Orphans* is much more essentially about nostalgia, which will be discussed in the next chapter, there is a nostalgic feeling to *A Pale View of Hills* as well. When Etsuko first starts telling about her life in Nagasaki shortly after the war, she shortly expands on the housing circumstances. “The occupants of the apartment blocks were much like ourselves - young married couples, the husbands having found good employment with expanding firms” (*Pale*, 13). However, the nostalgia does not seem to be because of those circumstances, but rather because of the then existing hope that the best was yet to come: “And yet I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better” (12). Although Etsuko may be just talking about moving to another house, I believe she is referring to the hope that, after the war and the bomb, everything would gradually go better and better. That is also the reason for her nostalgia: she has now lost all hope that she can “move to something better.” Her second husband deceased, her eldest daughter having committed suicide, the contact with her youngest daughter not being that close either, she feels as if her life is over and has no expectations anymore. So she experiences nostalgia of a time when that was different. This image of Etsuko in contemporary England, having lost all hope of better things that are yet to come, on a one-way track towards the end of her life, is mirrored by Sachiko’s feelings towards a life at her uncle’s house (where she had been staying before moving to Nagasaki). Mike Petry comments “Sachiko’s uncle’s house uncannily resembles the Sheringhams’ house in England” (Petry, 37) and he suitably quotes Sachiko: “There’s nothing for me at my uncle’s house. Just a few empty rooms, that’s all. I could sit there in a room and grow old. Other than that there’ll be nothing. Just empty rooms, that’s all” (*Pale*,

170-171). The reader can easily imagine Etsuko saying something similar to her daughter Niki in England.

Mike Petry claims that “every decisive character, every important motif, and every major scene in *A Pale View of Hills* exists, at least, twice” (Petry, 25). The most obvious example of this are the characters of Etsuko and Keiko on the one hand, and Sachiko and Mariko on the other hand. A recurring motif is the one of death or hanging, interlinked with the image of the rope. Keiko has hanged herself in her room in Manchester, an image Etsuko keeps “bringing to mind” (*Pale*, 54). Etsuko has recurrent dreams about a girl on a swing, but later she realizes “the little girl isn’t on a swing at all” (96). But what does the dream signify then? Is the girl rather hanging from a rope, just like Keiko? Or is the girl in a cable-car, as Etsuko, Sachiko and Mariko once did during a trip to Nagasaki’s countryside? The image of the rope is present first and foremost in Keiko’s hanging, a picture that keeps haunting her mother. The rope returns at the end of the novel when Mariko is suddenly frightened by Etsuko, asking “why are you holding that?” (173). A rope has caught around Etsuko’s sandal. She tries to assure the child: “Why are you looking at me like that? I’m not going to hurt you” (173). Thus, the scene already obliquely hints at Keiko, but it does so even more obviously in the conversation between Etsuko and Mariko, but I will go further into this scene later on. Ropes are also obviously present in Etsuko’s dream of a girl, whether she is on a swing or not, and in the image of the cable-cars.

Evaluating his own work, Ishiguro has said that the trouble with *A Pale View of Hills* is that “it doesn’t have the same murkiness of someone trying to wade through their memories, trying to manipulate memories, as [he] would have wanted. [...] those scenes of the past [...] don’t have the texture of memory” (Ishiguro, interview with Mason). Although I find the novel a very successful representation of someone recounting a particular period from her past, to some extent, I can agree with Ishiguro’s critique. I find that his later work, for example *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*, is much more convincing in the way it represents memories and their particular characteristics. Memories are not complete, detailed copies of earlier events, but fragmented and blurry parts that come back to you and of which it is sometimes hard to say what is accurate or contorted. A good example of this can be found in *Never Let Me Go*:

I don’t remember if it was before or after the class, or how full the room was. I remember having books in my hands, and that as I

moved towards where Ruth and the others were talking, there was a strong patch of sun across the desk-lids they were sitting on. (53)

These kind of remarks, about how you can not remember all the exact details of an event, but you remember *some* of the circumstances, are abundant in *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*. I believe that is part of how Ishiguro's fiction has developed over the years.

Nevertheless, "memory and hindsight" work very well as "a narrative strategy" in *A Pale View of Hills*, as Cynthia Wong remarks (Wong, 17). The story is presented as a simple reflection on a short period long ago, but it carries deeper meaning due to its psychological relevance. The more Etsuko reveals about her past, the more incongruities come to the surface, which lead the reader to question the reliability of this narrator. The same holds true for *When We Were Orphans*, as I will briefly touch upon in the next chapter, which is entirely devoted to this novel, and more extensively in the fourth and last chapter.

Chapter 3: Nostalgic memory in *When We Were Orphans*

“Memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose.”

From the television show *The Wonder Years*

Christopher Banks is the protagonist and narrator of *When We Were Orphans*. It is the 1930s, England, and Banks is a renowned detective who can count many of the most prominent figures of British public life among his acquaintances. He recounts his ascent to success as a detective and the development of his acquaintance with Miss Sarah Hemmings. But most of the early part of the novel is concerned with Banks's recollections of his childhood spent in Shanghai, China, and of his friendship with Akira, the Japanese boy living next door. This childhood in Shanghai came to an abrupt end with the disappearance of first his father and subsequently his mother, after which Christopher was sent to live in England. Now he has become a successful detective, he decides to try and solve the mystery which has marked his life. He returns to Shanghai, convinced that he will be able to find his parents alive and well, and consequently will save civilization from catastrophe. But part of Shanghai is in turmoil due to the war with Japan and Banks ends up in the middle of the battlefield while searching for his parents. When he encounters a wounded Japanese soldier, he mistakes him for his childhood friend Akira. After they are both safely rescued from the battlefield, Christopher learns from his Uncle Philip that his father actually ran away with his mistress and died of typhoid two years after his disappearance. His mother had indeed been kidnapped. After resisting for a while the pressure of war lord Wang Ku, he took her as his concubine. In the final chapter, Banks tells about the visit he paid to his mother in a mental institution and finishes his memoirs.

