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**A CASA DA MEMÓRIA: OS ROMANCES DE  
REMEMORAÇÃO DE KAZUO ISHIGURO**

**THE (HO)USE OF MEMORY: KAZUO ISHIGURO'S  
NOVELS OF REMEMBRANCE**



**NOME  
COMPLETO**

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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica da Dra. Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira, Professora Associada do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro

Dedico este trabalho ao meu marido, Patrick, aos meus filhos Bernardo e Mafalda, que me motivaram e mantiveram lúcida nesta viagem labiríntica.

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**Palavras-chave**

Memória, lembranças, (re)lembrar, a infiabilidade da memória, tipos de memória, construção de memória(s), auto-memória, a memória como estratégia literária

## Resumo

A obra do autor britânico Kazuo Ishiguro é permeada de imagens e reflexos da memória. Os narradores *ishigurianos*, relatando quase sempre na primeira pessoa, descrevem personagens e narram as suas vidas e os seus caminhos recorrendo à sua memória ou às imagens que a memória filtrou e armazenou. A memória é então um mecanismo de construção de histórias dotado de pouca fiabilidade, uma vez que ela retém apenas aquilo que pretende e não tudo aquilo que cada personagem experiencia e experimenta. A memória é selectiva, filtradora e “desonesta”, se bem que possa ser fiel e fidedigna, mas quem poderá avaliar e certificar a sua fiabilidade?

Na literatura *ishiguriana*, em especial em determinadas obras do seu recente mas profícuo percurso, a memória tem um papel central e permite a (re)criação de cenários, de cheiros, de sabores, de cores e de pessoas de épocas passadas. É interessante notar que Ishiguro privilegia o período pós-II Guerra Mundial, provavelmente por ter sido esse o tempo em que nasceu, cresceu e viveu, ainda que apenas por cinco anos, num país particularmente afectado pelos estilhaços e destruição da guerra. É este país, o Japão, que utiliza em várias das suas obras, mas que afirma ser fruto de imaginação e do seu conhecimento do cinema japonês, dado que as imagens descritas são tão realistas e fidedignas.

A memória funciona como um mecanismo ou uma estratégia literária, um fio condutor que transporta o narrador e o leitor numa viagem labiríntica na obra *The Unconsoled*, ou numa viagem de descoberta da verdade em *Never Let Me Go*, ou ainda numa viagem de tentativa de compreensão de vários eventos em *A Pale View of the Hills*.

**Key-words**

Memory, recollections, remembering, the unreliability of memory, types of memory, memory construction, self-memory, memory as literary strategy

## Abstract

The work of British author Kazuo Ishiguro is filled with images and reflections of memory. Ishigurian narrators, nearly always recounting in the first person, describe characters and narrate their lives and their paths making use of memory or of the images that memory has filtered and stored. Memory is then a mechanism which enables the construction of stories, a mechanism characterised by its unreliability, since memory only retains what it determines and not all that each character experiences and experiments. Memory is selective, a filter and “dishonest”, although it can be faithful and truthful, but who could assess and certify its reliability?

In *Ishigurian* literature, especially in certain novels of the author’s recent but proficuous literary path, memory fulfils a central role and allows the (re)creation of scenarios, smells, flavours, colours and people from ancient times. It is interesting to note that Ishiguro privileges the post-II World War period, probably because it was during that time that he was born, grew up and lived, although for only five years, in a country particularly affected by the shattering and destruction of war. It is in this country, Japan, that he sets many of his novels, though stating that what he describes is merely a product of his imagination and knowledge of Japanese film art, given the realism and truthfulness of the images depicted.

Memory functions as a literary mechanism or strategy, a conducive thread that transports both the narrator and the reader into a labyrinthine journey in *The Unconsoled*, or into a journey of the discovery of truth in *Never Let Me Go*, or yet in a journey of an attempt to understand several events in *A Pale View of the Hills*.

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## List of Acronyms

*RD - The Remains of the Day*

*PVH - A Pale View of Hills*

*TU - The Unconsoled*

*NLMG - Never Let Me Go*

*WWWO - When We Were Orphans*

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Picture 2 - Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931)



## Introduction

The man who does not embrace  
his past, has no future.  
Film *The Mummy*

It seemed that if only it [the  
sound of the fountain] would stop,  
my memory would unlock and I  
would finally remember the names.  
*The Unconsoled*, 1995:24

Novels cannot exist without memory, imagination and fantasy. These are all ingredients that arise from the mind of an author. An author's mind is the home for numerous memories, for they gather materials for their writing in their own memories or in the memories of others. Memory and identity have played a significant role in literature, in novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850) and more recently Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). Many novels have been shaped from experiences that their authors have not lived or seen themselves but from experiences lived by others, in another space and another time. Therefore, museums and history books offer a wonderful repository of collective, cultural and social memory. No matter the direction an author chooses to tread, memory is at its core and will play a crucial role in the unfolding of the plot.

Kazuo Ishiguro takes this idea and exploits it further, since all of his novels deal with the issue of memory in one way or another. Ishiguro is a British novelist born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954, and his Japanese origins and ancestry are discernible and widespread in his works. His father was an oceanographer and the family moved from Japan to Surrey, England, when Ishiguro was merely 5 years of age. For this reason, Barry Lewis states that the author's "home is a halfway house,

neither Japanese nor English, somewhere in-between departure and arrival, nostalgia and anticipation.” (Lewis,2000:1). This early dislocation of Ishiguro is similar to that described in his novel *When we were Orphans* (2000), in which an English child born and raised in Japan is sent to England after the disappearance of both his parents in Japan. This character, English in blood but Japanese at heart, and having a Japanese boy for a best friend, is torn between the two worlds, and faces a long period of adaptation to a new reality and setting. As observed by Rob Burton in *Artists of the Floating World: Contemporary Writers between Cultures*,

Fictions by Ishiguro (...) do not offer pat celebrations of liminality in an emergent context. Rather, they seem to float in complex ways between an embrace of the local and the global, home and exile, the context-based and the transcendent, the centre and the periphery, the insider and the outsider.

(Burton,2007:28)

Like the character Banks in *WWWO*, Ishiguro grew up being considered an outsider in an English context, in which he felt quite at ease and completely adjusted to. He considers himself much more European than Japanese, although his name and appearance, as well as his recurrent use of Japanese settings and characters, make people view him as purely Japanese.

In her thesis *The Desperado Age. British Literature at the Start of the Third Millennium*, Lidia Vianu defines Ishiguro as a Desperado writer, a characterisation which has its origin in his treatment of themes such as displacement (*PVH*, *TU*, *WWWO*) and dystopia (*TU*), as well as in the repeated employment of one-hero narratives: “Ishiguro is a one-hero novelist, like all Desperadoes.” (Vianu,2006:171) About these heroes, Vianu goes on to observe that,

Ishiguro’s main heroes are never likeable persons. We learn to put up with them. Our irritation grows as we read one more incident, as we discover that

the trajectory of their memory is aimed at hiding exactly what we are expected to find out and condemn. (Vianu, 2006:173)

What was supposed to be a short stay for the family became a permanent one. Ishiguro studied English and Philosophy at the University of Kent, Canterbury, and then Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, where he studied under Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson and earned his MA. He also gained British citizenship, and now resides in Sydenham, London, with his wife and daughter. Up to the present, Ishiguro has written and published six novels since his début in 1982, several short stories and screenplays for television. Although the writer is physically far from Japan, Ishiguro's parents continue to live there and he keeps regular contact with them, having to speak his mother tongue with them.

Therefore, Ishiguro's Japanese roots are omnipresent in his writing, be it in the characters he creates and shapes, in the names, in the settings he envisages (his novel *A Pale View of the Hills* is set in Tokyo, for instance, where an American woman is commissioned to demystify the clichés and stereotypes that exist around Japanese culture at the end of the II World War). But according to Ishiguro himself, this is irrelevant, for the plot could unfold anywhere else: "I often start with the relationships, or the questions, the themes. The setting always comes at the end."<sup>1</sup> Through memory, Ishiguro searches deep in his mind for the flavours and colours he grew surrounded by, in an attempt to draw those facets into his writing. However, he refuses to be classified as a Japanese writer, since his acknowledged intention and expressed goal is not to write about Japan, but about wider worldly themes, such as war, emotions, cloning, suicide, loss, among many others. Ishiguro is quick to dismiss the idea that he is a representative of Japanese literature:

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<sup>1</sup> Moore; Michael Scott & Sontheimer, Michael. Interview "I Remain Fascinated by Memory", published on 05/10/2005 in <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,378173,00.html>> retrieved on March 23, 2007.

I sometimes feel that if I had written a book like Kafka's *Trial*, people would say to me, "What a strange judicial system the Japanese have."<sup>2</sup>

But why is the issue of memory so prevailing in Ishiguro's novels? The explanation is apparently simple to the author: Ishiguro is spellbound by the possibilities this issue provides, for memory is an everlasting source of materials and every day science advances a step that allows us to understand the ways in which this wonderful mechanism operates. In the same interview above cited, which took place after the publication of his 2005 novel, Ishiguro explained that "I [the author] remain fascinated by memory" and that he would like to take the topic of memory a step further, using not just an individual that thinks back over his life, but a whole society or nation that remembers or forgets, analysing historical events and exploring the benefits of forgetting or remembering great human tragedies. Is it healthier to remember or simpler to forget and move on?

Until now, Ishiguro has published novels, shorts stories and screenplay:  
1981 - *Introductions 7: Stories by New Writers* (contributor). Faber and Faber.  
1982 - *A Pale View of Hills*. Faber and Faber.  
1986 - *An Artist of the Floating World*. Faber and Faber.  
1989 - *The Remains of the Day*. Faber and Faber (adapted to the cinema in 1992)  
1995 - *The Unconsoled*. Faber and Faber.  
2000 - *When We Were Orphans*. Faber and Faber.  
2005 - *Never Let Me Go*. Faber and Faber.  
2009 - *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*. Faber and Faber.

He has also written two original screenplays for Channel 4 Television, *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason*, broadcast in 1984, and *The Gourmet*, broadcast in 1986. He has also completed his first full-length screenplay for *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003), a melodrama set in the 1930s, starring Isabella Rossellini and Maria de

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<sup>2</sup> Moore; Michael Scott & Sontheimer, Michael. Interview "I Remain Fascinated by Memory", published on 05/10/2005 in <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,378173,00.html>>.

Medeiros, and a screenplay for the film *The White Countess* (2005) starring Ralph Fiennes and Natasha Richardson.

Ishiguro has been awarded and shortlisted for several literary prizes and awards, among which can be cited:

1982 - Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize for *A Pale View of Hills*

1986 - Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) for *An Artist of the Floating World*

1989 - Booker Prize for Fiction for *The Remains of the Day*

1995 - The Cheltenham Prize for *The Unconsoled*

1998 - Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France) and Premio Mantova (Italy)

2000 - Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) and Whitbread Novel Award (shortlist) for *When We Were Orphans*

2005 - Man Booker Prize for Fiction (shortlist) for *Never Let Me Go*

2006 - British Book Awards Author of the Year (shortlist), Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) (shortlist) and James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction)(shortlist) for *Never Let Me Go*

In almost all of them the characters have to deal with the troubles and the afflictions brought upon them by the use of memory or its absence. For instance, in *The Unconsoled* (1995), the main character, a famous and renowned pianist, suffers from memory loss and finds himself in a foreign city which he only vaguely recognises and where he must attend a series of appointments to please the local people and play at a concert. The whole narrative seems somewhat unreal and Kafkaesque, to some extent like Alice in Wonderland opening doors which lead to huge pianos placed in tiny washrooms. In *When we were Orphans* (2000), the character Christopher Banks resorts to his memory to trace back his life to Japan and thus try to uncover the mystery that lies underneath his parents' disappearance. In *The Remains of the Day* (1989), the main character is an English butler, Stevens, who analyses his past in diary form as he journeys through the English countryside.

Like his characters in his several novels, Ishiguro feels comfortable with his work and achievement, as pointed out by Rob Burton:

This contentment, this feeling of having done one's best, is perhaps the feeling that Ishiguro shares deeply with all his characters. Given the flux in personal and public histories, the changes of private and cultural memory,

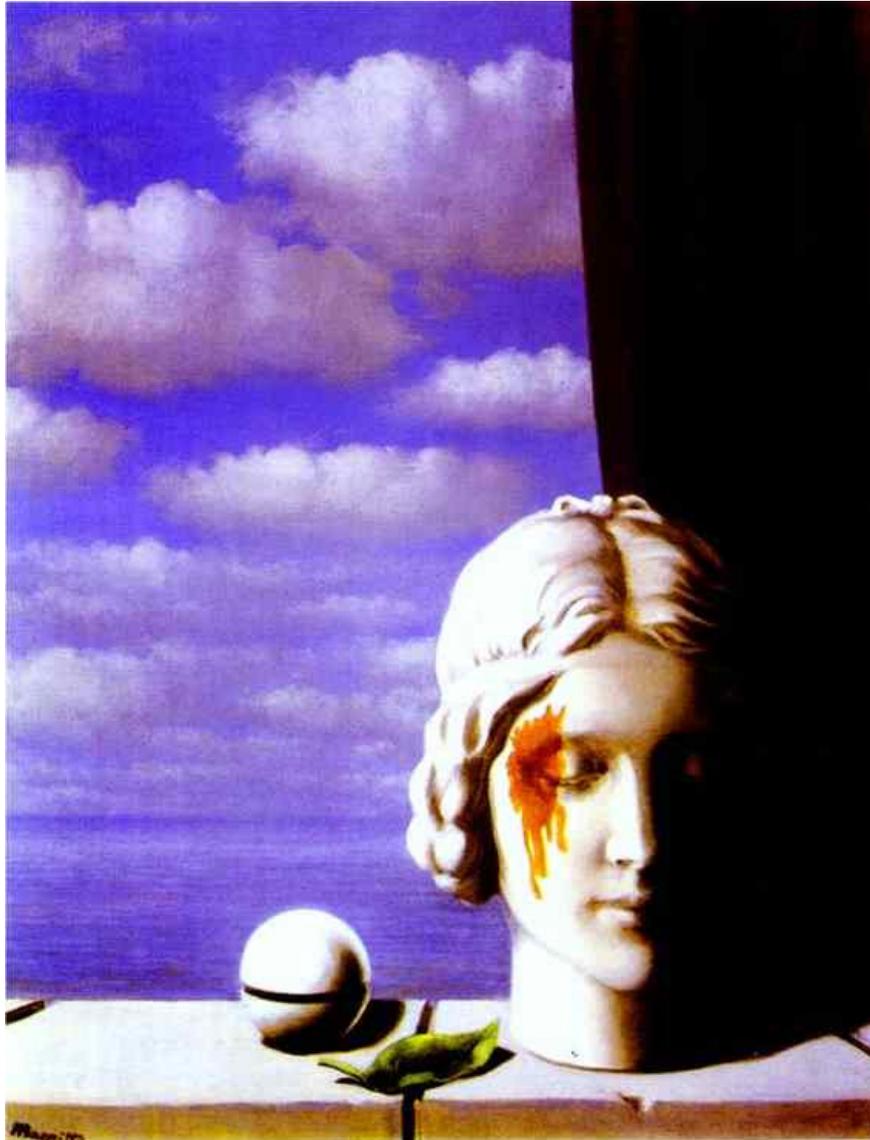
there seems to be one overriding absolute: the narrative track of having done one's best, and of consequently feeling a sense of triumph. (Burton,2007:57)

The purpose of the following chapters is to explore and analyse how Ishiguro resorts to the theme of memory in each of the novels which will be the object of this study: *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), *The Unconsoled* (1995) and *Never Let me Go* (2005). Other novels and short stories will be referred to according to their significance and relevance for this reflection on the use of memory as a literary trope.

Although memory is employed as a literary mechanism and trope, it seems appropriate to inform the analysis of these novels with useful information deriving from the fields of medicine, science and other non-literary dominions. Knowing how the brain and memory function will surely prove valuable to make this analysis more fruitful and far-reaching. This is the focus of Chapter I - Memory's Anatomy.

Chapter II - Memory and Literature will dwell on how memory has been the subject of many other authors of literary works, establishing a timeline that will help understand how memory has become a crucial subject in every realm of culture and science. Much of the information to be presented is based in the brilliant book by Suzanne Nalbantian, *Memory in Literature - From Rousseau to Neuroscience*. Still in this chapter, the second section will present some Portuguese authors who have equally made of memory a fundamental theme in some of their works, such as José Saramago, Sophia de Mello Breyner, and Agustina Bessa-Luís, among others.

In Chapter III - The (Ho)Use of Memory by Ishiguro, we explore and dissect the use of memory in three of Ishiguro's novels, exemplifying how the author brings memory into play in such diverse manners. Each section of this chapter will focus on one of his novels, beginning with a brief summary of the plot which serves as an introduction to the topics and aspects which are then explored.



Picture 2 - René Magritte's Memory (1948)



## Chapter I – Memory’s Anatomy

We resort to memory to access both the remote past and the recent past.  
Gleitman, 2003:279 (my translation)

Memory is a mixture of natural ability and artifice, or training; nature is served by art and art aided by nature.  
Carruthers, 1998:86

Like many others from my generation, I can remember exactly the announcement on Portuguese television of Princess Diana’s accident and ensuing death on the last day of August, 1997. But the most vivid images that have remained are those of her two sons, husband and brother walking after the casket where the princess lay and on which had been placed a white bouquet with a card from Harry which read “Mummy”. I remember I cried for Diana as if she were a family member, because she was always beautiful and full of poise in the public eye and I was accustomed to read about her and see her pictures in the magazines my mother bought. The recollection of this traumatic event is only possible due to the complexity and beauty of human memory.