3.1. Ishiguro's reasons for using memory

Memory is a very useful and interesting device when writing a story. It is difficult to even imagine a story without any memories, but making full use of the characteristics of memory can certainly enhance the quality of a story. In all of Ishiguro's novels up to date memory plays a very important role. *A Pale View of Hills*, revolves around a Japanese woman, Etsuko, living in England, reminiscing about a summer long ago when she was still living in Japan. *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), his second novel, is narrated by Masuji Ono, an aging painter who takes a walk down memory lane. An English butler,

Stevens, looks back on his days in the service of Lord Darlington and with Miss Kenton as his colleague in Ishiguro's greatest success up till now, *The Remains of the Day* (1989). You might say his fourth novel, *The Unconsoled* (1995), is the odd one out: a travelling pianist, Ryder, is spending a few days in some European city and is having difficulties fulfilling everyone's desires and requests and his tight schedule. Still, his odd present circumstances seem to be influenced by his troubled past. His next work is *When We Were Orphans* (2000) in which a detective tries to solve the mystery of his parents's disappearance decades ago in Shanghai. In his last novel up to date, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), a young woman called Kathy H., presents to the reader her memories of her childhood and adolescence at an unusual boarding school called Hailsham.

Ishiguro has often been asked about his treatment of memory in his novels. Ishiguro's own fading memory of his childhood in Japan was actually one of the initial reasons why he started to write. "To some extent, it was an act of preserving things that were good that would have otherwise faded in my memory" (Ishiguro, NBCC interview). He was born in Nagasaki, Japan, but moved together with his parents to England in 1960, when he was only six years old. Growing older he came to realize his memories of his childhood in Japan would not last for ever. There was an urgent need for Ishiguro to write down on paper this "mixture of memory, speculation, and imagination" which formed an image of Japan in his mind, before it disappeared altogether (Ishiguro, interview with Krider). For his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, he relied on his memory and on what he had read over the years to depict Japan. Later on, Japan was no longer the setting of his stories, but memory remained an important factor. Ishiguro is not really interested in the fictional facts of a character's life, but in their memory, "how one uses memory for one's own purposes, one's own ends" (Ishiguro, interview with Mason). In various interviews, Ishiguro has named three reasons for why he likes to work with memory: the technical advantages, the texture and the thematically interesting nature. I will discuss these characteristics of memory separately when analysing *When We Were Orphans*.

3.2. Technical advantages of the use of memory

Technically, *When We Were Orphans* takes great advantage from Ishiguro's use of memory as a narrative device. Memory allows a writer to escape the confines of a linear plot. As I have mentioned when talking about Proust's influence on Ishiguro, memory enables the author to paste a scene from decades ago next to a scene developing in the fictional present. *When We Were Orphans* is entirely constructed as a series of episodic memories of Christopher Banks. We learn about Banks attending various social events in the England of the 1930s, while in the next chapter we read about his childhood games with Akira. Memory allows Ishiguro much more freedom in the plotline than a chronological account would. The novel is presented as a detective story, so suspense is created by using memories interlaced with accounts about the fictional 'now.' By the time we read about his parents' disappearance, we have come to realize Banks will put his acquired skills as a detective to the solving of this all-important case. These two aspects of the novel fit Tzvetan Todorov's analysis of the whodunit which "generally involves a narrative duality" (Döring, 61). The duality involves two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. "In the usual chronology of events, the former ends before the latter can begin" (Döring, 61). Thus, the story would go in one direction: the direction of the future. But by intertwining the two stories, the reader is, just like Christopher Banks, constantly pulled back into the past, while also looking anxiously forward to the future, which hopefully contains the solution to the case. This reminds one of Genette's analysis of *order* (Herman, 68). The order depends upon the relation between the chronology of the original events and the presentation of these events. Genette distinguishes three categories within the order: direction, distance and reach. All of these categories depend upon the main story, which in *When We Were Orphans* begins in the 1930s with Banks's account of his activities in England and ends in 1957 with Banks visiting his demented mother at a mental institution. There are two possible directions in relation to the main story: forwards and backwards. A recollection is an example of *flashback*, while anticipation is a form of *flashforward*. The novel actually begins with a flashback: "It was the summer of 1923, [...] I remember it now as the most wonderful of summers" (*Orphans*, 3). The whole first half of the novel is packed with flashbacks. It is only when Banks returns to Shanghai in 1937, in part four of the novel, that the story constantly moves onward. 'Distance' refers to the temporal breach between the flashbacks and flashforwards on the one hand, and the main story on the other hand (Herman, 69). Related to memory, you can say that, the greater the

time gap, the less reliable the flashback is. This would make Banks's flashback quite unreliable since the 'distance' is most of the time at least twenty years. The 'reach' applies to the extensiveness of the flashback or flashforward. It can concern one single event or a whole period. The reach in *When We Were Orphans* is quite large, since Banks reminisces about several years of his childhood and of his early career. Of course, these periods are broken up into many separate flashes of memory. These memories also provide a smooth transition from one topic to the next. Ishiguro agilely moves between the various periods of the protagonist's life to present a continuous flow of events.

Her singing would then become punctuated by gales of laughter, until eventually she would come down from the swing, and we would go off to play with whatever I had prepared for us. Even today, I cannot think about my mother's meetings without remembering those eagerly anticipated moments that would always follow.

A few years ago, I did spend some days in the Reading Room of the British Museum researching into the arguments that raged over the opium trade in China during those times. [...] I did not once find my mother. I did though stumble upon several mentions of Uncle Philip. [...] But I have no wish to recall Uncle Philip here just now. There was a time [...] when I was convinced I had mentioned his name to Sarah Hemmings. [...] But [...] I am now reasonably sure Uncle Philip did not come up at all. [...] I did though tell her a little about Akira this afternoon. (*Orphans*, 74-76)

In a matter of only two pages, Ishiguro lets the story hover between Christopher's childhood, memories of his early adulthood, Uncle Philip, Sarah Hemmings and Akira.

Memory is not only useful as a way of keeping the attention of the reader and varying the storyline, but also as a means of controlling the mood of the novel. If the story is told completely chronologically, it is likely that the different parts of the story are marked by the predominant mood of that period. Memory offers more control than chronology. About the use of memory, Ishiguro has remarked:

I don't have to follow the plotline. And so I can work much more like I guess a visual artist would do, if they place one image next to another. Just because the artistic order tells them to rather than it's the way a still life should be set out. I can control the novel and the moods very, very clearly that way. (Ishiguro, NBCC interview).