What would our life be without memory? It is difficult to imagine. In Chapter 7 (dedicated to the issue of Memory) of the work *Psychology*, Henry Gleitman and others argue that without memory there would be no before, just now and the present, there would not be any possibility of building and refining competences, no memory of names or faces, no reference to days, hours or seconds elapsed. We would surely be condemned to live in a limited present and our personal identity would be compromised, for it is based on the continuity of the memories that link the present to the past. Memory is also a matter of survival and, as neurobiologist James McGaugh observes, «The major purpose of memory is to predict the future»<sup>3</sup>: we lean to avoid danger and deal with difficult ordeals because we remember what we or someone else has already experienced when faced with the same situation. We know not to stand in front of a moving train, otherwise we might get killed or seriously injured. In a Special Needs Education course that I completed some time ago, one of my professors used this image to explain how memory works: part of our brain is devoted to memory, and there are endless “hangers” where memories are

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Lemonick, Michael D. “The Flavor of Memories”.  
<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1580418,00.html>>

placed to be retrieved whenever necessary, in the same way as we place our clothes in hangers inside a closet and take them out as we need them.

Memory is difficult to understand and describe because it refers not to one but to a panoply of phenomena. Human beings have the ability to remember numerous things: I remember the years of Fernando Pessoa's birth and death; I remember my nieces and nephews' birthdays; I remember to water my plants every week. According to the entry on memory on the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy<sup>4</sup>,

Ordinary usage [of the term memory] hides a battery of different but related concepts of memory, which are now investigated by philosophers and psychologists alike, marrying attention to conceptual distinctions and subjective experience to functional and empirical concerns about the nature and the basis of memory processes and systems.

Therefore, human memory is much more complicated than a simple and linear law of storage and retrieval of information, and has been the object of study of areas so diverse as Psychology, Philosophy, Art, Medicine, Neuroscience and Literature. It is a complex cognitive process since what is remembered and how it is remembered depends not only on the past experiences of the individual but also on his/her cognitive structures. If past events were linearly and truthfully retrieved, then there would not be problems such as false memories, different types of amnesia (anterograde amnesia, retrograde amnesia, traumatic amnesia, dissociative amnesia, posthypnotic amnesia, lacunar amnesia, childhood amnesia, transient global amnesia, source amnesia) and syndromes related to memory (memory distrust syndrome, blackout phenomenon, Korsakoff's syndrome).

According to Linda Davidoff's work *Introduction to Psychology*, we remember so easily that we tend not to give importance to the ability of remembering. The same author goes on to refer to S., the man who remembered too much: this man was capable of remembering everything that had happened and been said in the past, whether recent or of long ago. Doctors were baffled by his permanent memory and he explained that he automatically transformed words into clear and stable images that he could see and, in some cases, also taste, smell or touch. Images make remembering easier as they make possible the formation of groups of information which are related. This ability to remember, called "hypertimesic syndrome", was as much a gift as it was a problem, for the images appeared and

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<sup>4</sup> Sutton, John. "Memory", in <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>>

accumulated one after the other, making it sometimes impossible to pursue linear thought.

The factual case of patient S. reminds us of Borges' character Funes, in the short story "Funes el Memorioso", in which this man suffers from a memory disorder that does not allow him to forget. Funes himself complains,

Más recuerdos tengo yo solo que los hábran tenido todos los hombres desde que el mundo es mundo. (J. L. Borges).

## The nature of memory

About memory, some authors (Gleitman et al., 2003:343-344) state that, Memory is the way in which we register the events in our lives and also the information and competences that we keep from those events. (...) The term memory is simply an ample label for a huge number of processes that form the bridges between the past and the present. (my ellipsis and translation)

There are distinct memory systems with different retention intervals: long term memory deals with information that has been learnt a long time ago, for this system allows the information to be dormant for long periods of time (similar to a bookshelf, where we store big quantities of books that we can use and read whenever we wish); working memory (before called short term memory) is the system which stores the information we are dealing with at present, allowing us to complete tasks (much like the work desk where we pile up the books we are presently using, so that they are within easy reach). Another brilliant metaphor for working memory is that of an overworked worker in a work stall able only to pack a few boxes at a time, without much grouping and organization (Baddeley, 1976, 1986 cited by Gleitman et al. 355).

Long term memory and working memory are two separate and distinct brain processes, but are interdependent and parallel. Some of the information we retain in our working memory will be preserved and stored in the long term memory and this will allow it to be retrieved at a later time.

Another distinction refers to the type of information that we remember: episodical memory is the remembrance of a certain event; generic memory is our mental "reference library" (Gleitman et al., 2003: 344, my translation), which

contains our mental dictionary and stores our common sense knowledge, allowing us to know that the sky is blue, that the year has twelve months and so on.

Memory can also be distinguished according to the conscience that we have of past events: it can be explicit or implicit. Explicit or declarative memory is when we are aware that we are trying to remember something (for example, how to say “thank you” in French or remembering a relative’s visit), while implicit or non-declarative memory is when we remember certain things or events without having a clear conscience that we are remembering (for instance, how to drive a car).

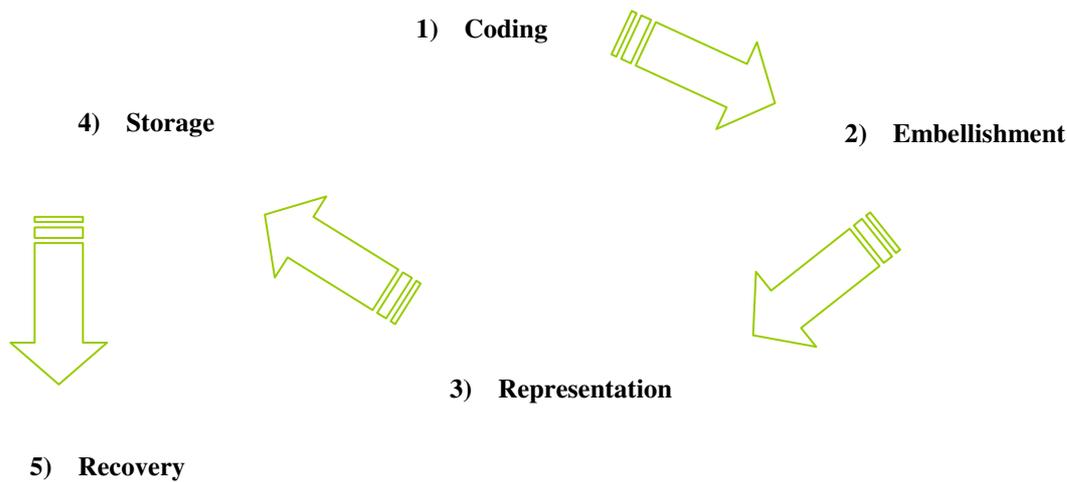
In 1995, Canadian neuropsychologist Endel Tulving came forward with a model of organization of the different sorts of memory into five systems under the following taxonomy: 1) procedural; 2) perceptual printing or cue based; 3) semantic or factual memory not tied to language; 4) primary or working memory; 5) episodic (Nalbantian, 2003:149).

Different studies have showed that distinct areas of the brain are “responsible” or interfere with diverse types of memory. In relation to this, Nalbantian (2003:136) states that:

Whereas the almond-shaped amygdala is seen in the immediate reception of emotion, the sea-horse shaped hippocampus has come to be known as the processing centre which strengthens connections over time between incoming perceptions into consolidations that become memory. (...) the evolutionarily older amygdala has been seen to store memory about emotional states, memory for motor and sensory experiences. (...) On the other hand, the adjacent and larger hippocampus harbors memory of facts and personal events, producing explicit, declarative memory. (my ellipsis)

All the different types of memory share a common characteristic: every act of remembering implies the achievement of three aspects of the memory process. In order to remember, it is necessary to learn and if memory seems to fail sometimes, this might be because the acquisition (learning) process was not successfully completed.

In order for the brain to accept and keep information, it is necessary to follow a certain scheme:



Psychologists believe that the three processes of coding, storage and recovering are necessary for all the memory systems. Initially, the material for storage is coded and the coding (1) refers to the whole process of preparing the information for storage. Many times it implies an embellishment (2), which is the association of the material with previous knowledge or experience, so that the data can be retrieved later. Coding involves the representation (3) of the material in a form that is recognized and handled by the storage system. Once it is coded, the experience is stored (4) usually without a consistent effort, for a variable period of time. The last of the stadiums is the recovery (5) or retrieval of the information we wish to remember, when we make an effort to produce information from memory in response to a certain stimulus or question. A different way of recovering information is through recognition, when we are confronted with a name, a fact or a situation that we recognize.

The storage capacity of working memory differs from that of the long-term memory. Long-term memory has a virtually unlimited storage capacity, whereas working memory has a limited capacity. The first one can be compared to a huge warehouse, while the latter may be compared to the entry platform of that same warehouse, which only accommodates a fraction of what the entire warehouse can hold.

Psychologist James L. McClelland, in 1981, presented a memory trace synthesis model to describe the process of reconstructing and retrieving memories, according to which recollections vary in accordance to one's previous knowledge. For him, retrieval

also involves contributions from background knowledge based on information acquired very gradually over the course of a lifetime of experience directly within the neocortical system. If these ideas have any

validity, we cannot see remembering as recall, but as a synthesis of contributions from many different sources of information.

(Nalbantian, 2003:152)

Human memory has plasticity in the sense that our memories and recollections do not remain stable and unaltered throughout the times, because we are always acquiring new information and living experiences that interact with what is already stored, as is conveyed in the entry on Memory of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*<sup>5</sup>:

It's useful for the contents of the files stored on my computer to remain exactly the same from the moment I close them at night to the time I open them again in the morning. But various kinds of reorganization and realignment often happen to the information retained in my brain over the same period. In us, memories do not naturally sit still in cold storage.

Throughout the times there have been several theories about the nature of memory. Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote an essay entitled “De Memoria”, in which memory is treated as a ‘modest’ faculty. His theory is a representation (‘phantasia’) to explain memory and he takes representations to be changes in concrete living things which arise from actual perception. To be connected to the original perception the representation has to be taken as a (kind of) copy of the original experience - this is the way Aristotle defines memory at the end of his investigation. Regarding Aristotle’s vision on memory, Peter Cosenstein argues that

[T]he issues Aristotle raises in his essay De Memoria persist to this day. Like so many others, Aristotle searched for memory’s locus and suggested that it reside in the soul, which also, for him, directed the imagination. Aristotle reasons that memory is of importance only to animals that perceive time - function of the human “heart” – because memory implies consciousness of past and present. (Cosenstein, 2002:12)

Saint Augustine was one of many who postulated a theory on the nature of memory. In her dissertation “Memory in St. Augustine’s “Confessions””<sup>6</sup>, Kelly Jane Connelly writes that,

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<sup>5</sup> Sutton, John. “Memory”, in <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>>

<sup>6</sup> Connelly, Kelly Jane “Memory in St. Augustine’s “Confessions”” (January 1, 1999). *Boston College Dissertations and Theses*. <<http://escholarship.bc.edu/dissertations/AAI9946593>>

Augustine's three-fold use of memory in his *Confessions* corresponds with the three confessions he makes in the work. (...) Augustine's first confession--that of his past--employs memory to retrieve, retrace, and represent who he once was. (...) Memory in Augustine's second confession--that of his present--serves as a map of Augustine's whole identity. (...) Finally, memory in the third confession--that of Augustine's wisdom and ignorance concerning Holy Scripture--is aimed at those Christian brethren who not only have the charity to understand and love him but also the minds to follow his reflections on the divine act of Creation. (...) Augustine relies on the analogical knowledge provided by memory in order to grasp the mystery of the relation between God and his Creation. (my ellipsis)

Saint Augustine claimed that memory is private because the memories of an individual are not those of others and that when one remembers, one always remembers oneself, which leads to the notion of reflexivity. This assertion is the foundation of many contemporary cognitive-psychological studies, such as that of Daniel L. Schacter, Chairman of Harvard's Psychology Department, who defines memory as a subjective experience and affirms that memories only belong to the individual and characterize his personal life (Nalbantian, 2003:137).

In order to represent memory in an abstract form, other models have been developed. The theory of the multi-storage facilities was developed 40 years ago, in 1968 by Atkinson and Shiffrin, and represents a modern variation of the spatial metaphor defended by Saint Augustine: he believed that there was only one storage space for memory, while this theory states that there are several of those systems of storage, each one with different properties (Broadbent, 1958; Waugh and Norman, 1965; Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968, cited by Gleitman et al. 347). This model has been criticized for being too simplistic because it does not take into consideration the several memories within a particular memory (for example, long-term memory has many components such as episodic and procedural memory) and because it proposes rehearsal as the only mechanism by which the information reaches long-term storage.

Years later, in 1974, Baddeley and Hitch proposed the working memory model which added specific and active components to the concept of short-term memory postulated by Atkinson and Shiffrin, which was later adjusted.

Craik and Lockhart<sup>7</sup> (1972) proposed another model by which it is the method and depth of processing that affects how an experience is stored in memory, and not rehearsal. This method consists of organization of the information (organising information makes it more memorable), distinctiveness (for example, spelling words out loud makes it easier to later remember them) and effort (individuals recall better what takes effort to learn).

### **To remember or not to remember**

Memory failures might be the result of problems in any of the phases described in the diagram above. Gleitman et al. examine three major aspects of memory failure: the passing of time, memory mistakes and extreme memory failures (in case of cerebral lesions).

As time goes by, we tend to forget events or facts that were learnt a long time ago and to remember more easily others which are more recent. The forgetfulness increases with the retention interval (according to German psychologist Herman Ebbinghaus' theory), which is the time between the moment of learning (or knowing something) and the moment of testing (or remembering) (Thompson, 1996:40-43).

To assess the consequences of time in memory, a study was conducted with people who had learnt Spanish for 3 or 4 years either in high-school or in college: those who finished the course a week before achieved the highest results, as expected; the results worsened for those who had not studied the language in the last year or two/three years; however, the performance levels stabilized and those who had studied Spanish 30 years before achieved the same results as the ones who had studied it a few years before (Barrick, 1984 cited by Gleitman et al. 374). This means that, in essence, the memories which are firm enough to last three years seem to last forever, an idea that contradicts Ebbinghaus' curb of forgetfulness.

But there are things we are unable to forget, usually because they are associated to an event which had a huge scale, were unexpected and emotional or that we associate with other events which occurred more or less at the same time. For instance, Gleitmann et al. refer to the murder of President JFK and to Princess Diana's funeral. These were heavily televised, so it is normal for people to have a photographic or at least very clear memory of those emotional events.

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<sup>7</sup> Unauthored article "Levels of Processing" (Craik & Lockhart) <<http://tip.psychology.org/craik.html>>

Until now, the memory failures described have been those by omission, when people are unable to recall a certain event, a face, a name or a fact. However, there are also memory failures which happen due to excess. According to Gleitmann et al., these are errors in which people make a sincere but false description of the past, generally because they involuntarily reconstruct a past event, based more on what we think and know rather than on what we really remember (Gleitmann et al. 377). This happens because our understanding and remembering of things is influenced by our previous knowledge.

British psychologist Frederic Bartlett conducted the most important experiments on memory distortions. He would present to the subjects stories of other cultures whose content seemed strange to them. When remembering and retelling these same stories, the subjects would eliminate the parts which had made no sense to them or else they would reinterpret them in a way to make them more understandable to them (Bartlett, 1932 cited b Gleitmann et al. 378). The Portuguese saying “Quem conta um conto, acrescenta um ponto” [He/She who tells a tale, adds something to it] coincides with this perspective, and even the retelling of a long sentence by pupils in a classroom results in an altered sentence for sure. Such distortion of events is also defended by American psychologist Daniel Schacter,

since the encoding process involves the subjective element of experience and draws on degrees of preexisting knowledge, it can introduce further distortion. (Nalbantian, 2003:137)

Most cognitive psychologists, in fact, believe that a better understanding of the mechanisms of distortion and confusion will also illuminate the general reliability of memory, by revealing processes which also operate in authentic and verifiable remembering. Neither ‘accuracy’ or ‘reliability’ is a transparent notion in this context, and ‘truth’ in memory, though not forever inaccessible, is neither a single nor a simple thing. Verbatim<sup>8</sup> recall and other forms of exact reproduction are rarely necessary for success in remembering<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> As a linguistic term, “verbatim” means an exact reproduction of a sentence, phrase, quote or other sequence of text from one source into another. The same words appear in exactly the same order, with no paraphrasing, substitution, or abbreviation of any kind, not even any trivial changes that wouldn’t have affected the meaning in any way.

<sup>9</sup> Sutton, John. “Memory”, in <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>>

## The Boundaries of Memory

There are plenty of proofs that memory is fallible, either due to the interference of our general knowledge in the remembering of a specific event or to the confusion between two memories. The latter occurs whenever the knowledge acquired at a certain moment mixes with another memory, a phenomenon known as confusion of sources. Unfortunately, this means that memory cannot be absolutely trusted upon, even if the individuals that recall affirm to be true about what they are remembering: if their memories are false, maybe they are not the ones to be blamed, but memory itself.

As far as the reliability of memory is concerned, Salvador Dali remarked that [T]he difference between false memories and true ones is the same as for jewels: it is always the false ones that look the most real, the most brilliant.

(Nalbantian, 2003:138)

The way in which the past events are questioned and surveyed can also interfere with the trustworthiness of memories, thus giving rise to distortions, since the context and the environment of the present time can alter. The fact that memory cannot be fully trusted is regrettable, since they are many times the foundation for judicial cases.

In relation to the application of memory in justice and law, some cases have become famous for the worst reasons. The term False Memory Syndrome was coined in 1992 by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation in order to refer to the theory that some adults who remember situations of sexual abuse from their childhood may be mistaken about the accuracy of their memory. This foundation was created to defend those who claim to have been falsely accused under these arguments.

Regarding the fact that memory is inexact and undependable, “A variety of conditions exist”, notes Daniel Schacter, “in which subjectively compelling memories are grossly inaccurate”<sup>10</sup>. Cognitive and developmental psychologists have recently reached a broad but striking consensus about the constructive nature of remembering. To say that memory is a constructive process is not to focus unrealistically on cases where it goes wrong, for there is no reason to think that ‘constructed memories’ must be false.

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<sup>10</sup> Sutton, John. “Memory”, in <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>>

## Memory and Memories

When researching into memory, the term appears coupled with numerous adjectives which more or less indicate the content and range of the expression and are related to the type of information retained by memory.

The most current expressions are long-term memory and short-term memory (currently designated as working memory). The first can be divided into declarative (or explicit) memory and procedural (implicit) memory. Declarative memory requires conscious recall in which a conscious process calls back the information. Declarative memory can be sectioned into semantic memory and episodic memory. Semantic memory concerns facts taken independent of context and allows the encoding of abstract knowledge about the world (for instance, Lisbon is the capital of Portugal); and episodic memory concerns information specific to a particular context, such as a time and place, and is used for more personal memories, such as the sensations, emotions, and personal associations of a particular place or time (memories of my wedding day). Procedural memory is primarily employed in learning motor skills and is revealed when we do better in a given task due only to repetition.

In their studies and work, scholars and experts have coined several other expressions within the field of memory such as:

Autobiographical memory - memory for particular events within one's own life, which is generally viewed as either equivalent to, or a subset of, episodic memory. Autobiographical memory produces a coherent narrative sense of a personal past.

Individual memory - (also designated personal) the memory of an individual, as opposed to that of a group or community.

Collective memory - a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs, separating the notion from the individual memory. The collective memory is shared, passed on and also constructed by the group, or modern society (Olick, 7-9). The debate was taken up by Jan Assmann, who wrote *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis (The Cultural Memory)*. Assmann distinguishes between the Cultural memory and the Communicative memory, whereas the former fulfils a storage function and the latter the function of an everyday memory that is situated in the present.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2007, Updated in 2009. < <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/collective+memory>>

Social memory - designates a society's explicit beliefs about its past. Social memory is based on private messages, and on physical evidence (a sequence of imperfectly informative public signals of past behaviour).

Cultural memory - a concept introduced to the archaeological disciplines by Jan Assmann, who defines it as the “outer dimension of human memory”, embracing two different concepts: “memory culture” (*Erinnerungskultur*) and “reference to the past” (*Vergangenheitsbezug*). Memory culture is the way a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving, with the help of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to *reconstruct* their cultural identity. References to the past, on the other hand, reassure the members of a society of their collective identity and supply them with an awareness of their unity and singularity in time and space— an historical consciousness—by *creating* a shared past.<sup>12</sup>

In this regard, zoologist, evolutionist and writer Richard Dawkins published the book *The Selfish Gene*, in 1976, in which he makes an analogy between human culture and genetic evolution and coined the term ‘meme’, which refers to a unit of human cultural evolution that has the power to replicate and reproduce (similarly to a gene). In chapter 11, Dawkins states that

[M]ost of what is unusual about man can be summed up in one word: ‘culture’.  
(...) Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution. (my ellipsis)  
(Dawkins, 1999:189)

Following Dawkins work, psychologist Susan Blackmore took the title of one of the chapters in his 1976 book and, in 1999, she published *The Meme Machine*. In it, Blackmore discusses the subject of memes and memetics<sup>13</sup> and claims that imitation is what makes humans different from all other animals:

I want to argue that the supreme ease with which we are capable of imitation, has blinded us to the simple fact – that *imitation* is what makes us special.  
(Blackmore, 1999:4)

This idea of something that can be transmitted from individual to individual via imitation functions similarly to cultural memory, for as she claims,

[W]hen you imitate someone else, something is passed on. This ‘something’ can then be passed on again, and again, and so take on a life of its own. We might

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<sup>12</sup> Holthorf, Cornelius. “Cultural Memory”, in <<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holthorf/2.0.html>> retrieved on March 13, 2007

call this thing an idea, an instruction, a behaviour, a piece of information... but if we are going to study it we shall need to give it a name. Fortunately, there is a name. it is the 'meme'. (Blackmore, 1999:4)

Sensory memory - corresponds approximately to the initial 200 - 500 milliseconds after an item is perceived. The ability to look at an item, and remember what it looked like with just a second of observation, or memorization, is an example of sensory memory. This type of memory cannot be prolonged via rehearsal.

Semantic memory - 'Propositional memory' is '*semantic memory*' or memory for facts, the vast network of conceptual information underlying our general knowledge of the world: this is naturally expressed as 'remembering *that*', for example, that Michael Jackson died in 2009.

Verbal memory - a phrase used to refer to memory for words and verbal items (as opposed to spatial memory, for example). It can be assessed by using a neuropsychological test which measures memory for a list of words or for a short story. People suffering from diseases such as Parkinson disease have this capacity diminished.

Communicative memory - an interactive practice located within the tension between individuals' and groups' recall of the past. It can be seen as the short-term memory of a society (Harald Welzer, cited by Erll et al., 2008:285).

Spatial memory - See topographic memory.

Flashbulb memory - a term coined by cognitive psychologists Roger Brown and James Kulik to designate a shocking, poignant, common external event that preserves the personal experience of it (Nalbantian, 2003:140). Clear examples are the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre or the attempt to assassinate the Pope during his visit to Portugal.

Automatic memory - memory that occurs without conscious intent, that is, without the person trying to remember. Automatic memory is a type of Implicit Memory. One example is Priming Memory. When priming occurs, a person responds more quickly and accurately to a stimulus the second time they experience it than the first, even though the subject was not trying to remember the stimulus.

Emotional memory - refers to both the enhancement of memory processing due to emotional value, and the association of emotional value to an object or experience due to the presence of an emotionally active stimulus. An example of

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<sup>13</sup> For further information on memes and memetics, see Susan Blackmore's talk on video: <[http://www.ted.com/talks/susan\\_blackmore\\_on\\_memes\\_and\\_temes.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_blackmore_on_memes_and_temes.html)>

the first type of emotional memory is that very emotional events are often memorable. Another example is that pictures with high emotional content may be more memorable than pictures with little emotional value, whether the pictures are very pleasant or very unpleasant.

Working memory - the same as Long-term memory.

Eidetic memory - also designated as photographic memory or total recall, is the ability to recall images, sounds, or objects in memory with extreme accuracy and in seemingly abundant volume. The word *eidetic* comes from the Greek word εἶδος (*eidōs*), which means “image” or “form”.

Visual memory - part of memory preserving some characteristics of our senses pertaining to visual experience. We are able to place in memory information that resembles objects, places, animals or people in a sort of a mental image. Some authors refer to this experience as an “our mind’s eye” through which we can retrieve from our memory a mental image of the original object, place, animal or person.

Photographic memory - see Eidetic memory.

Episodic memory - ‘Recollective memory’ is ‘*episodic memory*’, also sometimes called ‘personal memory’ or ‘direct memory’ by philosophers: this is memory for experienced events and episodes, such as a conversation this morning or the death of a friend eight years ago. Episodic memories are naturally expressed with a direct object: I remember our argument about Ishiguro yesterday, and I remember my emotions and my bodily sensations as we talked. Such personal memories can be generic or specific, and they can be memories of more or less extended temporal periods.

Screen memory - a memory of something that is unconsciously used to repress recollection of an associated but distressing event (Freud); memory that is tolerable but allied to a distressing event and which is unconsciously used to hide the distressing memory (Nalbantian, 2003: 18-19). Freud used the term “screen memory” to denote any memory which functions to hide (and to derivatively express) another, typically unconscious, mental content (Smith, 2000)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, David L. “The Mirror Image of the Present: Freud’s Theory of Retrogressive Screen Memories” in *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven*, 2000, nr. 39  
< <http://www.psychoanalytischeperspectieven.be/online%20papers/papers/screen%20memories.pdf>>

Topokinetic memory - term coined by A. Berthoz, refers to the dynamic aspects of spatial memory, for which the name 'topokinetic memory' is proposed. These dynamic aspects could both overlap and be different from those involved in the cartographic and static aspects of 'topographic' memory (Nalbantian, 2003:139).

Source memory - many people have vivid and substantially accurate memories of events which are erroneous in one key aspect: the *source* of the memory. Studies by Marcia Johnson et al. have shown that the ability to distinguish memory from imagination depends on the recall of source information.

Subliminal memory - memory below the level of consciousness. Priming is a form of subliminal memory in which one piece of information can cue recall of another.

Memory of habit - Philosophers' 'habit memory' is psychologists' '*procedural memory*', a label for embodied skills such as typing, playing golf, using a knife and fork, dancing, or solving jigsaw puzzles. It usually refers to procedural memories with the grammatical construction 'remembering *how*'.

Topographic memory - the ability to orient oneself in space, to recognize and follow an itinerary, or to recognize familiar places. Getting lost when traveling alone is an example of the failure of topographic memory. Problems with topographic memory could be caused by multiple impairments, including difficulties with perception, orientation, and memory.

Retrospective memory - the recollection of past content (includes semantic and episodic memories).

Prospective memory - memory for future intentions (a doctor's appointment at 3 p.m. on Tuesday). Event-based prospective memories are intentions triggered by cues, such as remembering to post a letter (action) after seeing a mailbox (cue). Cues do not need to be related to the action (as the mailbox example is), and lists, sticky-notes, knotted handkerchiefs, or string around the finger are all examples of cues that are produced by people as a strategy to enhance prospective memory.

## Memory and the Brain

Overall, the mechanisms of memory are not completely comprehended. Brain areas such as the hippocampus, the amygdala, or the mammillary bodies are thought to be involved in specific types of memory. For example, the hippocampus is believed to be involved in spatial learning and declarative learning. Damage to certain areas in patients and animal models and subsequent memory deficits are a primary source of information. However, rather than implicating a specific area, it could be that damage to adjacent areas, or to a pathway travelling through the area is actually responsible for the observed deficit. Further, it is not sufficient to describe memory, and its counterpart, learning, as solely dependent on specific brain regions. Learning and memory are attributed to changes in neuronal synapses, thought to be mediated by long-term potentiation and long-term depression.

The interest on exploring the brain in order to map its regions and know all its functions has existed for centuries, and has been boosted by the technological advances which allow for less invasive, but more successful surveying techniques. As the years go by, neuroscientists marvel us with the amazing capacities of the human brain, always in the hope of curing disabling diseases such as Parkinson and Alzheimer's.

However, the brain is equally the object of interest of other realms of knowledge, such as Literature, which will be the focus of the following chapter.



Picture 3 - Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, Greco-Roman mosaic from Antioch C2nd A.D., Antakya Museum.



## Chapter II – Memory and Literature

The genealogy of discourse on memory reveals, however, that philosophy, historiography and literature have more in common with neuropsychology than one may be inclined to think. Nünning, Gymnich & Sommer, 2006:1

The Greeks were a polytheist society and Mnemosyne was one of their many goddesses. Mnemosyne was the Titan goddess of memory, remembrance and time, and the inventor of language and words. She represented the rote memorisation required, before writing was introduced, to preserve the ancient stories of History and mythical sagas. Thus, she was considered the mother of the Muses, who originally were the patron goddesses of the poets. Acknowledging the relationship between memory and literary or poetic inspiration, Michael Larivière wrote that

[T]he Muses of memory and invention are one.<sup>15</sup>

In recent years, memory, remembering and everything that relates to this activity has been the focus of numerous theory books, novels, articles, films and other literary texts. According to Nünning, Gymnich and Sommer,

Memory and remembering are among key paradigms of current literary studies. (Nünning et al., 2006:1).

These authors have themselves been the editors of a book, *Literature and Memory: Theoretical Paradigms, Genres, Functions*, including a selection of articles on memory and literature.

In another work on memory and literature, *Cultural Memory Studies. A Handbook*, edited by Erll, Nünning and Young, Birgit Neumann presented an essay entitled “The Literary Representation of Memory”, in which she claims that,

[M]emory and processes of remembering have always been an important, indeed a dominant, topic in literature. Numerous texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past and how they construct identities on the basis of the recollected memories. They are concerned with the mnemonic presence of the past in the present, and they illuminate the manifold functions that

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<sup>15</sup> Larivière, Michael. “The Invention of Oneself (Self-portrait of an Other)”, 2005. <<http://www.academyanalyticarts.org/lariviere4.htm>>

memories fulfil for the constitution of identity. Such texts highlight that our memories are highly selective, and that the rendering of memories potentially tells us more about the rememberer's present his or her desire and denial, than about the actual past events. (Erll et al., 2008:333)

Similarly, Suzanne Nalbantian in her book entitled *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience*, describes and analyses how authors such as Rousseau, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz, and artists such as Dalí, Dominguez and Magritte, just to cite a few, have dwelled on the theme of memory. Therefore, we can undoubtedly ascertain that memory is a fertile realm for literature and for authors who, like Ishiguro, use memory as a *leit-motif* and a trope in their work, since

literary representations and explorations of individual memory have proved to be a prolific field for literary studies in recent years, being dealt with in numerous articles and book length studies. (Nünning et al. 2006: 1)

Belgian authors Lavenne, Renard and Tollet in their paper "Fiction, Between Inner Life and Collective Memory. A Methodological Reflection"<sup>16</sup>, have stated that

[I]n the writing of their fictional works, novelists often have to reflect on the functioning of memory, for memory lies at the heart both of inner life and of human experience in general. (...) literature provides more than a means of reflecting on memory: it is also the site of the rebirth and construction of individual and collective memories, which can then serve as a foundation for the writing of fictional works. Creative writing has a meiotic function and is as such a powerful tool capable of rescuing memories from oblivion and bringing them back to life, thus reconciling the past with the present. (my ellipsis)

Dozens of names of authors who have somehow depicted the theme of memory could be cited: Aristotle (*On Memory and Reminiscence*, ca 350 b.C.); Jorge Luis Borges (the short story "Funes el Memorioso" is about a man with a remarkable memory who remembers everything, and the poem "Curso de los Recuerdos", which presents variegated instances of retrieval through the imaginative power of memory); Virginia Woolf (*To The Lighthouse*, whose task over a ten-year period is to transfer her recollections of her friend Mrs Ramsay into a painting which would

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<sup>16</sup> Lavenne, François-Xavier; Renard, Virginie & Tollet, François. "Fiction, Between Inner Life and Collective Memory. A Methodological Reflection", *The New Arcadia Review* online, volume 3, 2005. <<http://www.bc.edu/publications/newsarcadia/archives/3/fiction>>

preserve her memory forever); Rousseau (*Confessions*, in which the author resorts to memory constantly<sup>17</sup>); William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*, which puts together different experiences of the memory process focused upon the tragic history of the character Candace, two of whose brothers are particularly significant remembering subjects); and Anaïs Nin (*Cities of the Interior*, a collection of five novelettes which presents the poetic inscape which harbours her strong and often repressed memories), just to mention a few. The panoply of writers, novelists and poets, who have resorted to memory in their works is immense, attest that

(M)emory interrupts linear, conventional narratives in order to make room for multiple voices and perspectives. (Singh & al. 18).

The research on memory is a Herculean task, as there are so many things written and said about it and so much to be read. In its relation to literature, memory may be approached in three distinct manners:

- 1) the memory of literature, a concept which resides in the fact that literature has a diachronic dimension and a memory of texts which were written in a previous time. There are also “memory genres” (Nünning et al., 2006:13), genres which shape cultural remembering and rely on memory in order to exist, such as the historical novel, memoirs or biography;
- 2) memory in literature, a concept that deals with the way memory is represented in literature;
- 3) literature as a medium of collective memory, since literary texts have the power to form and transform cultural memories. According to Bal (cited in Nünning et al., 2006: 12),

(B)ecause memory is made up of socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations, but also amenable to individual acts of intervention in it, memory is always open to social revision and manipulation. (...) Cultural memory can be located in literary texts because the latter are continuous with the communal fictionalizing, idealizing, monumentalizing impulses thriving in a conflicted culture. (my ellipsis)

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<sup>17</sup> Rousseau's *Confessions* is an autobiographical work divided into twelve parts which cover his life until 1765, thus the constant use of memory (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3913/3913-h/3913-h.htm>).

Individual memory and collective memory are probably the two types of memory which matter the most to literature and to authors using memory as a theme. Collective memory is tightly related to history, while individual memory involves processes of a – conscious or unconscious – selection of what is to be remembered, of evaluating memories and, of course, of choosing to forget certain persons, things or events rather than keeping their memories alive. (Nünning, Gymnich & Sommer, 2006: 1-2).

The fact that memory and the act of remembering is such an unreliable process and “cognitive activity” (–, 2006: 2) is an inexhaustible topic for authors, novelists and theorists. Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the many novelists that amply utilises memory as a focal point in most of his novels, thus confirming the reflection that

[t]hroughout literary history, fictional texts have engaged in a discussion of the implications, the problems, and the purposes of remembering. (Nünning et al.: 2006:3).

In the work *Memory, Narrative & Identity*, edited by Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr. and Robert E. Hogan, a volume containing fourteen essays around these topics, the Introduction reads,

[T]his “collective memory”, like individual memory, is a function, not an entity. We negotiate within this net of language, which traverses the body and the mind, for discourses intersect in both the body and the mind of the individual. Memory is one of the ways our consciousness connects items and experiences in the net of language, for as scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs (*The Collective Memory*, 1950) have shown, we “remember” not only things that have actually happened to us personally, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, we “remember” events, language, actions, attitudes, and values that are aspects of our membership in groups. What we study are the traces of memory in language and narrative and the ways individual writers challenge it: opposing to memory its dark shadow, forgetting; reconsidering its relation to history and oral tradition; erasing and revising it; preserving or recovering it. In the process, each writer reorients our sense of both cultural identity and literary form. (Singh & al. 17)

The use of a first person narrator already indicates an affinity between literature and memory, as

Literature can virtually be described as a way to represent individual memory. [...] it is not surprising that the narrative distinction between an experiencing

and a narrating “I” already rests on a (largely implicit) concept of memory (Nünning, 2006:22).

Ishiguro’s works give privilege to a first person narrator, as the middle-aged widow in *A Pale View of the Hills*, and Kathy H. in *Never Let Me Go*.