3.3. The foggy texture of memory

Memory can be very unreliable. Ishiguro exploits this as a way of adding layers to a story. Christopher Banks is both the protagonist and the narrator of *When We Were Orphans*. While he may have a trustworthy character, that does not guarantee his reliability as a narrator. He can consciously present things differently to the reader. However, what adds to his unreliability as a narrator, is the fact that he mainly talks about things of the past. He presents memories of some twenty years to the reader and repeatedly expresses his doubt about their accuracy. For example when Banks has told about how his mother got into a conflict with a health inspector who advises her to dismiss some servants of hers who are from the province of Shantung. He makes the generalization that people from that region are not to be trusted because they are often addicted to opium, after which his mother gets into a rage because he dares to speak to her about opium, while, according to her, it is exactly the British companies who are responsible for the opium problem while making profit out of it as well.

To take, for instance, this episode I have just recounted concerning my mother and the health inspector: while I am fairly sure I have remembered its essence accurately enough, turning it over in my mind again, I find myself less certain about some of the details. (*Orphans*, 80-81)

What adds to the problem of remembering these scenes correctly, is that he was often kept out of it as a child and could not fully understand the problems concerning his mother's opposition against the opium trade either at that point. Banks also remarks upon the possibility that his memory of that episode might have been partly shaped by what his mother told him about it afterwards. He is not sure how much of the story is his own memory and how much of it is just what his mother has told him, which would make the account unreliable because she might have exaggerated her firm response to the health inspector.

Consequently, I cannot be sure today how much of my memory of that morning derives from what I actually witnessed from the landing, and to what extent it has merged over time with my mother's accounts of the episode. (69)

But more so than to the manipulation of others, our memory is susceptible to conscious and unconscious manipulation by ourselves. As Christoph Henke remarks in his essay "Remembering Selves, Constructing Selves:" memory is not a simple matter of recording

an event and then later on simply retrieving it from our 'storage room.' Instead, a memory is more a present reconstruction of an occurred event, highly dependent on current cognitive structures and providing tent poles for our identity.

Studies in autobiographical memory have shown that individuals develop particular 'self-schemata' with which memories are rendered consistent with their own identity concept. The ensuing autobiographical stories [...] are the result of a continual 'self-creation' of the ego, which also affects the self-justifying 'inner story' that individuals tell themselves about themselves. (Henke, 80)

When we remember episodes from the past, we like them to be consistent with our perception of ourselves. If a memory is in one way or another at odds with what we believe to be our character, we often prefer to forget it. If you consider yourself to be a friendly person, you may not like to be reminded of a particular instance where you were cruel or harsh to another person. You may even come to remember the instance differently over time: either you may convince yourself that your cruelty was completely justified, or you may belittle your reaction until you believe yourself that you were not nearly as harsh as the other says you were. It seems that Christopher Banks's memories are influenced by self-schemata as well. In the very beginning of the novel, he meets an old school friend of his, James Osbourne, who claims Christopher had been 'such an odd bird at school'. A remark which irritates Christopher "since [his] own memory is that [he] blended perfectly into English school life" (*Orphans*, 7). More than that, he is convinced he adapted tremendously well to his new life, after having lived for so long in Shanghai. Something similar occurs in a conversation Christopher has with Colonel Chamberlain, the man who accompanied him on his boat trip from Shanghai to England. The colonel is recounting memories of the voyage, insinuating that during the whole trip, Christopher was sullen and on the verge of tears.

For according to my own, quite clear memory, I adapted very ably to the changed realities of my circumstances. I remember very well that, far from being miserable on that voyage, I was positively excited about life aboard the ship, as well as by the prospect of the future that lay before me. Of course, I did miss my parents at times, but I can remember telling myself there would always be other adults I would come to love and trust. (32)

This seems an unlikely rational, mature reaction for a ten-year old who has only recently lost both of his parents and is now forced to move to a country which he does not know

and where he does not know anybody. Christopher obviously likes to think of himself as a rational, well-balanced and agreeable human being, characteristics which he may deem indispensable to a great detective. Both of these episodes are related at the start of the novel, and consequently, the reader is already alerted that not all may be as it is presented by the narrator.

But we do not always alter our memories to fit our self-schemata. Very often, the memories that do not fit our self-image, stay with us the most, for example, we tend to remember all our humiliations and embarrassments extremely well. When you have done something wrong, the memory of that humiliating moment can come to haunt you all your life, even if it was only a minor mistake. In relation to this, Draaisma mentions Wagenaar, who kept a detailed record of his ‘worst sins’ (Draaisma, *Waarom het leven*, 63). Wagenaar remarked that memories of painful events which were caused by himself, stayed much clearer with him than memories of very pleasant events of which he was the cause or memories of painful events which someone else made happen. Wagenaar suspects that these ‘worst sins’ memories are so carefully recorded because they influence our self-image and do not fit our self-schemata. These memories make sure our self-image does not come to differ very much from our real identity. What is reassuring though, is that your ‘worst sins’ are most often not nearly as well remembered by others, as is illustrated by a particular event in *When We Were Orphans*. Banks is remembering he once asked his friend Osbourne about his ‘well connectedness.’ Osbourne replied “Oh, do knock it off, Banks. [...] One simply knows people. One has parents, uncles, family, friends. I don’t know what there is to be so puzzled about” (*Orphans*, 6). Banks being an orphan and living without any relatives in England, Osbourne realized this might have been a tactless remark and quickly apologizes. When they meet again in the beginning of the novel, Banks comments upon this conversation, saying:

This *faux pas* seemed to cause Osbourne much more anguish than it had me. Indeed, it is impossible it had remained on his conscience for all those years, so that in asking me to accompany him to the Charingworth Club that evening, he was in some way trying to make amends. (7)

Maybe equally important as the episodes the narrator reveals, are the ones he omits. To borrow Pascal Zinck’s words: “his recall is highly selective” (Zinck, 150). At the end of the novel, Banks only obliquely hints that Jennifer may have tried to commit suicide, when he recounts a conversation between the two of them:

‘Oh, you shouldn’t worry so much about me.’

‘But I do worry. Of course, I worry.’