Another reason for memory to be closely linked to literature is that it serves as an interdisciplinary interface connecting literary history with cultural history. (--, 2006: 2).

The above cited concepts of individual and collective memory are key to a “constructivist approach to the past” (--, 2006: 2). Cultural memory is a term coined by Jan Assman, following the works of Halbwachs in “collective memory” and Aby Warburg in “social memory”.

Cultural memory is conceived as a virtual space which is organised by rituals, semiotic objects and systems and processes of oral, written and visual communication. (--, 2006: 4).

This implies that the same events are in a dissimilar way perceived, recalled and represented by different people: for instance, the Portuguese colonial war is part of the cultural and collective memory of the Portuguese and Africans in a diverse manner. The coloniser’s perspective is diverse from that of the colonised, in the sense that they feel they are arriving at a new territory which needs control and authority that can only be achieved by a people of superior qualities. It would be interesting to confirm this feeling and divergent opinion on the colonization process in History books in both nations.

Memory cannot be separated from identity, since they are two interdependent aspects:

[T]he core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity. (Gillis, 1994:3).

Memory is essential to form an identity, whether individual or collective, as people need to have a memory of their past and history so as to comprehend how they have come to be what they are today. Nonetheless, memory and identity are “flexible”, in the sense that,

identities and memories change over time» and they are «not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena (Gillis, 1994:3).

## Chapter II.1 - Memory and Portuguese Literature

The relationship between literature and memory is of an essential intimacy while the study of memory for its own sake involves all disciplines of thought. (...)

Elements of style, rhetoric, content, history, and intertextuality come to mind when studying memory and its relationship with literature.

Consenstein, 2002:11

Although the issue of memory is addressed by numerous authors worldwide, this chapter will focus on and allude merely to a handful of Portuguese contemporary authors who equally resort to the theme of Memory in their works. This is the case of authors/writers such as José Saramago (the Nobel Prize Winner in Literature in 1998), Sophia de Mello Breyner, Vergílio Ferreira, António Lobo Antunes and Agustina Bessa-Luis, among many others. Although there is much to be said on each one of these authors, the following paragraphs will dwell on their works which are somehow related to memory. All the extracts cited have been the object of my translation.

### ***José Saramago***

Encerrados na quinta, Baltazar e Blimunda assistem ao passar dos dias. Agosto acabou, Setembro vai em meio, já andam as aranhas a tecer os seus fios na passarola (...)

Saramago, José, *Memorial do Convento*, 1982:192

José Saramago is probably and most certainly the best known author of the above-cited list. Born in a poor household, in 1923, he barely remembers the house of his grandparents where he happily grew up:

Essa perda [falta de lembrança], porém, há muito que deixou de me causar sofrimento porque, pelo poder reconstrutivo da memória, posso levantar a cada instante as suas paredes brancas, plantar a oliveira que dava sombra à

entrada, abrir e fechar o postigo da porta e a cancela do quintal (Lucas, 2006)<sup>18</sup>.

This excerpt was taken from an article published in *Diário de Notícias* in November 2006<sup>19</sup>, on the occasion of the publication of the author's memories, to which he gave the title of *As Pequenas Memórias* (The Small Memories). According to Saramago, it is a book on memory, thus full of hesitations and mistakes, dispersion, a book with a treacherous, unpredictable and forgotten plot. It is also an autobiographical book in which he narrates scatological episodes, confesses fears, remembers suffering and tells how he lost his religious faith. In the last pages, Saramago states that,

Muitas vezes esquecemos o que gostávamos de poder recordar, outras vezes, recorrentes, obsessivas, reagindo ao mínimo estímulo, vêm-nos do passado imagens, palavras soltas, fulgurância, iluminações, e não há explicação para elas, não as convocámos, mas elas aí estão.<sup>20</sup>

Saramago's memories are also a dissertation on the disorganised fashion in which memory presents itself and a reflection on how so many episodes of his life were the genesis of some of his novels: the search for the reasons of his brother's death gave rise to *Todos os Nomes* (1997) and an excursion to Mafra was the germinating point for *Memorial do Convento* (1982). However, about the use of personal and biographical events in his works, Saramago declares that he does not belong to the category of writers who make their living and writing out of their own life, even because there is nothing worth writing about (free translation from an interview to Saramago by Luis António Girón, 2006)<sup>21</sup>.

In *Memorial do Convento* (1982), Saramago writes simultaneously about two stories which intertwine: the construction of the Convent in Mafra and its repercussions on the lives of the enslaved workers, and the love story between Baltazar and Blimunda. The title of the novel itself immediately indicates that it concerns memory: the word "memorial" seems to allude to discursive practices of referential type, in which the relationship between the narrator and time (past) is

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<sup>18</sup> [That loss, however, has long ago stopped to cause me suffering because, through the reconstructive power of memory, I can at any instant raise its white walls, plant the olive tree that cast shadow on the entrance, open and close the small window of the door and the gate on the backyard – my translation].

<sup>19</sup> Lucas, Isabel. "José Saramago regressa ao lugar da memória", in DN online <[http://dn.sapo.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content\\_id=648823](http://dn.sapo.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content_id=648823)>

<sup>20</sup> [Many times, we forget what we would like to remember, other times, recurring, obsessive, reacting to the smallest of stimuli, from the past emerge images, loose words, resplendence, lights, and there is no explanation for them, we did not call upon them, but there they are – my translation].

<sup>21</sup> Girón, Luis Antonio. "As razões da memória sentimental", Entrevista, 2006. <<http://www.kplus.com.br/materia.asp/co=77&rv=Colunistas>>

brought about by memory. The narrator is living in the present, but narrates events which took place two centuries before. However, his present time is not characterised by chronological features, so the time of the novel is global and continuous, joining the present and the future and thus becoming timeless and enduring.

According to Maria Alzira Seixo,

Saramago convoca o passado, aliás fielmente reconstituído (mas com intromissões de tipo fantástico que o alteram, note-se), para o filtrar de modo consciente para uma óptica do presente<sup>22</sup>(Seixo, 23)

But this novel, classified by some scholars as an historic novel, is not merely an exercise of personal and individual memory, it is also an exercise of collective and historical memory, due to the depiction of the construction of a monument which is now a national treasure. In 2006, Portuguese scholar Adriana Alves de Paula Martins published her book *A Construção da Memória da Nação em José Saramago e Gore Vidal*, a study which dwells on the distinct models of post-modern historical fiction and, particularly, on the historical fiction of Saramago and the North-American Gore Vidal, comparing both authors as far as the construction of the memory of a nation is concerned.

For Saramago, every memory is false and what lingers are memories of memories, traces of other memories, the memory of the first memory. Therefore, people live among the vestiges of their memory.

### ***Vergílio Ferreira***

Sento-me aqui nesta sala vazia e relembro.  
Uma lua quente de Verão entra pela varanda,  
ilumina uma jarra de flores sobre a mesa.  
olho essa jarra, essas flores, e escuto o indício  
de um rumor de vida, o sinal obscuro de uma  
memória de origens.  
Vergílio Ferreira, *Aparição*, 2002:9

Another author, Vergílio Ferreira (1916-1996), used the topic of memory in his literary creation in several of his novels. In 1977, writing his autobiography, Ferreira wrote,

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<sup>22</sup> [Saramago calls upon the past, faithfully reconstructed, but with intromissions of the fantastic type that change it, to filter it consciously to a vision of the present - my translation].

Vejo o meu pai, no limite da minha infância, dobrar a porta do pátio, com um baú de folha na mão. Vejo-o de lado, e sem se voltar, eu estou dentro do pátio e não há, na minha memória, ninguém mais ao pé de mim. Devo ter o olhar espantado e ofendido por ele partir.(...) Estou só ainda, na memória que me ficou.<sup>23</sup> (Ferreira, 1977: 4)

But certainly the novel which clearly resorts to memory is *Aparição* (1959), a novel which is written from memory by a high-school teacher who, years later, tries to recollect a certain school year which affected him in a special manner. Memory then performs a crucial role since it is through memory that the narrator departs from a time in the present to a time in the past:

Sento-me aqui nesta sala vazia e relembro.<sup>24</sup>(Ferreira, 2002:9)

Although several years separate the past and the present, the past events are recollected and described in chronological sequence, from the beginning of the school year until the summer holidays, and with great clarity. The title, meaning the act of emerging and appearing, is linked to memory, revelation, finding, reading and reflection on the part of the protagonist, who is the enabler of the narrative. Through his reflection and memory, the protagonist will discover himself and others, come to terms with life as a creation and death as an absurdity, anguish and fascination.

In a study about *Aparição*, Mendes & Dias cite a quotation from Henri Wallon in which it is stated that what we call memory is implicit in all forms of psychic activity: perception, association of ideas, thinking, and so on. In each one of them the action of past experiences intervenes. Every living being is modified by its own reactions, therefore one can assimilate one's life in a sort of continuous memory (Mendes & Dias, 1997: 76).

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<sup>23</sup> [I see my father, at the edge of my infancy, disappearing through the front door, with a trunk in his hand. I see him sideways, and without turning back, I am in front of the house and there is, in my memory, no one else next to me. I must have an admired and offended look for his departure - my translation].

<sup>24</sup> [I sit here in this empty room and I remember - my translation].

## ***Sophia de Mello Breyner***

Não se perdeu nenhuma coisa em mim.  
Continuam as noites e os poentes  
Que escorreram na casa e no jardim,  
Continuam as vozes diferentes  
Que intactas no meu ser estão suspensas.  
Sophia de Mello Breyner, *Poesia*, 1944.

Sophia de Mello Breyner (1919-2004) was born in Porto in an aristocratic family. She was of Danish origin on her father's side, a fact that seems to reflect on her work through her love of the ocean and messianic ideology. She published widely in poetry, short stories and children's stories, being one of the most studied authors in Portuguese schools.

Sophia was interested in many diverse themes, but reading her work one can make out a few main topics, such as: Nature (the sea, the beach, gardens, the city), poetry and poetic creation (art, artists, poetry and revolution), the recollection of her childhood and adolescence, time divided and absolute time (exile, revolution, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April - the end of the Portuguese dictatorship), ancient (Greece and Greek culture and history), injustice and social inequalities, life and love, and the inheritance she received from Fernando Pessoa. Out of this list, what is relevant for this dissertation is Sophia's recollection of her childhood and adolescence, in which she nostalgically reconstitutes places (the beach, the family house and garden), people and events related to her first years spent on the sea shore. Her poems depict recollections of a happy time saved by memory, frequently transfigured by dream and fantasy:

De todos os cantos do mundo / Amo com um amor mais forte e mais profundo/  
Aquela praia extasiada e nua/ Onde me uni ao mar, ao vento e à lua.<sup>25</sup>  
(Breyner, 1944)

These images of a paradise always recovered by memory serve as an insertion of energy to face the hardships of the real and the maze-like inferno of life in the city.

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<sup>25</sup> [From every corner of the world / I love with a stronger and deeper love/ That enchanted and naked beach/ Where I united with the sea, the wind and the moon - my translation].

## **António Lobo Antunes**

(...) vieram-lhe à memória longas noites  
na praia desfeita dos lençóis (...)  
*Memória de Elefante*, 2004:36

Lobo Antunes is a singular writer, frequently compared to Saramago, whom he criticises, along with other authors of their generation: Agustina Bessa-Luis, Vergílio Ferreira and Lídia Jorge. Lobo Antunes is an original artist, somewhat eccentric, and whose language and style are a strong distinctive feature of his work.

*Memória de Elefante* (1979) is one of the author's autobiographical works, alongside with *Os Cus de Judas*. It was António de Lobo Antunes's first novel, in which he exposes, without shame, exactly what goes on in the mind and heart of the protagonist, himself, a psychiatrist on the verge of an acute conscience crisis, hurt at himself and having great disbelief in the world around him. He has come from the war in Africa, only to lose the wife he still loves, walks purposeless in a decadent Lisbon, sombre, slimy and which seems to be an external metaphor of the pain that afflicts him. The action described occurs within a two-day period, during which the readers are able to follow all his steps and simultaneously penetrate his box of child memories, war memories and the recollections of his marriage and his two beloved daughters.

Folheou rapidamente a meninice desde o setembro remoto do fórceps que o expulsara da paz de aquário uterina à laia de quem arranca um dente são da comodidade da gengiva, demorou-se nos longos meses da Beira iluminados pelo roupão de ramagens da avó (...) e preparava-se para explorar de lupa psicanalítica em punho as angustiosas vicissitudes da sua estreia sexual entre uma garrafa de permanganato e uma colcha duvidosa<sup>26</sup> (...) (my ellipsis, Lobo Antunes, 2004:27)

Como sempre que se recordava de Angola um roldão de lembranças em desordem subiu-lhe à cabeça na veemência das lágrimas contidas<sup>27</sup> (Lobo Antunes, 2004:39)

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<sup>26</sup> [He quickly flipped his childhood since the remote September when the forceps had forced him out of the uterine and fishbowl-like peace like pulling out a tooth of the comfort of the gum, took his time in the long months of the countryside lit by the colourful robe of his grandmother (...) and prepared to explore, with a psychoanalytical magnifying lens, the anguishing adversities of his sexual debut between a permanganate bottle and a doubtful quilt (...)]

<sup>27</sup> [As in every time he remembered Angola a string of disordered memories came to his head in the intensity of restrained tears]

In a wonderful critique to this novel, Ricardo Turnes writes, Todo o turbilhão de recordações vai surgindo na cabeça do psiquiatra em catadupa, cada fragmento do passado pescado à laia de ganchos descendo da realidade quotidiana urbana – pormenores da vida real que por uma razão ou outra captam a atenção do protagonista, lançando-o num passado de amarga efervescência, prendendo-o a um lodo do qual não se consegue libertar.<sup>28</sup>

Hugo Torres<sup>29</sup>, who started a Portuguese site of literary critique, writes about the novel which is now available in a commemorative *ne varietur* edition:

Conta-nos a estória do senhor doutor – psiquiatra –, dos seus dias em cambalhotas circulares, da pressão de fora (para dentro) para que escreva, da educação e da linguagem, dos pacientes – transversalmente –, do amor.<sup>30</sup>

Being about himself and his experience as a doctor who penetrates in the minds of his patients, *Memória de Elefante* revisits the author's memory in search of inspirational motifs and moments. But the novel is a lot more than an autobiographical work, in which it is sometimes difficult to discern between what is fictional and what is biographical/real: it is equally an instrument of social critique, pervaded with irony and caricature, including the use of vocabulary regarded as obscene for the time. The use of the third person narrator that sometimes escapes to a first-person narrator is a feature of this author and denotes the autobiographical register.

*Memória de Elefante* was the author's first tormented writing experience and debut catharsis, the book which would launch his career and set his style. As José Ramos<sup>31</sup> observed,

os primeiros passos para encontrar a mão e a voz que lhe ditará o estilo *sui generis* que toda a vida vai obcecadamente procurar, a intenção de contar não histórias mas o interior psicológico e afectivo das pessoas, buscando as palavras

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<sup>28</sup> <http://orgialiteraria.com/2007/03/memria-de-elefante-antnio-lobo-antunes.html>

[The whole twister of memories comes about in the mind of the psychiatrist in gushes, each fragment of the past fished with hooks which fall from the urban daily reality - details of real life that for one reason or the other draw the attention of the protagonist, launching him into a past of bitter effervescence, attaching him to a slime from which he cannot get free.]

<sup>29</sup> Torres, Hugo. "Memória de Elefante", in <<http://rascunho.iol.pt/critica.php?id=598>>

<sup>30</sup> [It tells us the story of the doctor - psychiatrist -, and his days in circular jumps, of the external pressures (inwards) for him to write, of education and language, of the patients - transversally - of love.]

<sup>31</sup> Ramos, José Alexandre. "Memória de Elefante: a primeira angústia", in <[http://ala.nletras.com/livros/memoria\\_de\\_elefante.htm#JAR](http://ala.nletras.com/livros/memoria_de_elefante.htm#JAR)>

para o indizível (segundo a sua noção de que os sentimentos são anteriores às palavras), apanhar a vida toda entre as capas de um livro. *Memória de Elefante* é, de facto, o início disso tudo.<sup>32</sup>

### **Agustina Bessa-Luís**

Ela (Germana) tinha o espírito de parecer vulgar. Um dos seus prazeres consistia em analisar-se como o conteúdo de todo um passado (...e o seu coração derrama à sua volta uma vigilante evocação.  
*A Sibila*, 1954:8-9

Agustina Bessa-Luis is called by some a provincial writer, since she came from a provincial background and many of her novels depict life in the country, being somehow a peregrination through the province. In an interview with Portuguese Journalist Anabela Mota Ribeiro<sup>33</sup>, the author claims she does not write out of memory, being more like a child, always in a state of curiosity. Children do not possess a memory of the past, but are constantly looking for answers. However, memory is important in the construction of her characters:

Quando as pessoas são alteradas pela minha memória, são personagens.  
[When people are changed through my memory, they are characters]. Conversely, she never loses touch with reality, which is precious, because she likes things as they are.

One of her greatest novels, *A Sibila* (1954), uses memory in a memorable manner, for it remembers not just images and people but also sounds and smells. One year after its release, an article by José Fernandes Fafe stated that,

As digressões, em *A Sibila*, são sempre discretas e serenas, e além disso perfeitas retrospectivas da vida das personagens<sup>34</sup> (Fafe, 1955)

The narrator of the novel, Germana, goes back and forth in time through memory, remembering past events and then returning to the present time, breaking any possibility of a chronological sequence. The result is an amalgamation of numerous

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<sup>32</sup> [the first steps to find the hand and the voice which will dictate the particular style that he Will obsessively look for all his life, the intention not to tell stories but the psychological and emotional interior of people, searching for words to name the unspeakable (according to his notion that feelings precede words), catching the entire life between the covers of a book. *Memoria de Elefante* is, in fact, the beginning of all that. - my translation]

<sup>33</sup> Ribeiro, Anabela Mota. "Entrevista a Agustina Bessa-Luis", in [http://dn.sapo.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content\\_id=594718](http://dn.sapo.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content_id=594718)

brief stories that the narrator happens to recollect, but even though it becomes complex to follow the narrator's line of thought, the reader learns the history of a family and its generations, especially the life of the protagonist, Quina. The novel can be read as a long flashback by Germana.

Included in Nünning, Gymnich and Sommer's collection of essays, Silvia Quinteiro offers a perspective on the use of memory on the historical novel, namely in Alexandre Herculano's *Eurico o Presbítero*, a Portuguese writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the same compilation, Maria Helena Serôdio presented another essay under the title "Performing Memory on Stage: A Reading of Jorge Silva Melo's Play and Performance *Prometheus*." According to the author,

[T]he play *Prometheus*, by Jorge Silva Melo, uses Aeschylus' play in a rather poetical and inquisitive way, thus intersecting both intertextual mnemonics and the generic memory, by challenging the tragic genre as defined by Aristotle – and his followers – over the centuries. (Nünning, 2006:223)

As described above, these are merely a handful of examples of how memory is used by these authors, novelists and poets, and many others could have been referred to, but that is not the object of this study.

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<sup>34</sup> [The digressions, in *A Sibila*, are always discrete and serene, and moreover perfect retrospectives of the lives of the characters (my translation)]



Picture 4 - *Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory* by contemporary artist Thomas Dodd.



### Chapter III – The (Ho)Use of Memory by Ishiguro

Each of Ishiguro's protagonists is likewise locked in the prisonhouse of memory, the web of which constitutes and arrests the Self.  
Sheng-mei Ma:75<sup>35</sup>

It is my intention to dwell on and demonstrate how memory is used similarly and differently by the novelist Kazuo Ishiguro in several of his works, as

[L]e sujet des romans est cette obsession quotidienne pour un passé ritualisé par la mémoire. (Veyret, 2005:14)

The aim is to validate its purpose and utility, its importance in the economy of the novels, as well as its reliability or fallibility as viewed by the narrators. Ishiguro tends to centre his novels on characters that have some kind of psychological and emotional relationship with the past. Ishiguro's narrators are attracted or haunted by their past and

(T)heir reflections on their present circumstances and memories of the past clearly define the power relationships that have formed their consciousness.  
(Webley,4)

and the narrators

are thus repeatedly obliged to reconstruct their accounts as encounters with the outside world provide checks on their projects. Each time their assertions are undermined, the narrators must develop new readings of their pasts and amend their portraits in accordance with these altered interpretations.  
(Horowitz,2004:6).

The issue of memory arises as the protagonists/narrators of the stories try to find closure with their past, and for this they must resort to memory. This concurs with Maurice Blanchot's theory, according to which "narrators recall and relate past experiences to divest themselves of memories and their past."<sup>36</sup> Ishiguro's narrators have made choices in their past whose consequences they must face now, at the present time in which they undergo introspection and remembrance. As Lewis marked,

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<sup>35</sup> Sheng-mei Ma, «Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream for Post ethnicity: Performance in Whiteface». Post-Identity, 71-88, in [http://liberalarts.udmercy.edu/pi/PI2.1/PI21\\_Ma.pdf](http://liberalarts.udmercy.edu/pi/PI2.1/PI21_Ma.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Mesher, D. "Kazuo Ishiguro", <<http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/eng339/coursepack/Ishiguro.htm>>

the novels are all engaged with memory. And memory, by its very nature, is uncertain, quivering, subject to erasures and displacements. (Lewis, 2000: 101).

Veyret concurs and brilliantly notes in his dissertation on Ishiguro,

(L)es romans d'Ishiguro sont des textes écrits à l'encre de la mémoire. À la fois substance et ancrage, dérive et nouveau départ, l'encre d'Ishiguro est cette matière étymologiquement composée de cendres, de restes, de vestiges. (Veyret, 2005:12).

The protagonists in the novels all strive to overcome some type of loss, whether this is the loss of a child, family members and loved ones (*A Pale View of Hills*, *When We Were Orphans*), the loss of permanence and safety (*The Unconsoled*) or the loss of something ineffable (*Never Let Me Go*). Ishiguro intermingles one's personal past (biography), especially how people try to cope with their past, and society's collective memory (Petry, 1999:6-7).

In *The Contemporary British Novel*, Frederick M. Holmes wrote the section devoted to Kazuo Ishiguro, in which he argued that Ishiguro's first three novels (*A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*) have been celebrated for their historically grounded realism, achieved through the limpid, masterfully controlled prose styles of their first-person narrators, all of whom depend upon memory as they look back over their troubled lives and times. (Holmes, in Acheson & Ross, 2005:11)

And the same could have been said for his novels *When We Were Orphans* and *The Unconsoled*. Likewise, Dr James Procter affirmed that

Ishiguro's novels center on memories and their potential to digress and distort, to forget and to silence the past, and above all to haunt the present.<sup>37</sup>

For them, remembering offers a catharsis through which they can solve their past and find peace in the present and an opportunity to have a future. Procter equally pointed out that

[L]ike all of Ishiguro's novels to date, narration is, at least partly, a therapeutic process. The novels are not attempts to render the past convincingly, but rather to pursue how individuals interpret and construct that past.<sup>2</sup>

In her article "Magnifying Memories: Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*"<sup>38</sup>, Pamela St. Clair uses the expression that gives title to her article as a

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<sup>37</sup> Procter, Dr James. "Kazuo Ishiguro" <<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth52>> retrieved on June 6 2007

metaphor of memory: it magnifies and tries to make comprehensible all the events that populate the past of the characters, not just in the above cited novel, but in all *Ishigurian* novels that focus on memory.

Sheng-mei Ma adds that Ishiguro is drawn by the subject of memory in order to somehow organise his own hazy recollections of the Japan he left when he was merely five:

(B)y having his protagonists explore their shaky recall of the past, Ishiguro ingeniously justifies the fuzziness of Japan in his own creative mind. (Ma 75)

But the Japan that he presents is fabricated, as

Ishiguro's memories of his native land are intertwined and thereby adulterated with Western ideas of Japan

and

[H]e assembles in a textual collage cultural icons and landscape markers to call forth collective memory of a specific locality. (Cheng:160;162)

The Japan he aims to represent, like his characters and situations, are merely a pretext to achieve something larger, "to create metaphors to express personal concerns", as noticed by Frederick M. Holmes (in Acheson & Ross, 2005:13).

Cheng and Mason also argue that Ishiguro is highly influenced by Japanese filmmaking, which "instils in Ishiguro's memory images of his native society" (Cheng 174).

Interviewed by Donna Liquori<sup>39</sup>, Ishiguro explains his permanent interest for memory in its various approaches:

I like memory, at various different levels. At a purely technical level, I like it as a method of telling a story – it gives me plenty of freedom. (...) And I just like the texture of memory as well. I like that the scenes are necessarily foggy around the edges, because they're open to manipulation and they're open to self-deception and embroidery. And they're often tinged with nostalgia, some kind of strong emotion. I like all these layers that come with a scene. Thematically, I have been interested in memory itself.

Ishiguro employs an array of words and expressions which refer to memory and remembering: "remember", "recall", "reminisce", "recollect", "call back",

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<sup>38</sup> St Clair, Pamela. "Magnifying Memories: Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*", March 1, 2001 <[http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/british\\_literature/61686/3](http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/british_literature/61686/3)> retrieved on February 21, 2007

<sup>39</sup> Liquori, Donna. "Texture of memory: Ishiguro finds in the fog of recollection a device to craft novels", April 17, 2005 <[http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/tu\\_ishiguro\\_kazuo.html](http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/tu_ishiguro_kazuo.html)>

“look back”, “bring back the old days”, “bring back memories”, things that “drift into the mind”, “come to mind” and “pop into my head”.

The choice of the novels is mainly linked to the use of memory as a literary strategy in each of them, but also to its date of publication, so as to verify if the passing of time and the evolution of Ishiguro’s career have somehow changed the author’s perception of memory, history and narrative. For this reason, the first novel to be explored is *A Pale View of Hills*, published in 1982, a novel which marks the beginning of Ishiguro’s career as a novelist. Then, there were some novels I could have chosen, but *The Unconsoled*, first published in 1995, was the narrative chosen to represent the 1990s and mainly because it proved such a challenge to read. It is nearly 600 pages long and I was almost put off by the strangeness of its main character and by the lack of sense and surrealism of the narrative line. Critic Barry Lewis considers that this author’s novels “are not exactly ‘page-turners’ as far as plot is concerned” (Lewis, 2000:20). The third title is *When we were Orphans*, published in 2000, a brilliant novel in which a young detective of Japanese descent goes back to Japan to uncover the disappearance of his parents. Finally, I had to tackle Ishiguro’s last novel, *Never Let Me Go*, published in 2005, which touches upon themes such as cloning and organ donation, orphanage and memory.

Apart from the titles listed, I tried to find and read almost everything that Kazuo Ishiguro has ever published, including his short stories “A Family Supper” (1981) and “A Village after Dark” (2001) and saw two films whose screenplays he wrote - *The Saddest Music in the World* (2004), an independent film Ishiguro co-wrote with George Toles and starred Isabella Rosselini; and *The White Countess* (also 2004), Ishiguro’s original screenplay, directed by James Ivory and starring Ralph Fiennes, Natasha Richardson, and Vanessa Redgrave. Whenever deemed suitable and appropriate, any of his works will be referred to.

### **Chapter III.1. A Pale View of Hills**

Em *A Pale View of Hills*, as imagens recorrentes do terreno baldio e das águas turvas, associadas ao passado da narradora, reflectem o dilema ou os riscos do recordar.  
Nogueira, 2002:14

Ishiguro's first novel was published in 1982 and won him the Winifred Holtby Prize of the Royal Society of Literature, marking the beginning of his career as a full-time writer. This novel was commissioned for translation in thirteen languages.

The novel is a first-person narrative told by Etsuko, a Japanese middle-aged widow residing at present in the English countryside<sup>40</sup>. Ishiguro favours the use of first-person narrators as a form of controlling his own creative and writing process:

Because it was a first-person narrative, there comes a point when you ask, am I writing about a person like this, in a voice like this, because I am afraid of losing control in the writing process? (Ishiguro cited in Nasta, 2004:161)

However, Veyret observes exactly the opposite, as he considers the employment of a first-person narrator as a means to escape personal desire:

Dire 'je' et se réciter ainsi à la première personne, c'est toujours s'éviter et toujours refuser son désir. (Veyret, 2005:163)

The use of a first-person narrator is one of the many features which justified Ishiguro's presence in the work edited by Sandra Buckley, *Encyclopedia of Japanese Culture*, since

[A] comparison made often between his [Ishiguro's] writing and Japanese fiction is his repeated use of a first-person narrative reminiscent of the Japanese I-novel. (Buckley, 2002:219)

Etsuko now lives in the countryside in the house that she shared with her deceased English second-husband, while her second daughter, Niki, lives and works in London. The female narrator embarks on a journey into her past in Japan, seeking answers and clues to understand and accept her daughter's suicide and her own life and to reflect on her family life in Japan. In the words of Yu-Cheng Lee,

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<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to point out that in this novel, Ishiguro's first, as well as in his last (2005), the narrators are female while in his other works the narrators are male.

This interplay and interaction between past and present is underscored by Ishiguro's skilful and effective deployment of the narrative form.<sup>41</sup>

However, the author himself seemed to be discontent with the novel's flashbacks:

Ishiguro attributes his discontent with the novel to flashbacks so clear-cut that they are devoid of the "murkiness of someone trying to wade through their [sic] memories, trying to manipulate memories. (Mason:337-8 cited by Ma:82).

Ishiguro constructs a seamless narrative which depicts a seemingly uninterrupted journey between past and present, as the diagram in the following page suggests. As stated by scholar Yu-Cheng Lee in the below-cited article (see footnote):

It is there, in the interweaving of episodes both past and present, in the free movement of the narrative voice between postwar Nagasaki and the more recent England of perhaps the late nineteen-seventies or early eighties, that Ishiguro deftly melds now and then, here and there, into one narrative tapestry. (Lee, 2008: 20).

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<sup>41</sup> Concomitantly to the writing of the present dissertation, scholar Yu-Cheng Lee published a brilliant essay entitled "Reinventing the Past in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*". Lee's paper examines the forms and meanings of the main character's memories of postwar Japan and "deploys Walter Benjamin's concept of history to look into the significance of the novel for Ishiguro, as it obviously represents the author's effort to conjure up fading memories of his homeland." (Lee, 2008: 19)

1. PRESENT  
(page 9)  
Niki's visit to Etsuko

2. PAST  
(page 11)  
Post-war period;  
reconstruction of  
Nagasaki; meeting  
Sachiko and Mariko

3. PRESENT  
(page 47) Reference to the  
little girl in the park who  
triggers the reminiscence  
about Sachiko; the third day  
of Niki's visit

4. PAST  
(page 56) Etsuko's life  
in Nagasaki and her  
father-in-law's visit;  
friendship with Sachiko

5. PRESENT  
(pag 89) a friend of  
Niki's is writing a  
poem about Etsuko;  
dream about Mariko

6. PAST  
(page 99) Ogata-San's  
visit; child murders in  
Naasaki; excursion to  
Inasa with Mariko and  
Sachiko

7. PRESENT  
(page 174) Etsuko and  
Niki talk about Keiko and  
Niki's father relationship  
and attitude towards  
Keiko; Niki's departure

The novel begins in the present time and it almost immediately goes back several decades (*flashback*). The majority of the pages are about Etsuko's past, but she sometimes comes back to the present in order to recount the minimalist conversations she has with her daughter Niki (*flash-forward*). Barry Lewis pointed out that "the two strands of present and past despair are braided with great dexterity." (Lewis,

The present is the moment in time and the perspective from which the past can be examined and interpreted. As Yu-Cheng Lee writes,

the past is to be retrieved and manipulated to serve the present. (Lee, 2008: 23).

Therefore, the past is the material from which the present is moulded and it can be seen, interpreted and manipulated to explain and cater for the present time. History thus functions as a tool, a literary instrument which permits the conception of a panoply of stories and narratives; it is a non-extinguishable source of ideas, characters and events that can be designed, adapted and tailored to suit the author's needs and style.

Etsuko is a female narrative voice that freely moves between past and present, giving voice not to one but two stories which are somehow linked. The first story is that of Sachiko, a war widow with a daughter, Mariko, who is experiencing financial troubles and gets involved with an American soldier who promises her a new life in America. Etsuko lives with her husband Jiro in the eastern side of Nagasaki and is pregnant with her first daughter, Keiko. It is near her house that she meets Mariko and then Sachiko and witnesses the strange life of the two and the strange relationship between the two. Mariko is a quiet and strange child who does not go to school. The second story refers to Etsuko's life in England, after the death of her English husband and the suicide of her first daughter. Etsuko is haunted by the thought of her daughter committing suicide in a room in Manchester, where she lived, only to be found days later by her landlady. Etsuko is prisoner of her memory and of the impossibility to let go:

The memory landscape that emerges is marked by the impossibility of forgetting. (Buckley,2002:219)

The mother's recollections occur while her younger daughter Niki, who lives in London, is visiting and comes to an end when she leaves Etsuko's house - "She left after five days" (PVH 9).

Chapter I begins with Etsuko's explanation of the choice of her second daughter's name, but quickly moves to the issue of Keiko's suicide:

The English are fond of their idea that our race has an instinct for suicide, as if further explanations are unnecessary; for that was all they [the newspapers] reported, that she was Japanese and that she had hung herself in her room. (PVH 10)

Despite the existence of several references to Keiko's suicide, the mother is always eager to dismiss the subject, as if trying to escape her feeling of guilt towards the death of her child:

I have no great wish to dwell on Keiko now, it brings me little comfort. (PVH 11).

A blank space in the page marks the flashback to Japan some decades before, to when

American soldiers were as numerous as ever – for there was fighting in Korea – but in Nagasaki, after what had gone before, those were days of calm and relief. (PVH 11).

Etsuko and her husband Jiro lived “a short tram journey from the centre of town” (PVH 11), which reminds us of the city where the action of *The Unconsoled* takes place. Etsuko then recalls the day when she met Sachiko:

I can recall vividly that afternoon at the tram stop. [...] We were to become friends that summer and for a short time at least I was to be admitted into her confidence. (PVH 13).

In Chapter three, the female narrator states the unreliability and fallibility of her memory when she says,

[I]t 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. (PVH 41)

Etsuko has clear conscience that her memory or what she remembers is not reliable (what Mike Petry classifies as ‘an ill-working memory’ - Petry, 1999:34), because memory, as Daria Przybyla observed in her thesis *The Status of Metaphor in (De)constructing Historical Master Narratives in the Novels of Julian Barnes, Graham Swift and Kazuo Ishiguro*, “as a scientific or detective category - is an imperfect tool” (Przybyla, 2007:46), and alone it may not be sufficient to unveil the truth. Although referring not to PVH, but to a more recent novel, *When We Were Orphans* (2000), Przybyla argues that in this detective style novel,

Ishiguro elaborates on the ambivalent nature of memory. On the one hand, it gives a powerful stimulus for intruding in history which is neither unknown or, as the protagonist suspects, has been falsified. Memory nurtures the ambition to make private, if metaphorical, sense of history. On the other hand, memory also works as a playground for a stockpile of facts and myths that followed them. Even if memory favours personal and local stories, their

meaning is negotiated with history's discursive trends. It means that beside its potential to inspire action directed at historical discourse, memory often imitates knowledge instead of leading to it. (Przybyla, 2007:45)

The narrator uses the thread of memory to recall her past life in Japan, pursuing "a specific event that forces the protagonist to think back to the past" (Aertsen, 1996:136), her daughter's visit. But Etsuko does it with a defined intention:

He [Ishiguro] usually writes about false or misleading memories, indicating how people displace emotions and transform the past for their own benefit. (King, 2004:165)

Memory helps construe and "create identity", "avoid responsibility" (Gaukler, 2006:12) of her actions (that she believes have led to her daughter's suicide) and understand her own choices and experiences. Thinking back and about things is this anguished mother's way of coming to terms with her past.