‘It’s all behind me now,’ she said, ‘all of that last year. I won’t try anything foolish like that ever again. I’ve already promised you that. It was just an especially bad time, that’s all. Besides, I never really meant to do it. I made sure that window was left open.’
(*Orphans*, 360)

Being her guardian, he would naturally feel responsible for her and probably have some feelings of guilt after her attempted suicide. Nevertheless, he does not really mention the attempt itself; he only narrates how Jennifer assures him it will not happen again. Likewise, Banks only shortly refers to the cases which have assured him of the reputation of being such a great detective: for example, the ‘Mannering case’ (26, 134) or the ‘Trevor Richardson affair’ (10). Being ambitious and becoming a successful detective having been his childhood dream, it seems at least remarkable that the very cases which have gained him his professional fame, are mentioned only obliquely.

Another interesting aspect of memory are the details we remember. Regardless the remembered event, conversation or situation, it is surprising what stays with us about the particular atmosphere or circumstances connected to that event. Ishiguro pays special attention to these kind of details. An often mentioned detail is the weather. On several occasions, Christopher Banks recalls the weather circumstances at the time. Examples are:

I remember it now as the most wonderful of summers. (3)

It was on a foggy autumn morning, and the two of us had been sitting on a low wall outside a country inn. (6)

The following day was again hot and humid. (119)

It was a sunny, windy morning. (142)

This is also where Proust’s influence comes to the surface. To borrow Zinck’s words: “Banks’s misremembrance of things past is filtered through strong emotional perceptions. [...] Most of these filtered fragments are treasured because they magnify the narrator’s loss” (Zinck, 152-153). Examples are “her special beige dress, the one that gave off a peculiar smell like mouldering leaves” (*Orphans*, 125) or his father “wearing a white suit and hat, holding a briefcase and a stick” (120) on the day of his disappearance. Rather than specific words, he remembers atmospheres, colours, smells, signifying the sentimental value to him, as I will return to in the last chapter.

The foggy texture of memory is mostly due to the unreliability, which is two-sided. Christopher Banks is recounting the story of his life, but it becomes obvious he may have altered some details in order for them to fit his self-schemata or to ease his feelings of guilt. On top of that, he can not be entirely sure of anything he remembers; he repeatedly admits his memory is failing and his past has become blurry. Consequently, the reader soon considers him an unreliable narrator.

3.4. Memory as a theme

Thematically as well, memory plays a prominent role in all of Ishiguro's work. The protagonists of the novels explore their past, often to discover nothing really is as they initially thought. In *Remains of the Day*, memory is "the place Stevens goes to figure out how where his life has gone wrong" (Ishiguro, Times Union Article). In *When We Were Orphans*, Christopher Banks keeps returning to his memories of his childhood because he can not let go of it. He was the happiest when he was a child, living in Shanghai with his parents and playing games with Akira, and he has not been able to accept that past is gone for good. Nostalgia is in fact the main theme in *When We Were Orphans*. In an interview conducted by Brian Shaffer, Ishiguro has argued that most people consider nostalgia to be a negative thing, a sort of obsession with the past, but he believes "it can be quite a valuable force in our lives." He says nostalgia often has a pejorative undertone when it is applied to a nation's memory, especially with countries like Britain and France, with a strong imperialistic history. He feels the nostalgia he is trying to get across in his novels, is an "emotional equivalent to idealism" (Ishiguro, interview by Shaffer, 7). Nostalgia is the memory of the time when you were still a child and had no realization of what kind of evil there is in the world, when adults tried to make you believe that the world is a better place than it really is. Of course, at some point, you need to come out of that bubble. For most people, that happens gradually while growing up. Step by step, we realize that the world is a grimmer place than we thought. But for some, like Christopher, this childhood illusion is shattered all of a sudden. And he grows up with a sense of huge disappointment that the world is not what he thought it was. But we all like to remember the time when we were still living in the childhood bubble. Nostalgia is a return to this childhood bubble. It is the dream of a better, purer place, where nobody gets hurt. That is why Ishiguro calls nostalgia the emotional equivalent of idealism: it is the imagination that there is a better place and when you try to pursue this, nostalgia can be a positive influence. When it becomes a place where you run to when you are unable to accept the conditions of the real world, it can

become an obsession and a negative force in your life. For Ishiguro, “orphans is just a metaphor for that condition of coming out of that bubble in an unprotected way.” Not only Banks lost both of his parents at an early age; Sarah Hemmings and Jennifer are orphans as well. All three of them were suddenly disillusioned and confronted with the harsh world. That happens to a lot of people, who are mostly not orphans, but Ishiguro made them literally orphans in order to exaggerate the situation of coming out of the protected world without guidance. Ishiguro says “Banks, Sarah, and Jennifer all feel that they have to repair something and only then that they can pick up where they left off” (Ishiguro, interview with Shaffer, 9). Banks believes that, after several decades, his parents are still being held prisoner and that he just needs to find them in order for his life to carry on again from where it was stopped. They could all even live in their old house in Shanghai again. Sarah Hemmings seems intent on getting acquainted with the most renowned people and making a successful social life, so to speak. Jennifer looks determined to be happy and not to worry her guard, Banks. She goes out of her way to make a happy appearance and put his mind at ease. It may be hard, but they have to carry on with their lives and “must face the world as orphans.” Pascal Zinck argues “orphanhood becomes a central metaphor for universal trauma” (Zinck, 147). The novel is full of “homelessness”: it shifts between several settings: Shanghai, London, Hong Kong in various decennia. During his return to Shanghai, he really believes he has found his former home. At the end of his story, Christopher Banks claims to have finally settled. But the reader can not help but wondering if may not be fooling himself again: “This city, in other words, has come to be my home, and I should not mind if I had to live out the rest of my days here” (*Orphans*, 368).

We could say that, in part, Christopher Banks, in the early stages of his life, uses his nostalgia as a driving force behind his ambition to become a detective and combat evil, to re-create that perfect childhood world. However, Banks’s memories of his childhood become more and more blurry, illustrating how slowly, he begins to leave his past behind. In the beginning he makes remarks like: “I have the most vivid memory of the occasion.” (28) or “I remember very well that [...]” (32). Only later on, he starts to make comments such as “I have no real memory of what either of us had been doing prior to the moment.” (128) or “I do not remember much about the days immediately following my father’s disappearance” (124). We learn that he has failed to leave that world behind him, to accept its loss, as he admits himself in a conversation with a Japanese colonel. The colonel quotes a Japanese poet who “wrote of how our childhood becomes like a foreign land once we

have grown.” And Banks replies: “Well, Colonel, it’s hardly a foreign land to me. In many ways, it’s where I’ve continued to live all my life. It’s only now I’ve started to make my journey from it” (325). Dominique Vinet believes that this “gradual amnesia [...] corresponds to the slow emergence of the self which could never have been complete without a re-enactment of the game that the child had been playing with Akira” (Vinet, 141.) Banks had a traumatic experience when thrown out of the ‘childhood bubble’ and in order to deal with the trauma he has to re-enact it. He needs to turn this traumatic memory into a narrative memory to be able to get past it.