Some of the events are told with clarity and certainty, while others are partially omitted, either for memory loss, as a consequence of the ageing process, for shame or embarrassment. For example, Etsuko recalls the episode when she found Mariko near the wasteland, covered in blood, and the fact that she and the reader never know what exactly had happened. Was it rape? Had it something to do with the woman Mariko imagines and talks about? Or did she really fell from a tree like her mother explains? Touching on a more tragic justification, could Mariko be related to the child murders that Etsuko refers to on one of her journeys down memory lane? (PVH 100) Both the narrator and the readers are left in the dark, most certainly with the intention of creating an atmosphere of suspense and allowing or even inviting the readers to create and infer their own stories and justifications.

The infested and filthy wasteground is itself an image that conveys the destruction of Japan after the II World War, its cities and families shattered: Sachiko's husband and Mrs Fujiwara's sons died in the war and the lives of the people affected by it were never again the same. Simultaneously, it conveys the reconstruction of Japan and of its people:

As the summer grew hotter, the stretch of wasteground outside our apartment block became increasingly unpleasant. Much of the earth lay dried and cracked [...] all manner of insects [...] In the apartments there was the usual complaining, but over the years the anger over the wasteground had become resigned and cynical. (PVH 99)

As Barry Lewis puts it, the wasteground is “a metaphorical space” (Lewis, 2000: 38), which can be paralleled to Etsuko’s attempt to forgive herself for her past and to construct a new life on her own.

The narrator, Etsuko, has clear conscience that her own memory and recollection of the past events is hazy and untrustworthy:

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. (*PVH* 41)

and

[M]emory, I realise, 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. (*PVH* 156)

Memory fogginess seems to affect some of the characters in the novel, as Etsuko’s father-in-law had already complained to suffer from this condition - “my memory is so foggy these days” (*PVH* 56).

Etsuko seems to remember with greater vivacity and certainty events and moments which are associated to smells or the feeling of touch, as when she narrates that,

I must have been wearing sandals that night for I can remember distinctly the feel of the grass on my feet. (*PVH* 83);

and that

[T]he conversation comes back to me quite vividly (*PVH* 100).

At times, the narrator prefers to discard or put aside certain memories, hurtful memories such as situations related to her first husband Jiro and daughter Keiko. Etsuko, or Mrs Sheringham, has never told her British neighbours about Keiko’s death, so they mistake Niki for Keiko when they see mother and daughter strolling in the countryside.

Ogata-San, Etsuko’s father-in-law, when discussing the subject of one of his students who has written an article accusing older professors and scholars of carrying and teaching fascist ideals, states that,

it’s good to take a glance back now and then, it helps keep things in perspective. (*PVH* 30)

This is exactly what Etsuko tries to do when she embarks on a journey aboard her memory: her goal is to repress the guilt and anguish she feels towards the death of her daughter. Etsuko’s reminiscences and use of memory enable her to perform a

catharsis and a therapeutical journey which make possible for her to enjoy her senior years peacefully and guiltlessly.

Etsuko's life and marriage in Japan were surely not a happy time, because she had to run away from the country together with Keiko. The reasons for her running away are unknown, but the narrator states that,

such things are long in the past now and I have no wish to ponder them yet again. My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept Keiko's interests very much at heart. There is nothing to be gained in going over such matters again. (PVH 91).

There is, however, a hint given by Niki that Etsuko was ill-treated and probably abused by her husband and had the courage to leave him in order to protect her daughter:

So many women [...] get stuck with kids and lousy husbands and they're just miserable. But they can't pluck up the courage to do a thing about it. [...] It couldn't have been easy, what you did, Mother. (PVH 90)

The first time I thought about the title of this novel, it sounded awkward and seemed to miss the definite article - *the hills*. The title makes sense after reading the novel, as it clearly suggests the idea of pale, colourless and hazy memories in Etsuko's past, the hills of the Nagasaki district. Her view of the past is no longer vivid and clear, either because so many years have elapsed or because she has voluntarily chosen to remember only the events she can emotionally handle.

Etsuko's troubled and lacking memory is evident in chapter XI of the novel, for she mistakes or confuses Mariko for her own daughter Keiko, who was not even born at the time: according to Etsuko, when referring to a trip to Inasa,

Keiko was happy that day. (PVH 182)

The reader knows about a trip Etsuko took to Inasa along with Sachiko and Mariko, but Keiko had not been born yet. Barry Lewis considers that this identity switch is the result of "a displacement" (Lewis, 2000:36). It is then possible to draw a parallel between the two mothers, Etsuko and Sachiko: did Sachiko and Mariko really exist or are they a kind of surrogate family to represent or are in reality Etsuko and Keiko? It seems that Mariko and Sachiko are imaginary people, fictionalised by Etsuko to portray her own life in Japan. She has detached herself from that time and created an alter-ego for herself and her first daughter transferring all the episodes of her life in Japan to those two female characters. About this novel, Ishiguro remarked that,

the whole narrative strategy of the book was about how someone ends up talking about things they cannot face directly through other people's stories. I was trying to explore that type of language, how people use the language of self-deception and self-protection... it's really Etsuko talking about herself. (Mason's interview in Shaffer & Wong (Eds),2008:5)

Following this version of the events, then the girl found hurt and bleeding near a tree could have been Keiko, and Etsuko's flight from Japan served the purpose of providing her daughter with a future. Women in Japan were, after all, servants to men and had to pursue severe social rules and constraints that were put upon them by a patriarchal society.



## Chapter III.2. *The Unconsoled*

*The Unconsoled*, set in a surrealistic world, tells how traumas consume individuals and incarcerate them in the haunting past.  
Cheng:183

This novel was published in 1995 and it offers a different and an unexpected “mood and matter”<sup>42</sup> from Ishiguro’s previous novels. According to Barry Lewis, [T]he *Unconsoled* differs greatly in some respects from Ishiguro’s previous three novels, and in the theme of memory is managed very differently. (Lewis, 2000:104)

In *The Unconsoled* Ryder’s memories are not repressed, but erupt into the consciousness of the central protagonist and are projected outwards into his circumstances. (Lewis, 2000:104)

This novel marks an evolution and a distinction in style from his first three novels, although the reception by critics was not consensual, for the reason that, praise in the past, Ishiguro is encouraged by the richness of human existence to keep exploring new form of aesthetic representation. (Wong, 2005:80)

Interviewed by Jennie Rothenberg, Ishiguro himself stated that “I’ve long been fascinated by how a writer could veer away from realism”<sup>43</sup>, and it seems that *The Unconsoled* was a laboratory to experiment with this fascination and desire. Other critics were less sympathetic and described the novel as

a bad dream from which Ryder will never awake, is Kafka in reverse... But at least Kafka is concise and visionary, whereas Ishiguro is directionless and undifferentiated (Rorem,1996:157)

Besides his wish to experiment a new style and ambiance, Ishiguro wanted to write a novel in which, similarly to *A Pale View of Hills*, memory is used to the convenience of the protagonist:

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<sup>42</sup> This expression was taken from the text in the side jacket of Knopf’s edition of the novel (1995).

<sup>43</sup> Gritz, Jennie Rothenberg. “Myths and Metaphors”, Interview, April 7, 2005  
<<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200504u/int2005-04-07>>

I wanted to write a book not from the viewpoint of someone looking back and ordering his experience, but of someone in the midst of chaos, being pulled in different directions at once, and not realizing why. Self-deception is dealt with differently in this book. It's absurdly exaggerated. Ryder's always deluding himself. His memory and perception are convenient for him; he censors things, and manages to pinpoint things he emotionally needs and blots out others. He'll forget things from a few minutes before and rewrites that just happened. (cited in Nasta, 2004:168)

Once more, as it is Ishiguro's tradition, the story is told by a first person narrator.

This is the awkward story of a man named Ryder, an international renowned pianist who arrives in an unnamed European town to give a concert which he cannot remember agreeing to give. An aspect that adds to the oddity and awkwardness of this novel is the feeling that the plot takes its time to unfold, as

[T]ime is in suspension in this narrative. There is no linear progression either in the events related in the city leading up to the recital or in the constant eruption of memories into the time-present of the story. (...) He [Ishiguro] describes his willingness to follow a thought or internal monologue for pages as evidence of not being afraid of slowness or letting things almost come to a stop. (Buckley, 2002:219, my ellipsis)

This town could be in Germany as there are references to the Bahnhofplatz (TU 318), Tillgasse, Poland and Russia, but this is only what the reader is able to infer. As Barry Lewis interprets,

The central European state is palpably a displaced England of his memory and imagination (Lewis, 2000:110),

for the reason that, as the plot evolves, Ryder recognises and comes across several school friends from England. According to Cynthia F. Wong,

[E]verywhere in the novel, Ryder bumps against people, places, and objects recognizable to him from an obscure past. Such familiar objects cast in intentionally absurd situations or conditions further strengthen Ishiguro's view that one's dreams and imagination have great potency. (Wong, 2005:72)

Despite the reader's interest or curiosity in wanting to know where the action takes place, the truth is that the setting does not matter to the unfolding of the plot, or does it? Interviewed by Maya Jaggi, Ishiguro revealed that,

One of the last things I decided was where *The Unconsoled* was. I didn't name any place, but I always thought it was the western part of central Europe, like Austria or Switzerland. I just needed to have an English guy who was not in England. He had to be away, travelling, for the techniques to work. (Nasta,2004:160)

The eager inhabitants regard Ryder's visit as a salvation of the town and its people - "your help, Mr Ryder, your agreeing to come to our humble city may prove absolutely crucial to us" (TU 114) - although some people already think it is too late for that, as old man Theo:

The soul of this town, it's not sick, Mr Ryder, it's dead. It's too late now. Ten years ago, perhaps. There was still a chance then. But not now. (TU 107)

The reader is given the impression that the town is emerged in some kind of tragedy, misery and pessimism, whose origin we cannot ascertain, and that somehow Ryder's concert can change this gloomy condition, as the character Pedersen states:

Everywhere, in the streets, in the trams, I sense a tremendous feeling, a feeling of optimism. (TU 108)

This suspicion is later confirmed when Jakob Janitz refers to a "crisis" (TU 128) that is affecting the town, although the nature of the crisis is not specified:

Naturally there were still many aspects to this local crisis that remained unclear, even mysterious. (TU 158)

In the days that precede this concert, Ryder is taken to a number of places and meets several people who are described to the readers as complete strangers, but about whom the protagonist seems to have some knowledge of and recollects. Ryder complies with all the social norms and tasks assigned to him during his stay, but without really knowing how he got to where he is or why he is doing what he is doing. The text in the side jacket of Knopf's edition of *The Unconsoled* describes the novel as:

eerie and comical and, always, strangely malleable – as a dream might be, or a nightmare, or the day-to-day reality of a man whose public self has taken on a life of its own.

The novel takes us on a journey following Ryder and like him the reader cannot tell if he is dreaming or he is in fact living through all the events presented to him. If the narrator is dreaming, his dreams need to be interpreted in order to grasp their meaning:

Dreams are therefore like literary texts: they must be interpreted on several levels. The analyst, like the critic, looks specifically at the operations that conceal meaning through symbolisation. (Lewis, 2000:105)

Amnesic, Ryder has no control over what happens during his visit, as he is pushed from one event to the other and is asked favours by several people he encounters: he is asked, for example, to deliver a speech on Brodsky's dead dog, Bruno, at the beginning of the dinner ceremony. Despite his best intentions, he is unable to keep his promises to those people as he is diverted to other events. Adding up to the awkwardness of the plot, Ryder is put in an embarrassing situation when he is about to deliver his talk:

I cleared my throat and was about to embark on my talk when I suddenly became aware that my dressing gown was hanging open, displaying the entire naked front of my body. (TU 143)

In this very long novel, we are kept in the dark about a number of issues, and with a lot of blanks to fill, similarly to Ryder's memory:

The pianist's memory is a set of holes, which are filled in turn, one by one, but he opposes his being understood, refuses to voice connections, keeps incidents as separate as he can. (Vianu, 2006:175)

But to compensate for his bad fortune and memory failures,

Ryder is blessed with unusual extrasensory perceptions. He overhears conversations well out of listening range; has knowledge of other people's actions when not present; and can access the memories, fantasies and thoughts of other people. (Lewis,2000:104)

The same author finds that the novel displays "many mergings and meanderings" in which "(D)igressions and evasions are frequent, and their narratives link episodes with the hidden cunning of a free-associative analysis." (Lewis,2000:105). Ryder jumps from one topic to another with no apparent reason and the succession of episodes is complicated and "outlandish, illogical" (Lewis,2000:107), probably not what the reader would normally expect because it is so far from reality and normalcy.

At the hotel where he stays, the pianist is given a tight schedule he should follow in the following days so as to fulfil all the commitments with the city's associations and important people. Ryder's memory problems are revealed at the onset of the novel, as he fails to remember how he arrived to that city and what is expected of him. The narrator remarks:

I could recall the very texture of the thick grey paper on which the schedule had been typed, the dull yellow patch cast on it by the reading light, the drone of the plane's engines – but try as I might, I could remember nothing of what had been written on that sheet. (TU 15)

The story presents moments when Ryder is at a loss and knows not what he is expected to do, and then leaps to other moments when the reader cannot tell if the protagonist is dreaming or is in fact living a real episode of his life. In the hotel room where he is led by Gustav, the old porter, he finds himself remembering the room where he had stayed with his parents years before:

I was just starting to doze off when something suddenly made me open my eyes again and stare up at the ceiling. [...] The room I was in, I realised, was the very room that had served as my bedroom during the two years my parents and I had lived at my aunt's house on the borders of England and Wales. (TU 16)

Ryder goes on to recall the decoration of that room and the hotel rug triggers a memory of his past:

I reached down a hand and let my fingers brush against the hotel rug, and as I did so a memory came back to me of one afternoon when I had been lost within my world of plastic soldiers and a furious row had broken out downstairs. (TU 16)

Ryder seems to recollect this bedroom because he feels trapped in a strange and eerie situation and that room represents a safe haven and his “childhood sanctuary” (TU 17) where he can escape from the tensions of that day. As stated by Hayley Horowitz,

Ryder's text, like the three that come before it [Ishiguro's first preceding novels], is marked by a hopeful nostalgia for a past that once contained the promise of future structure, permanence and agency. (Horowitz 64),

but his present has not proved structured, so “by rectifying his own shortcomings, he hopes, he can redeem the past” (Horowitz,2004:66). According to Cynthia F. Wong,

Ryder's strategy for dealing with a painful past reminds us of the ways in which Ishiguro's other protagonists found ways to confront their lives: by remembering events of other people's lives, they begin to assess the meaning of their own. This approach both reflects and deflects their pained pasts onto the narrative present.(...) Ishiguro turns the strategy of substituting another's

past for one's own to comic, even bizarre, effect. (Wong,2005:74) (my ellipsis)

As the days evolve and Ryder is presented to other characters, he feels affected by his memory loss:

It seemed that only if it [the sound of the fountain] would stop, my memory would unlock and I would remember the names. (TU 24)

It is early in chapter 3 that the reader starts to believe that Ryder is suffering from some kind of memory loss following the conversation he has with Sophie, the porter's daughter. The latter has asked him a favour, like so many other characters in the novel, so that he and his daughter can talk and be reunited after so many years of separation. When talking to Sophie, Ryder has a "déjà-vu" sensation:

For the fact was, as we had been sitting together, Sophie's face had come to seem steadily more familiar to me, until now I thought I could even remember vaguely some earlier discussions about buying just such a house in the woods.[...] After a while, I found a faint recollection returning to me of listening to this same voice (...) in the not-so-distant past. (TU 34-35)[my ellipsis and underlined]

The reader senses that Ryder already knew Sophie and is suffering from some kind of memory impairment, or that he is merely experiencing a feeling that he has already lived that episode without it being true. Art imitating life, Ishiguro probably obtained inspiration from the real case of Clive Wearing, an eminent English musician and musicologist in his mid-forties who, in March of 1985, was struck by a brain infection which affected the parts of the brain concerned with memory. Clive was unable to preserve new memories and also had retrograde amnesia which made it impossible to remember his whole past. In 1999, a man walked into a hospital in Toronto after apparently being attacked. He had no memory of who he was, no identification and was diagnosed with post-concussion amnesia. He was christened "Mr Nobody" by the press. In 2005, a man, who became known as "Piano man", turned up with no memory in a beach on the Isle of Sheppey and became a celebrity. Both men were virtuoso piano players, so police took over both cases and found out they were the one and same man trying to obtain citizenship, first in Canada and then in England. The resemblance of these real life cases and Ryder's is astounding.

Ishiguro's use of nouns and verbs like remember, recall and recollect is abundant and in this excerpt such words are accompanied with an adverb and an adjective - vaguely and faint - which convey an idea of haziness and lack of clarity.

The tone of the novel is Kafkaesque, resembling the tone of works like *Metamorphosis*, in which the reader is confused by the reality or unreality of what is described: is Ryder dreaming, impaired in his memory or living that experience for the first time? A few pages ahead, the protagonist confirms that he has had a telephone conversation with Sophie in the recent past:

It had taken place perhaps a week or so ago, and I had been in a hotel room somewhere, listening to her voice at the other end of the line (TU 37)

Other moments which are reminiscent of Kafka's work are for example Brodsky's dog funeral in which several members of the community participate and the fact that Ryder appears at the concert dressed in his night gown without anyone remarking that fact. Ryder's garment was probably considered eccentric and acceptable for an artist. Another illustration of surrealism which reminds the reader of an *Alice in Wonderland* atmosphere is the small door which Ryder, Sophie and Boris step through to get to a series of corridors inside the hotel. Despite these similarities, some authors do not regard *The Unconsoled* as a fantasy, for the fact that,

Ryder may well forget that he is married or turn up at a reception in his dressing gown, but there is never a possibility that he will change size or meet whit rabbits with watches. Perhaps, then, the novel should be classified in a different way. According to Valentine Cunningham, with this book Ishiguro joins the 'Oh-Dear-Me-No-the-Novel-Doesn't-Tell-a-Story' lot, the cheeseparing Kafka-Borges-Calvino-Handke tendency.' (Lewis, 2000:125)

Ishiguro's novel is definitely post-modern, as it makes use of aspects such as temporal disarray and lack of narrative linearity. According to Barry Lewis, Ishiguro's novel is also defined by other post-modern aspects such as "its mingling of fictional forms, and its experiments with language" (Lewis, 2000:125). Lewis regards it as:

an experimental work, successfully utilising several dream techniques to skew its narrative, and incorporating aspects of postmodernism, fantasy and realism. (Lewis, 2000:127).

Throughout the novel, the protagonist recalls his past but always a tainted and unclear version of it, like in the moment when he h his schooldays: "a certain memory came back to me from our schooldays of a crisp winter's morning in England" (TU 46). Once more, this reference reminds us of another novel by Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (2000), in which the main character, Banks, recalls his childhood moments and schooldays spent in a boarding school in England. All of his recollections are vague or blurred, as Ryder states:

I could not recall with any definiteness such an item having been on my schedule and decided to forget the matter. (TU 55)

Notwithstanding the lack of memory he displays about his own life and affairs, it is interesting to notice that Ryder narrates the episodes about the lives of other characters with omniscience, knowing exactly what goes on inside their minds:

But then I caught sight of his profile in the changing light and realised he was turning over in his mind a particular incident from several years ago. (TU 65)

Like a wrecked ship and its debris, Ryder's memories or bits of memory surface abruptly as the hours and days elapse. Being at the movies with Sophie, where the girl selling cigars strangely and unrealistically sells him a copy of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, brings about recollections (this time vivid, as Ryder explains):

I too turned back to the screen, but then after a few seconds certain fragments of memory began to come back to me there in the darkness of the cinema and my attention once more drifted from the film. (TU 94)

The second section of the novel presents the second day of the visit and at this time Ryder already acknowledges Boris, Sophie's son and Gustav's grandson, as his «boy». According to Sophie's words, Boris is not Ryder's biological son, but has a relationship with them and is likened by the boy:

That's the difference! He's not your own. Whatever you say, it makes a difference. You'll never feel towards him like a real father. (TU 95)

Boris is in fact lodged in a hotel room adjacent to Ryder's.

In the middle of the crowd in the unnamed European town and on the second of his visit, Ryder recognises a girl from his schooldays, Fiona Roberts, who once more sends him back on memory lane:

I suddenly found myself recalling an afternoon from our childhood, when the two of us had been sitting together under her parents' dining table. (TU 171); memories came back to me of the warm friendship Fiona and I had had as children. I recalled the small white cottage (...) I remembered the times I had wandered down to the cottage (TU 238) (my ellipsis)

His mind wanders off to one afternoon when his parents were arguing as usual and he made the decision not to get married and live his life by himself. But Fiona raises a question about the reason why his parents fight constantly, hinting that it has something to do with Ryder. He then is called back to the present when Fiona addresses him and remarks that he missed the dinner party he was supposed to attend

the previous night, having put her in a delicate position with the women of the Foundation she is a member of. Ryder has no idea of that appointment, but he had “the vaguest recollection of such an event having been on my schedule” (TU 176). It is Fiona who informs the pianist about the arrival of his parents to the town to attend the concert, adding up to his nervousness and anxiety. His elderly parents’ welfare will be Fiona’s responsibility, so Ryder agrees to visit her at her house so that the other women see them together and confirm that they are childhood friends.

However, Ryder has to meet a journalist and a photographer for an interview and shooting session, and once more fails to attend the appointment with Fiona. When he is walking towards a monument where he will be photographed with the journalist and the photographer, they talk between them and call Ryder “the shit” and “the fool” (TU 180), making clear that he is not admired by everyone in the town.

On that same day, Ryder and Boris take a bus to visit the artificial lake, built to embellish the estate and located near Sophie and Boris’ apartment, and also his, according to the boy. He does not recognise it (“the door (...) aroused no memories for me at all” (TU 213)), but inside the apartment Ryder is again reminded of his parents’ house:

this same rear section seemed in itself strongly reminiscent, and after a moment I realised this was because it resembled exactly the back part of the parlour in the house my parents and I had lived in for several months in Manchester. (TU 215)

Ryder chats with Boris and explains him that he and Sophie argue frequently because, as a famous pianist, he needs to travel constantly and she dislikes that. They are trying to become a family and they are searching for a new house to live in as a family.

Ryder is continually failing to show up for the appointments arranged by the town inhabitants because something unexpected always comes up and he embarks on a new path without realising he is missing those appointments. It is shameful for him, as he needs to apologise for something he has control of, but also irritating for the reader who watches this man being dragged from one situation to another without logic.

On the evening of his second day, he is supposed to attend a party at a Gallery along with Sophie and Boris, but he is distracted along the way by the remains of an old car on the side of the road, which he identifies as his parents’. The image of the depleted car prompts his memory:

Seeing it again in this sad state brought back to me its final days with us (...)  
Towards the end, I recalled, I had started to invent elaborate ploys to avoid  
taking journeys in it. (...) I could remember it parked in the drive of our little  
cottage in Worcestershire (TU 261) (my ellipsis and underlined)

and

I found a memory coming back of one of the happier family expeditions  
undertaken in the vehicle (TU 263)

Either this is in fact a huge coincidence, finding the old family car in that unnamed  
city, or Ryder is somewhere in an English city or all of what he describes is utterly the  
product of his fertile imagination. This is up to the confused and baffled reader to  
decide.

At the Gallery, and contrary to what was expected, Ryder delivers a hard and  
criticising speech about the behaviour of the citizens of the town, holding them  
responsible for the crisis in which it is emerged:

you exemplify everything that's so wrong here! (TU 271)

The third day of Ryder's visit begins in section III of the novel. He is still very  
much confused about the entire visit, but tries to collect his thoughts and organise his  
day. He meets with Miss Collins who advises him to talk generally about the people of  
the town, because they are so eager to listen to him they will not complain. Already  
at the ceremony, Ryder meets encounters many people and while listening to others  
delivering their addresses, he is yet again assaulted by his memory:

As Parkhurst had been talking, a fragment of memory had come back to me  
from my student days (...) I was recalling a fine morning not unlike the present  
one. (TU 280) (my ellipsis and underlined)

The faces he remembers become indistinct due to memory, which acts like a mixing  
bowl of recollections:

it was some of these same people, whose faces had now merged with one  
another in the memory (TU 305) (my underlined).

However, memory lapses are not affecting only the protagonist, as Brodsky, the  
hotel pianist, and Miss Collins are also forgetting facts and details: ""That's funny",  
Brodsky said. "I don't remember.(...) I don't remember this time you're talking  
about." "Perhaps I've remembered incorrectly," said Miss Collins. "Perhaps I've  
muddled him with someone else."" (TU 324-325; my ellipsis). It is interesting how the  
author uses the word "muddled" in the sense that sometimes memories and all the

information that is stored in memory is sometimes confused and unclear. Recollecting is not always a linear process as there are many interferences that makes us blur and confuse people, dates, facts, and so on.

Mr Brodsky dreams of conquering Miss Collins and having sexual intercourse with her, as two decades before. This description of this desire is one of the most comical moments in the novel, one which makes us laugh out loud:

I could remember how we used to do it, step by step. And that's how we're going to do it again. Of course our bodies are old now, but I've thought it through. We'll do it just the way we did. (...) someone said she'd hurt her hip, maybe she can't part her thighs widely now. Well, we'll do it the best we can because that's what came next. Then I'll bend down and kiss her pussycat, I won't expect it to smell the way it did then, no, I've thought it through, it might smell bad, like stale fish, her whole body will smell bad, maybe, I've thought hard about it. (...) I won't complain about her pussycat smelling the way it does, or the way her thighs won't part properly without clicking, I won't get angry, you won't see me trying to force them apart like something broken, no, no. (TU 311-312)

The description continues, but this excerpt suffices to illustrate how laughable Brodsky's words are.

It is Miss Collins who declares that memory keeps some information and lets go of other information, maybe because it can store only a limited amount:

"Some things I remember. Other things, inevitably, I've forgotten." (TU 326)

The human brain has a mechanism of letting go of certain memories which are hurtful for the individual: why should we remember something that causes us pain? We tend to remember moments which we consider happy and comforting.

Ryder's hypothetical amnesia has an effect on the social tasks he is supposed to fulfil, but also on his profession, since he is a gifted pianist but finds himself unable to remember the pieces he has chosen to play at the concert:

I could not for a moment even remember which piece I had decided to play. Was it Yamanaka's *Globestructures: Option II*? Or was it Mullery's *Asbestos and Fibre*? Both pieces, when I came to think of them, were disturbingly hazy in my mind. (...) I could recall almost nothing. (TU 328; my ellipsis and underlined)

He asks for a private room with a piano where he can practise in silence, and when playing Ryder remembers his mother's words:

The more I thought about it, the more some recollection seemed to come back to me of my mother expressing her irritation specifically with this composition.

(*TU 344*; my underlined)

In this case Ryder's memory is prompted by the piano and the choice of a composition for the concert, but memories are triggered by anything: a sound, a colour, a situation, a person, or an image. Memories are latent and retrieved when there is a stimulus, giving rise to the act of remembering, as Bergson concluded:

Quand une tendance mémorielle est constituée, elle reste latente jusqu'au moment où la question joue le rôle de stimulation et provoque l'acte de la remémoration. (Bergson cited in Nalbantian 17)

Adding to the eeriness and strangeness of the novel so far, and after Ryder complains about not having a proper space to practise, the novel takes another twist and Ryder is once more depicted in an improbable and even surreal portrait: he is taken by Mr Hoffman to a wooden hut on a hill inside which there is a piano for Ryder to perform. Then he starts remembering about his childhood, saying that

a particular memory came back to me, of sitting quietly in that room, my cup of tea on my knee, listening to my parents chatting to Mrs Clarkson about music. (*TU 358*; my underlined)

Ryder is by several times assaulted by images of him along with his parents in their house in England, usually representations of happiness and calmness that oppose the confusion and the perplexity of situation in which he is emerged. It is Ryder himself who rebels against the circumstances, seeing that he is approached by people from the town who ask him stupid favours and is put in an awkward position with the town people:

In fact, if I may say so, this wall is quite typical of this town. Utterly preposterous obstacles everywhere. (*TU 388*)

He finds the whole town strange and out of this world and he does not fit in it.

Ryder has trouble remembering things from the distant past, but also from the recent past, even from a few hours before:

I even had a vague memory of having agreed to some arrangement whereby I played the piano while he performed the burial ceremony. (*TU 358*)

It is as if Ryder is not himself or his personality has taken a life of itself and he cannot control whatever he does or says. It is at the dog's funeral that its owner, Mr Brodsky, ends his speech with these words:

My mind, it's full of the future. And sometimes, full of the past. I think, you know, of our old life. (TU 362)

The mind accumulates what we call memories, the things of the past which Mr Brodsky tells of. But it also leaves room for what is to come, for the future and the memories they will provide, for the fantasies we generate and wish to act out.

Mr Brodsky's inflated love for his dog can be interpreted as a displacement phenomenon:

Freud refers to the spinster or bachelor who transfers their emotions to animals or hobbies. (TU 106)

In the absence of a woman, Bruno is the target of Brodsky's love and affection.

Section four of the novel begins with the fourth day of Ryder's visit to the town. In a poetry recital, Ryder overhears a man talking about the infidelity of his wife and describes that "He hung down his head as if this memory still grieved him." (TU 485). This image is so strong that it is not difficult to imagine this poor saddened man carrying the weight of betrayal, or at least the memory of it.

The so long awaited recital is ruined by Mr Brodsky's drunkenness and Ryder is not given the opportunity to show his talent. After Gustav's death, Ryder is in the tram with Sophie and Boris, physically close but very distant:

They were still in a deep embrace, their eyes closed. Patches of sunlight were drifting over their arms and shoulders. There was at that moment something so private about their comforting of each other that it seemed impossible even for me to intrude. And as I went on gazing at them, I began to feel, for all their obvious distress, a strange sense of envy. I moved a little closer until I could almost feel the very texture of their embrace. (TU 531)

The novel ends with Ryder, Sophie and Boris walking in the woods, but without Ryder catching up with their pace. There seems to be a constant literal or metaphorical distance between the three, preventing them from being a real family, as "the triangular situation creates tensions that cannot be sustained." (Lewis, 2000: 114). Ryder's marriage is crumbling down as he was unable to become part of Sophie and Boris' family, as she explains to him on the tram:

You were always on the outside of our love. Now look at you. On the outside of our grief too. Leave us. Go away. (TU 532)

Ryder finally embarks on another journey, this time to Helsinki, where he is expected to do a concert, but we are left with the sensation that he is spiralling down

on his own life and will probably end up a drunk like Brodsky. When Ryder visits his old apartment outside the town along with Boris, the neighbours tell them about the couple who lived in that same apartment (Ryder and Sophie themselves), a young couple who fought frequently because the husband was recurrently absent due to his work.

The title *The Unconsoled* surely refers to the common people of the town who had regarded Ryder's visit as an elixir which would save the town's soul from dying: Brodsky wants to be consoled by Miss Collins, Sophie looks for Ryder's understanding and love, Gustav is anxious for the recognition of his working class (the town porters), and Hoffman mirrors his passion for music and his lack of talent on his son. Everybody needs some kind of consolation and comfort. But due to circumstances unrelated to him, Ryder is not even allowed to perform at the concert. He is incapable of saving the town and his marriage, leaving the people and his family "unconsoled" and dissatisfied, as the reader who is also dissatisfied with the outcome of the novel. As Ishiguro explained,

It's this thing you can't fix – Brodsky talks about a wound. It's something you can't fix or heal; all you can do is caress it. (...) Brodsky thinks late in life that even the love of a woman can only be a consolation, but nevertheless, he thinks it's worth having. These people don't get even that, that's why they're unconsoled. (cited in Nasta, 2004:167, my ellipsis)

### Chapter III.3. Never Let Me Go

*Never Let Me Go*, set in the placidity of rural England, relates the disturbing story about human clones whose existence, ignorant of their origins and deprived of future, is solely to serve as spare parts in medical procedures.  
Cheng:183

“The year’s most remarkable novel” was the *Sunday Times* review for Ishiguro’s sixth novel, published in 2005. *Never Let Me Go* was shortlisted for The Man Booker Prize of that same year and was highly praised:

This is a fine novel, fiction as moving and horrific as Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and John Wyndham’s *The Chrysalids*.<sup>44</sup>

Margaret Atwood herself described the novel as

(A) brilliantly executed book by a master craftsman who has chosen a difficult subject: ourselves, seen through a glass, darkly.<sup>45</sup>

Once more, the author has chosen the subject of memory

as a device to drive the plot, which revolves around the science of genetic engineering.<sup>46</sup>

But if in other novels playing with memory results in unreliable narrators, in *Never Let Me Go* “we trust Kathy more because she struggles to recreate an honest memory”<sup>47</sup> so as to come to terms with the true meaning of her existence.

In one of the many interviews to the author, when asked about the recurrence of memory in this novel, Ishiguro explained:

I’ve always liked the texture of memory. I like it that a scene pulled from the narrator’s memory is blurred at the edges, layered with all sorts of emotions,

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<sup>44</sup> *The Sunday Times*, November 27, 2005

<[http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts\\_and\\_entertainment/books/fiction/article593378.ece](http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/fiction/article593378.ece)> retrieved on April 12, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Atwood, Margaret. “Brave New World: Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel really is chilling”, posted April 1, 2005 [www.slate.com/id/2116040/](http://www.slate.com/id/2116040/)> retrieved on April 12, 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Liquori, Donna. “Texture of memory: Ishiguro finds in the fog of recollection a device to craft novels”, April 17, 2005 <[http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/tu\\_ishiguro\\_kazuo.html](http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/tu_ishiguro_kazuo.html)> retrieved on March 13, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Walters, Trent. “Review of *Never Let Me Go*”, 2005 <<http://www.sfsite.com/08a/nl205.htm>> retrieved on March 18, 2008.

and open to manipulation. You're not just telling the reader "this-and-this happened". You're also raising questions like: why has she remembered this event just at this point? How does she feel about it? And when she says she can't remember very precisely what happened, but she'll tell us anyway, well, how much do we trust her? And so on. I love all these subtle things you can do when you tell a story through someone's memories. But I should say I think the role played by memory in *Never Let Me Go* is rather different to what you find in some of my earlier books. [...] in this book, Kathy's memories are more benevolent. They're principally a source of consolation. As her time runs out, as her world empties one by one of the things she holds dear, what she clings to are her memories of them.<sup>48</sup>

Coincidentally, months before the publication of the novel, on February 18, 2005, the 191 countries of the United Nations called on its member nations to ban all forms of human cloning, which were incompatible with human dignity and the protection of human life<sup>49</sup>. Ishiguro seems to concur with this position, at least in the novel.

However, Kathy being a clone, we might raise the question of her memory: she knows she is a cloned being and she is fully aware of her role in the world, but as a clone, shouldn't she have memories of events not lived by her but by her "original"? According to John Locke, individuals need to maintain memory over time in order to have and preserve their identities. A cloned body (and brain) would be the exact duplication of its original, but personality, character and memory would not be passed on from one body to the other, since scholars argue that the cloning of our mother's genes, for instance, will not give us her memories.<sup>50</sup> Cloning does not transfer or carry memories, because memories are correlated with activity in the hippocampus and it is a thought process, not a genetic one. Nonetheless, clones do not depart from a state of *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, as the brain is already inputted and hard-wired for numerous functions. Clones will create their own memories and live their own experiences, not necessarily like those from whom they were cloned from.