Indeed, some of Banks’s behaviour is consistent with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Victims of a train collision, the example Caruth used for her analysis of PTSD, often walk away seemingly unharmed. The psychological effect becomes apparent only later on. Likewise, Banks keeps insisting that he was completely alright after his parents’ disappearance, for example when he claims he adapted perfectly well to English school life or when he says he was convinced there would be other adults, after his parents, he would come to love. ‘Acting out’ is also a typical symptom of PTSD patients: they keep revisiting the event in their dreams or imagination or sometimes even physically repeat it. Shed in this light, Banks’s whole career may be an ‘acting out’ of the failed attempt by the inspectors to find his father. This acting out, gives victims the second chance to have the feelings and emotions they were supposed to have at the moment, but which they did not experience because at the time of trauma their mind did not register properly what was happening. Banks did not fully grasp the significance of what was happening. He always believed his father would come to be found soon enough and thus, was never able to deal with the trauma of losing his parents. Going back to these memories allows him to accept the gravity of this trauma. ‘Working through’ is the process which permits victims to overcome the traumatic after-effects, but not the trauma itself. It is of course impossible to forget the trauma. Banks could never forget the fact he lost his parents when he was so young, but he needs to move on, leave the trauma of being an orphan behind him. The only way to arrive at ‘working through’, is to create a story, a chronological narrative by which you can break the repetitive action of the trauma. This is where you have to turn traumatic memories into narrative ones.

When We Were Orphans is not only a story about nostalgia, but also about melancholia. Melancholia means you are feeling sad for a long time, without an obvious reason. You are stuck in your sorrow, often because you can not overcome your past. In trauma theory,

melancholia is opposed to mourning. Mourning is a healthy step in the healing process. Freud called this *Trauerarbeit*: the work of mourning. It means you are able to grieve for what you have lost instead of continuously and obsessively trying to return to the time before you lost it. In the beautiful words of Vinet, when talking about *Remains of the Day*, but equally applicable to *When We Were Orphans*: in the end, Christopher Banks has “regrets for what could have been and not for what could be, [he] forces himself to visit his mother after more than thirty years to check that dream is the imperfect of dream” (Vinet, 143). ‘Regrets for what could have been’ means that you wonder how your life would have been if things turned out differently, but you realize that it is a lost possibility and there is no use in trying to regain it.

Pascal Zinck says “memory impairment [...] as well as reluctance to bear witness” are “two common scars of trauma” (Zinck, 149). These are also evident in Banks’s behaviour. As I have illustrated before, Banks frequently comments upon his fading memories and often leaves out important events such as Jennifer’s suicide attempt.

Another notion from trauma theory, used in their discussion of *When We Were Orphans* by Dominique Vinet and Paul Veyret, is the screen memory. The concept of screen memory was first coined by Freud and refers to a memory which is unconsciously used to repress another associated memory of an emotionally painful event. Veyret argues that “in *When We Were Orphans* [...] some memories seem to stand in the way of reminiscence, screening the hidden object of true horror, veiling the heart of darkness of the narrative” (Veyret, 165). Banks’s memories of his parents’ disappearance are blocked by all kinds of other things. When talking about the day his father disappeared, Banks focuses on his adventure with Akira when they stole a bottle of ‘magic lotion’ from one of Akira’s servants. Out of fear for what might happen if Akira’s parents discovered what they had done, they planned to replace the bottle into the servant’s room, but his father’s supposed kidnapping prevented Christopher from going over to Akira’s house. In fact, the possibility of Akira being angry with him or of Akira’s parents finding out about the theft of the bottle, occupied his mind most of that evening, Banks claims.

My sullenness stayed with me well into the night, but of course this was interpreted as my reaction to the situation regarding my father. [...] I do not remember much about the days immediately following my father’s disappearance, other than that I was often so concerned about Akira. (*Orphans*, 124-125)

A lot of the imagery in *When We Were Orphans*, says Veyret, is related to concepts of vision or the lack of vision, as an illustration of how his nostalgia keeps Banks from coming to true understanding. When Banks returns to Shanghai, he observes the war for the first time through a pair of *opera glasses* (*Orphans*, 189). Also upon his return to Shanghai, Banks comments upon a particular habit members of the Shanghai community seem to have and which annoys him: “namely, the way people here seem determined at every opportunity to block one’s view” (181). He is told the house where his parents are held, is opposite the house of a *blind* actor. A treasure of his is an old *magnifying glass*. He once received it as a present from two school friends and he claims it has been of use to him in his investigations as a detective. *Photographs* appear as well in *When We Were Orphans*. People mostly take photographs in order to *not forget*. Looking at pictures is a way of helping your memory to remember things, which sometimes do not come back to you spontaneously. But pictures can influence your memory as well. We need only think of the witnesses who first did not identify Iwan Demjanjuk as Iwan the Terrible, but were afterwards completely sure he was, only because they had already seen his picture and therefore came to think they recognised him. The same happens to Christopher Banks, when discovering the picture of a Chinese man on the back of an newspaper article.

I will have to admit, incidentally, that I cannot say with complete certainty that the plump Chinese man I saw that day was one and the same man in the newspaper photograph – the man now identified as the warlord Wang Ku. All I can say is that from the moment I first set eyes on the photograph, that face and it was the face, not the gown, cap and pigtail, which of course could have been that of any Chinese gentleman – struck me unmistakably as one I had seen during the days of my father’s disappearance. And the more I have turned that particular incident over in my mind, the more convinced I have become that the man in the photograph was the one who visited our house that day. (139)

Being a detective, he knows of course what enfeebles an identification, namely, when victims only recognise variably features of someone’s appearance or when they base their identification on very common features. Banks pro-acts to such a possible counterargument by saying it was really the man’s *face* he recognised. However, the reader comes to question the reliability of this identification since he says that his conviction grew stronger after some heavy reflection, when an identification is probably most reliable when it happens instantly. Borrowing Elizabeth Loftus’s concept, Pascal Zinck sees this as an example of “fake memory syndrome.”

Chapter 4: *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans*: a comparison

4.1. Unreliable narration

In the following discussion of Etsuko and Christopher as unreliable narrators I will partly draw on Joachim Veldeman's thesis "Challenges to Theorising Unreliable Narration: An Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled*." What Veldeman says of *The Remains of Day*, that the narrator's unreliability is closely interlinked with his self-deception as a person (Veldeman, 36), is equally true of the novels this thesis deals with. Just as Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, Etsuko is not intentionally trying to deceive the reader or lie. As Mike Petry says: "we really have no good reason to doubt the "facts" Etsuko is communicating to us" (Petry, 46), for example the details about the housing conditions in Nagasaki at the time. Etsuko is an unreliable narrator in the sense that the story she tells, is not the story she wants or needs to tell. The essence of her story is quite different from what lies on the surface. The self-deception lies in the fact that by not talking about Keiko's suicide, Etsuko thinks that she has dealt with it, or at least, that she gives the impression she has dealt with it. Christopher Banks seems an even less reliable narrator since he more intentionally tries to present events differently in order for them to fit his self-schemata. Both narrators play an ambiguous role: they are writing their own story and are at the same time its reader since they partly distance themselves from a "painful version" (Wong, 18). By taking a step back from their lives, they try to make sense of it. Wong notes that Ishiguro's narrators are split into two distinct roles. There is an extradiegetic narrator who stands above the narrative and an intradiegetic narrator who is part of the told story and thus is told himself by an extradiegetic narrator (Herman, 85). Applied to *A Pale View of Hills*, Wong argues that Etsuko at first appears to be an extradiegetic narrator when she describes her past in Nagasaki, but her deep emotional involvement makes her very much part of that story as well. To borrow Wong's words, "her own confusion of being either above or within the story adds to the tumultuous sense of her emotions during that volatile period of her life" (Wong, 19). I believe the same can be said of Banks's role in *When We Were Orphans*. Although he draws more attention to the occasional haze of his memory, in the beginning he repeatedly claims his memories are clear and perfectly reliable, as if he is an extradiegetic narrator recounting history.

However, both claims cause the reader to draw conclusions about his unreliability (Veldeman, 31).

There are significant moments in each novel that illustrate each narrator's unreliability par excellence. In *A Pale View of Hills* this episode finally explicitly reveals that the story of Sachiko may in fact be Etsuko's own story in part. I have already referred to this scene, in relation to the image of the rope. When Sachiko is packing her luggage to leave for Kobe (as a stop between Nagasaki and America), Etsuko gets worried about Mariko and goes out looking for her with a lantern. When she finds her on a small bridge, they start a confusing, yet revealing conversation:

“I don't want to go away. I don't want to go away tomorrow.” I gave a sigh. “But you'll like it. Everyone's a little frightened of new things. You'll like it over there. [...] In any case,” I went on, “if you don't like it over there, we can always come back.” This time she looked up at me questioningly. “Yes, I promise,” I said. “If you don't like it over there we'll come straight back. But we have to try and see if we like it there. I'm sure we will.” (*Pale*, 172-173)

Using the first person plural 'we' instead of, for example, 'you and your mother,' it seems Etsuko is confused about whom she is talking to. She may be confusing this conversation with Mariko with another conversation between herself and Keiko, before leaving Japan. But maybe it is not confusion, but a deliberate change of story. As Ishiguro has said of this scene: it is the suggestion “that Etsuko had dropped this cover. It just slips out: she's now talking about herself. She's no longer bothering to put it in the third person” (Ishiguro, interview with Mason, 337). A few pages later, it is revealed even more explicitly, when Etsuko says: “Keiko was happy that day” (*Pale*, 182). This would also further explain Etsuko's feelings of guilt. Keiko was anxious to leave Japan, but Etsuko convinced her, promising Keiko would certainly be happy there and that they would come back if she did not like it over there. Obviously, they did not leave England although apparently Keiko was not happy there either, so Etsuko broke a double promise to her daughter, with the known terrible consequences. It is difficult or even impossible to establish how far Etsuko's unreliability goes: has she merely adapted the quite similar story of Sachiko and Mariko in order for it to express what she can not tell about her own relationship with her daughter, or are the characters of Sachiko and Mariko even entirely invented?

In *When We Were Orphans* it is harder to pinpoint the exact moment on which the narrator's reliability becomes a big question mark. Instead there are a couple of occasions which add to the reader's suspicion. One of these is when Banks visits a house in Shanghai together with an English school friend of his, Anthony Morgan. When they enter, they see a family having dinner, but quickly the house itself attracts Banks's attention.

For what was dawning upon me was that the entire rear half of the room in which I was now standing was in fact what used to be the entrance hall of our old Shanghai house. (*Orphans*, 219)

Even though "some vast restructuring had taken place," Banks is certain it is the house where he once lived with his parents. On top of that, the agreement seems to have been made that Banks will return to the house together with his parents, after he has liberated them, consequently evicting the Chinese family residing there. At a later occasion the reader comes to doubt Banks's reliability and even his mental sanity still more. In search of the building where his parents are supposedly being held captive, he ends up in the battlefield where he finds a wounded Japanese soldier whom he "recognised [as] Akira with no difficulty" (293). That after several decades Christopher Banks would coincidentally meet his childhood friend Akira, severely wounded and in the middle of the war scene, seems very unlikely to say the least. Later on, Banks comes to doubt it himself, saying "I thought he was a friend of mine from my childhood. But now, I'm not so certain. I'm beginning to see now, many things aren't as I supposed" (325). This suggests that near the end of the novel Banks finally begins to realize he has been deceiving himself and can maybe reach some closure.

4.2. *A Pale View of Hills* and *When We Were Orphans* as trauma fiction

As I have mentioned already, I do not claim Ishiguro's work to be typical of trauma fiction, nor do I believe that it should be read as trauma fiction before anything else. However, when regarding the characteristics outlined by Anne Whitehead, several similarities can be noticed. One requirement for a work to be able to be read as trauma fiction is of course that the story in one way or another narrates a traumatic event or its repercussions for one of the characters. As I have repeatedly discussed in the previous parts, I believe this is very much the case in *A Pale View of Hills* as well as in *When We Were Orphans*. Both narrators have been traumatized and are turning their trauma into a narrative for a therapeutic purpose. I feel both of the endings remain quite unresolved as well. Although

Christopher Banks has found out what happened to his parents and has been able to see his mother again, the reader is nevertheless left behind with an ambiguous feeling because she does not really recognise him, he only obliquely refers to Jennifer having tried to commit suicide and because his concluding optimism does not appear to be genuine, in a way, since he still seems to be stuck in his nostalgic memories:

I do not wish to appear smug; but drifting through my days here in London, I believe I can indeed own up to a certain contentment. I enjoy my walks in the parks, I visit the galleries, and increasingly of late, I have come to take a foolish pride in sifting through old newspaper reports of my cases in the Reading Room at the British Museum. This city, in other words, has come to be my home, and I should not mind if I had to live out the rest of my days here. Nevertheless, there are those times when a sort of emptiness fills my hours, and I shall continue to give Jennifer's invitation serious thought. (*Orphans*, 368)

Likewise, *A Pale View of Hills* is not really left on a positive note. Niki is returning to London, leaving her mother behind, alone in the big house. During their final conversation, Etsuko puts forward the idea of selling the house, but Niki protests. Moreover, the story of Sachiko and Mariko does not have a conclusion either. The scene on the bridge is in fact the last time Sachiko and Mariko are mentioned and it merely ends with the child running off, after being scared by Etsuko. The difficulty with deriving *the* past is connected with the focus on the complexity of memory and the disruption of reality. Since both Etsuko and Banks frequently stress the unreliability of their memory, it is fair to say that the reader cannot be sure that the version which they render is the truth. There are also some elements which suggest a deviation from reality such as the hints of Keiko's ghost possibly haunting the house in *A Pale View of Hills* - "At first, I was sure someone had walked past my bed and out of my room, closing the door quietly." (*Pale*, 174) -, or the reunion between Christopher and Akira in *When We Were Orphans*.

When We Were Orphans can certainly be read in relation to postcolonialism and the 'postwar legacy.' In the references to the opium trade and Banks's mother's protest against it, the British empire's dubious role in history is hinted at, and during Banks's return to Shanghai, he ends up in the middle of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In *A Pale View of Hills*, all of the characters are still recovering from the shock of the nuclear attack on Nagasaki, although I object against a reading of the novel as if it should be first and foremost read in the light of this catastrophe, as did for example Cynthia Wong. I do

believe it fits into the tradition of postcolonial literature in the sense that it pays attention to the personal stories, the ones that are omitted by history. The novel's characters do not seem to be injured by the bomb, but nevertheless, the aftermath of the disaster runs through their lives, and that is at least hinted at.

Intertextuality is another aspect of trauma fiction which is present in these novels. In *A Pale View of Hills*, the obvious connections with "Eveline" and *Madame Butterfly* enable the reader to predict the unhappy ending of Sachiko's story, although that outcome is never explicitly revealed. Since *When We Were Orphans* is set out as a detective story with a detective as the protagonist and narrator, the reader expects to hear a realistic story with a problem (the disappearance of the parents), a development and a solution based on rational conclusions. However, the plot develops less and less rationally and for the fans of Poirot or Sherlock Holmes, the solution of the mystery will probably be a disappointment. Ishiguro may be suggesting here that for disturbing matters close to the heart, rationalism is often of no use. For this novel, Ishiguro was inspired by early twentieth century detective stories.

These detective stories portray a very cosy functioning community where just one thing has gone wrong -- somebody has murdered somebody. And all it takes is for this detective to come from outside and unmask the murderer and everything goes back to being rosy again. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to take a detective who seems to come from that world, carrying the tools that would be adequate in that fictional world, and to actually hurl him into the 20th century as it moved toward the second cataclysm. (Ishiguro, interview with Mudge)

Armed with his magnifying glass and his experience acquired in his various previous cases - of which it was so obvious he would solve them, there seems no need to expand on how he solved them in the novel -, Christopher will attempt to solve his parents' disappearance.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have discussed the very wide topic of memory in all of its aspects and in relation to two novels by Kazuo Ishiguro in particular. Looking at the history of philosophers' approach to memory, it became clear that in the beginning, memory was mostly seen as a useful device for rhetoricians and students. Techniques to make full use of your memory were developed, such as the place system. In the Middle Ages, memory was still considered to be very important. Wise men with great memories were held in high esteem. Having read a great deal and having remembered it all, was praised more than originality. During the Romantic period, the emphasis came to lie more and more on imagination and originality, and memory came to have a different importance. People as John Locke started to see memory as the deciding factor of our identity. Your whole past is confined in your memories and your past influences how you react to contemporary circumstances and people. Two significant names for our understanding of memory are Proust and Freud. Proust wrote one of the most famous literary renderings of involuntary memory. Freud laid the groundwork for trauma theory. His analyses of troubled memories still influence trauma theorists up to date. Trauma theory has been an important factor in the memory boom of the 1990s, a phenomenon which I have expanded upon in the second section. Various factors have contributed to this memory boom, including technology and the increasingly great time interval between the present and events we need to commemorate, such as the Holocaust. Afterwards I have given a short overview of works that have become very influential in the field of memory. For a more scientific understand of the workings of memory, I have then outlined the different varieties of remembering and forgetting as distinguished by (neuro)psychologists. In the next section I have touched upon the various metaphors people have used to denote memory, concluding with two proposals by Randall and Draaisma for organic metaphors. Finally, I have devoted some attention to how postmodern writers have given literary depictions of trauma and memory.

In the second chapter I have discussed Ishiguro's debut novel, *A Pale View of Hills*. After having briefly touched upon its intertexts, I have focused upon the meaning of memory for the main character and narrator, Etsuko. She uses her memories of a distant past to talk about her painful present grief. I have attempted to unravel some of the different layers in this story. Stories, characters and motifs are doubled and interwoven. I believe that, as a

debut, this novel is a great success, subtle and moving, but as a fictional representation of memory, *When We Were Orphans* is more interesting and ambitious.

In my analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *When We Were Orphans*, I have focused on three aspects of memory in fiction. The use of memory gives an author the freedom in his or her plot. The author can orchestrate the events much more freely than when using a chronological plot. But these technical advantages are not the only reason why Ishiguro has liked to work with memory in all of his novels. Memories are not facts. When you say "I remember him being very rude to me," it means something quite different than when you say "He was very rude to me." Ishiguro likes to play with these blurry lines between memories, facts, dreams and wishful thinking. I believe he has done so very successfully in *When We Were Orphans*, in which nostalgia is the main theme. In his memories, Christopher Banks reminisces about his life before his parents were so brutally taken away from him. He remembers a time when he still thought the world was perfect and his parents would always be there to protect him. Having been thrown out of this 'childhood bubble' so suddenly, has traumatized him and gradually, and the reader comes to realize s/he is listening to a troubled and psychologically damaged narrator.

While focusing on similarities between the two novels, I have gone into the concept of unreliable narration, present in both of these novels, and linked to the fact that the biggest part of both narrators' accounts are memories. Finally, I have devoted some attention to how these novels can be read as works of trauma fiction. Since memory and to what purposes people use it, have been a topic of tremendous interest to Kazuo Ishiguro, this thesis and its discussion of two of his novels is only a small part of what can be said about Ishiguro and memory. While in *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko's way of talking *around* things and her drawing back into the past were the main topic of interest, *When We Were Orphans* has been mostly interesting for the image it paints of a man caught up in his nostalgic memories.

Works Cited

- Ackerman, Diane. A Natural History of the Senses. London: Chapman, 1992.
- Brewer, William F. "What is Autobiographical Memory?" from Autobiographica Memory: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives. (ed. David C. Rubin). Cambridge University Press, 1986. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 2 May 2008).
- Carruthers, Mary J. The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture. Cambridge University Press, 1990. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 20 March 2008).
- . and Jan M. Ziolkowski, eds. The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 25 March 2008).
- Draaisma, Douwe. Waarom het leven sneller gaat als je ouder wordt. De geheimen van het geheugen. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Maarten Muntinga bv, 2001.
- Draaisma, Douwe. Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas about the Mind. Cambridge University Press, 2000. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 5 May 2008).
- . "De heimweefabriek van Douwe Draaisma. Hoe werkt ons geheugen (ook alweer)?" Humo. 16 (accessed 15 April 2008):150-155.
- Döring, Tobias. "Sherlock Holmes-He Dead: Disenchanted the English Detective in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*." Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective Eds. Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 59-86.
- Henke, Christopher. "Remembering Selves, Constructing Selves. Memory and Identity in Contemporary British Fiction." Journal for the Study of British Cultures. 10 (2003): 77-100.
- Herman, Luc and Bart Vervaeck. Vertelduivels. Handboek verhaalanalyse. Antwerpen: Vubpress/Vantilt, 2001.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. When We Were Orphans. London: Faber, 2000.
- . A Pale View of Hills. London: Faber, 1982.

- . Never Let Me Go. London: Faber, 2005.
- . "Texture of Memory" Interview with Donna Liquori. Times Union.
<http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/webpages4/archives/tu_ishiguro_kazuo.html>
(accessed 17 April 2005).
- . Interview with Nermeen Shaikh Q & A. Asiasource Interview.
<http://www.asiasource.org/news/special_reports/ishiguro.cfm> (accessed 26 March 2008).
- . Interview with Brian W. Shaffer. Contemporary Literature XLII. 2001.
- . Interview with Gregory Mason. Contemporary Literature XXX. (1989).
- . Interview with NBCC. Critical Mass blog: <<http://bookcriticscircle.blogspot.com>>
(accessed 27 April 2008).
- . "Rooted in a Small Space: an Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro" Interview with Dylan Otto Krider. The Kenyon Review. 10 (1998).
- . "Ishiguro Takes a Literary Approach to the Detective Novel: Interview by Alden Mudge," *Book Page* (September, 2000),
<http://www.bookpage.com/0009bp/kazuo_ishiguro.html> (accessed 14 May 2008).
- Jager, Eric. "Books, Computers and Other Metaphors of Memory." The Chronicle. 47
(2000): B14-B15.
- Ketelaar, Eric. "The Archive as a Time Machine." Proceedings of the DLM-forum 2002.
<www.project-consult.net> (accessed 27 April 2008).
- Kihlstrom, John F., Jennifer S. Beer and Stanley B. Klein. "Self and Identity as Memory" from *Handbook of Self and Identity* (eds. Mark R. Learey and June Price Tangney);
Guilford Press, 2003. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 1 April 2008).
- Kingsolver, Barbara. Animal Dreams. London, Abacus: 2000.
- LaCapra, Dominick. "Lanzmann's "Shoah": "Here There Is No Why"." Critical Inquiry 23
(1997): 231-269.

---. Writing History, Writing Trauma. JHU Press, 2000. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 19 May 2008).

Lewis, Barry. Kazuo Ishiguro. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Memento. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Perf. Guy Pearce. Newmarket Films, 2001.

Petry, Mike. Narratives of Memory and Identity: The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999.

Rossington, Michael and Anne Whitehead, eds. Theories of Memory. A Reader. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2007.

Shaffer, Brian W. Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro. Columbia (S.C.): S.C. Press, 1998.

The Wonder Years. ABC. Episode 9, 14 December 1988.

Veldeman, Joachim. "Challenges to Theorising Unreliable Narration: An Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled*." Diss. Ghent University, 2007.

Vinet, Dominique. "Revisiting the Memory of Guilt in Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*." Etudes britanniques contemporaines 29 (2005): 133-144.

Vingerhoets, Guy and Engelen Lannoo. Handboek Neuropsychologie. De biologische basis van het gedrag. Leuven: Uitgeverij Acco, 1998.

Whitehead, Anne. Trauma Fiction. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2004.

Winter, Jay. Remembering War. The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century. Yale University Press, 2006. <www.books.google.be> (accessed 26 March 2008).

Wong, Cynthia F. Kazuo Ishiguro. Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005.

Yates, Frances. The Art of Memory. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Zinck, Pascal. "The Palimpsest of Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*." Etudes britanniques contemporaines 29 (2005): 145-158.

A Pale View of Hills book. Read 1,496 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. In his highly acclaimed debut, A Pale View of Hills, Kazuo ... After all, the narrator of the story tells us more than once that perhaps her memory is faulty, perhaps she is mixing things up. But such a confession, such reluctance to appear certain, such a recognition of the false nature of memory, does the opposite of what the words should do. Ishiguro's first novel is an intriguing read. If anything, it shows how much promise he had as an author and how much he could offer the literary world as he honed his skills. The Pale View of Hills is a very implicit book, and the conclusions I took from it may not even be conclusions at all.