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<sup>48</sup> Unauthored article. "Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro"

<[http://www.bookbrowse.com/author\\_interviews/full/index.cfm?author\\_number=477](http://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm?author_number=477)> retrieved on April 12, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Preto, Roberto. "Science and Ethics: will they clash violently again?", posted March 14, 2005

<<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-bloggers/1362696/posts>> retrieved on March 18, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Libfemme blog. "How will we retrieve the memories of those that we clone?"

<<http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:wVam0KiwZxcJ:www.humancloning.org/~abstracts/4686.htm+cloned+memories&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=31&gl=pt>> posted on November 11, 2003, retrieved on March 2007.

It is reasonable that many people believe that a cloned being should be the exact copy, in all senses, of its original, as this has been the idea conveyed by many short stories, some of which are even studied as extensive reading in Portuguese secondary schools. It is the case of “The Copy”<sup>51</sup>, a short story by Paul Jennings (1997) and “World of Strangers”<sup>52</sup>, by Lisa Tuttle (1998). In the first one, a scientist and inventor conjures a cloning machine and creates a teenager clone of one of his students. Then the original student has to struggle to keep his life, as the clone’s wish is to take his place. The story ends with a dead scientist and the clone being trapped forever inside the machine that ‘gave him birth’. Lisa Tuttle’s story, labelled as “speculative fiction”<sup>53</sup>, is set at a time when couples or just mothers/fathers have children through the cloning method. The protagonist is a boy who turns against his mother because, unlike all his school friends, he is a clone but in no way resembles his mother. All his friends resemble either the mother or the father, depending on the fact they are boys or girls. Being a boy, he must resemble his father, whom he has never met, until one day when he meets a young man exactly like him. Too young to be his father, he turns out to be his brother, born or cloned of the same father, but carried by a different mother. Does this sound odd? Even more strange is the fact this son and father become sexually involved in an incestuous relationship, but feel no remorse or moral constraints because they are complete strangers to each other. This presents serious dilemmas that will challenge our values, ideas and feelings, and puts us at an unsettling place which we are not yet ready to comprehend and tackle.

Going back to the focal point of memory, then how is memory transmitted? According to Mohamed Sid-Ahmed,

[M]emory is the reflection in the mind of experiences lived by a given individual, not by any other. Even if we assume that the brain can store cloned memories, this would apply only to memories prior to the time cloning is performed, and cannot be extended beyond that time.<sup>54</sup>

From the moment the clone is formed, it creates personal memories which derive from its own experiences. Unlike what would be expected of clones, Kathy does not

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<sup>51</sup> Jennings, Paul. “The Copy”. <[http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/copy\\_text.pdf](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/copy_text.pdf)> retrieved on December 3, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Nussbaum, Martha & Sunstein, Cass (Eds). *Clones and Clones: Facts and Fantasies About Human Cloning* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), p.297-309.

<sup>53</sup> JSTOR Archives, *Science Fiction Studies*, page 361 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240907>> retrieved on December 22, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Sid-Ahmed, Mohamed. “On Human Cloning”, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 9-15 January 2003, Issue no. 620 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/620/op3.htm>>, retrieved on March 27, 2007.

have the memories of her “original”, but she has created memories of her own existence and it is those that she recalls and brings back to present in her discourse.

Set in England in the 1990s, it is structured in three parts and twenty-three chapters. As in *A Pale View of Hills*, the first-person narrator is female, Kathy H., aged 31 and is a carer for a job. Kathy cares after donors, people who donate their organs to others, until their moment of completion, a euphemism for death. Kathy embarks on an evocation of her past at Hailsham, a boarding-school which she attended along with her childhood friends, Ruth and Tommy. The teachers were called guardians, the students were bullied by their peers and had to undergo weekly medical exams carried out by Nurse Trisha, or Cow Face, as they nicknamed her. She remembers Hailsham after a request from a donor who is close to completing, so that he might enjoy good thoughts in his sleepless nights:

the line would blur between what were my [Kathy’s] memories and what were his. (NLMG 5)

Through her telling of the events, her memories of Hailsham and her childhood were transferred to her patient, who would then remember what she had told him as if those memories were his.

This brings to my mind the topic of a talk show I have watched recently, in which a psychologist referred to a memory process similar to the transference of memories, which can be carried out willingly or not. The discussion was about small children of divorced parents and the fact that many parents created false memories in their children so as to win their guard in court. Parents submerge their children with sentences like “Don’t you remember your mother/father did this? ...” leading the young children to create and implant memories about those facts which are untrue.

Kathy recollects a number of situations about her own school life and that of her friends. Her recollections are unclear regarding the exact time the facts happened:

It must have been a Friday or a weekend, because I remember we had on our clothes. I don’t remember exactly what Tommy was wearing [...] but I definitively had on the maroon track suit top that zipped up the front. (NLMG 25)

At Hailsham, children were taught about donation, as a means of preparation for that task. Only a handful would be chosen to be carers instead of donors.

During her evocation, Kathy H. establishes a relation with the reader, confronting him/her with questions and drawing up parallels between her life experience and the reader's:

Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves – about who we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside – but hadn't yet understood what any of it meant. I'm sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day; similar if not in the actual details, then inside, in the feelings. Because it doesn't really matter how well your guardians try to prepare you: all the talks, videos, discussions, warnings, none of that can really bring it home. (NLMG 36).

The "it" would be the fact that they are actually clones specifically created to tend to the needs of other people as far as organ donation is concerned. They were repeatedly admonished to keep fit, do exercise and not smoke, as a way to produce healthy bodies and organs:

'You've been told about it. You're students. You're ... *special*. So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me.' (NLMG 68)

The other students, like Kathy, were prepared and conditioned to accept their future role as carers or donors. Especially for the latter, the idea that you are going to be "dismembered" and deprived of your organs, four or five of them, until you eventually perish is not an easy one to acknowledge no matter the age you are. Despite their conditioning for the future, the donors still dreamt of a different prospect in the hope they would lead an ordinary life:

We [Kathy and the others] still had that last bit of comfort, thinking one day, when we were grown up, and we were free to travel around the country. (NLMG 66)

Chapter four begins with Kathy's acknowledgement that she needs a pause from her work as a carer, which she has been carrying out for nearly twelve years:

I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest – to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories. (NLMG 37).

Kathy's intention is to understand and interpret her life from her experience in Hailsham, from "these earlier memories" (*NLMG* 37) which involve not only her, but Tommy and Ruth. It seems that Kathy is impelled to go back in her mind and analyse all that she has gone through, as she describes

something tugging away at my [her] memory. (*NLMG* 37); the memory of that time in the library – along with maybe one or two other little episodes like that – started tugging at my mind. (*NLMG* 41)

Additionally, her memory is also revived by the fact that she has been a carer for Ruth, who eventually dies, and they both spent ample hours discussing their childhood together. But Ruth seems to have discarded some of her memories, probably facts that she feels uncomfortable with:

She was probably embarrassed about it and so the whole thing had shrunk in her memory. (*NLMG* 49)

Our mind has the ability to select the facts which we mean to store for a subsequent retrieval and the ability to erase the facts that we dislike to recollect. This is usually called episodic memory. Also, many facts and events are unwillingly blurred in our memory making it difficult for us to recollect and retrieve them when necessary. The brain does not store memories in a linear fashion, like a recorder or a video camera; it stores memories in circuits or neuronal nets. We tend to compare memory to a sponge, because information is absorbed, but a better metaphor would be that of a strainer: based on some estimates, 99% of all sensorial information (information which is filtered by the senses) is rejected almost immediately when entering the brain (Wolfe 77).

Kathy explains their routine at Hailsham, the assemblies, the sports activities, the bullying among students, their favourite teacher, Miss Geraldine, Madame's visit to the boarding school, the Sales where they acquired their little treasures which they stored in a chest under their beds, among others. One of Kathy's treasures is a tape with songs by Judy Bridgewater, one of which gives title to the novel:

What made the tape so special for me was this one particular song: track number three, 'Never Let Me Go'. (*NLMG* 69)

At eleven, Kathy was so innocent and naïve that she thought the song was about a woman who wanted to have babies and after having one, holds the baby very close and sings "Never Let Me Go" because she is afraid he will get ill or be taken away. Students at Hailsham were kept in the dark about a number of things, so they would not ask many questions and jeopardize their future as donors.

She remembers, although vaguely, the first time she met Ruth, who would later become her best girl friend:

I can remember, at five or six, doing things with Hannah and with Laura, but not with Ruth. I only have the one vague memory of Ruth from that early part of our lives. (NLMG 45).

Kathy also remembers the way the guardians and the school controlled the students and kept them inside the grounds of the school, fearing the outside world would call out for them and deviate them from their path and role:

There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods. (NLMG 45)

In some instances, Kathy seems to have an acute visual memory (also called photographic or eidetic memory) which enables her to remember exactly some spaces and objects:

I can see the thing [a pencil case] now like it's here in front of me. It was shiny, like a polished shoe; a deep tan colour with circled red dots drifting all over it. (NLMG 56).

Other times, Kathy is assaulted by specific and particular memories:

There's a particular memory I have of sitting by myself one evening on one of the benches outside the pavilion, trying over and over to think of some way out, while a heavy mix of remorse and frustration brought me virtually to tears (NLMG 62).

I have stated it before that the same event might be remembered differently by distinct people, giving rise to different memories. Kathy uses the expression "my memory of it - and Ruth remembered it the same way", an expression which plainly confirms this allegation. This happens because the new information that is received is accommodated according to the previous experiences of the individual, and these are surely different (the experience might be the same but each individual lives it in a particular way according to diverse emotions and perspectives). In American psychologist Daniel Schacter's view, cited by Nalbantian,

failures in source memory can lead to what he calls "confabulation" or false recollections of events that did not fact take place. Moreover, since the encoding process involves the subjective element of experience and draws on degrees of pre-existing knowledge, it can introduce further distortion. It's common, after all, for two people to have entirely different experiences of the same event. (...) New memories are inevitably influenced by old memories,

which opens the door to distortion as a relatively common occurrence.  
(Nalbantian, 2003:137-8)

Chapter Seven begins with Kathy's retelling of her life in her teenage years:

I want to move on now to our last years at Hailsham. I'm talking about the period from when we were thirteen to when we left at sixteen. In my memory my life at Hailsham falls into two distinct chunks: this last era, and everything that came before. The earlier years – the ones I've just been talking about – they tend to blur into each other as a kind of golden time, and when I think about them at all, even the not-so-great things, I can't help feeling a sort of glow. But those last years feel different. They weren't unhappy exactly – I've got plenty of memories I treasure from them – but they were more serious, and in some ways darker. Maybe I've exaggerated it in my mind, but I've got an impression of things changing rapidly around then, like day moving into night.  
(*NLMG 76*)

At Hailsham, the students were encouraged to lead their lives in compliance with their future role, so their childhood was carefree and enjoyable. Conversely, their teenage years were already imbued with responsibility and the weight of their close transition to adulthood and their function.

One of the guardians, Miss Lucy, feels that the students are not given substantial information regarding their future and decides to let them in on the truth:

The problem, as I see it, is that you've told and not told. [...] If you're going to have decent lives, then you've got to know and know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do. [...] You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. (*NLMG 80*)

Miss Lucy's intention is not to destroy their hopes and dreams, but to make them aware of their real future and what lies ahead. She tries to explain about the sequence of the donations and the recovery, but fails to do so before the puzzled faces of the students. But from that day forward, the subject of donations became "sombre and serious" (*NLMG 87*).

Kathy observes that even if the students were not directly told about their future as donors, she somehow sensed or knew about it:

Certainly, it feels like I *always* knew about donations in some vague way, even as early as six or seven. And it's curious, when we were older and the guardians were giving us those talks, nothing came as a complete surprise. It *was* like we'd heard everything somewhere before. (NLMG 81)

Note that the author has italicised the adverb “always” and the verb “was” to reinforce the knowledge the students already possessed. Like themselves, are their own memories also cloned? Or was that knowledge pressed into their heads subliminally? Kathy does not remember being told about donations by Miss Lucy, but she senses she always knew about them.

In chapter nine, when Kathy is referring to her school friend Harry, whom she finds years later at a recovery centre, she claims that

I suppose there's no reason I should have any special place in his memory (NLMG 99),

conveying that it is people who intentionally choose the things they wish to store in memory and remember. However, this is not so: the brain keeps what it finds relevant and eliminates what has no value or relevance for the individual.

Part two begins with reference to the Cottages, a place run by a couple to serve as a transition from Hailsham into real life. Kathy describes that she felt the urge to have sex frequently and that this was considered odd by the other residents, so she thought there was something wrong with her. This sexual appetite is what makes Kathy look for her model (the person from whom she was cloned), in porn magazines, but she is calmed by Tommy who tells her he too feels urges sometimes and that it is quite normal. Kathy believes that she has inherited this sexual urge from her original, like a heart or a kidney, and she feels very upset about it.

It is finally in chapter twelve that we are introduced to “the possibles theory” (NLMG 137), a theory according to which the copy (the clone) could find the person they were modelled from. Kathy, Tommy, Ruth, Chrissie and Rodney embark on a journey to Norfolk because the latter two seem to have spotted Ruth's possible and she wanted to meet her. Ruth dreams about her “possible” and imagines she works in a fancy decorated office, like the ones she sees in magazines. Already in Norfolk, they discuss the case of a Hailsham girl who, unlike the others who became donors or carers, got a job and worked at a clothes shop in that town. This was known as a “deferral” (NLMG 150) and was only allowed to a few special students under very

special circumstances, for a period of three or four years. If the couple showed to be deeply in love, they were granted a few years to live together before becoming donors.

It is also in Norfolk that they find a place that looks exactly like the office dreamt by Ruth. They look at it from the street and try to find Ruth's "possible":

The woman was around fifty, and had kept her figure pretty well. Her hair was darker than Ruth's – though it could have been dyed – and she had it tied back in a simple pony-tail the way Ruth usually did. She was laughing at something her friend in the red outfit was saying, and her face, especially when she was finishing her laugh with a shake of her head, had more than a hint of Ruth about it. (NLMG 157)

They stand by the wall on the street until Ruth decides to go have a look at her possible once more and Kathy remembers exactly what followed:

And today I have these vivid images of the ten, fifteen minutes we waited there. [...] These are the pictures I've kept of those moments we waited by that car park. (NLMG 158)

After a while, the woman from the office comes out into the street and they follow her into an art gallery, where looking closer they realise the woman is not in any way similar to Ruth. She feels disappointed and is cheered up by her friends, especially Tommy and Kathy, who agree that even if that woman was Ruth's possible,

I don't see what difference it makes to anything. [...] It's daft to assume that you'll have the same sort of life as your model. (NLMG 163)

Upset, Ruth bursts out that clones are "never modelled from that sort...", meaning the woman was too stylish, and that

(W)e're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just as long as they aren't psychos.[...] If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from. (NLMG 164)

According to James Wood,

[T]his episode testifies to what is strangely successful in this book: the way it rubs science fictional narrative from the rib of the real, making it breathe with

horrid plausibility, and then the way it converts that science fiction back into the human, managing to be at once sinister and ordinarily affecting.<sup>55</sup>

Kathy and Ruth have different perspectives on the clone models or “possibles”, for Kathy, unlike Ruth, believes the life of the clone is not the same as the life of the model. Ruth wished a different life for herself, that is why she wanted that woman to be her “possible”.

Kathy then moves on to other subjects and refers to her treasure tape once more, which

brings back memories of that afternoon in Norfolk every bit as much as it does our Hailsham days. (NLMG 171)

She discusses with Tommy the purpose of the gallery the Madame kept at Hailsham, a place where she stored all the art work such as pictures, poems and other things done by the students. Tommy had been told that those things “revealed your soul” (NLMG 173), so Kathy adds that the art work is

a way to judge if they [students who claim to be in love]’re really telling the truth (NLMG 173)

when they ask for a deferral of their donations.

Part three begins with Kathy speaking of her work as a carer and to her feelings when one of her patients “completes” or dies. It is a life of solitude because she spends her time going from hospital to hospital to care for her donors, and talks to no one but them. She misses the companionship but has become accustomed to being on her own.

She also becomes Tommy’s carer and they get involved sexually. They plan to find Madame and ask for a deferral in order to spend a few years more as a couple, and for that Tommy prepares a few drawings of animals to show her, so that she can decide whether Kathy and Tommy are a match. They are received by Madame at her house, but she diverts then to a figure in a wheelchair who they recognise to be Miss Emily, one of the guardians at Hailsham. It is Miss Emily who tells them the deferral issue was merely a rumour and had never been true. There had been cases of clones asking for deferrals, but all had been denied. After Tommy’s request, she explains why they kept a collection of artwork at Hailsham:

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<sup>55</sup> Wood, James. “Review of *Never Let Me Go – The Human Difference*”, May 2005 <[http://www.powells.com/review/2005\\_05\\_12.html](http://www.powells.com/review/2005_05_12.html)> retrieved on March 18, 2008.

We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all.* (NLMG 255)

Miss Emily declared that at that time common people thought of clones as soulless beings with a mere utilitarian purpose, which was to donate organs. At Hailsham they had projected to show the opposite, that clones had souls and art was one way of conveying just that. Now with the institution closed down, she explained that

[A]ll around the country, at this very moment, there are students being reared in deplorable conditions, conditions you Hailsham students could hardly imagine. (NLMG 255)

Hailsham had been a unique project to give clones years of security and an environment of normalcy, with all the activities which are customary for children and teenagers. The former guardian elucidates that

(M)ost importantly, we demonstrated to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being. Before that, all clones – or *students*, as we preferred to call you – existed only to supply medical science. (NLMG 256)

This theory reminds me of Determinism, which claims that human beings are not uniquely influenced by their genetics, but are in fact the result of a combination of genetics, education and the environment. When discussing determinism, free will needs to be accounted for, as these two concepts are usually placed in opposition. Is human action predetermined by any of the elements cited (genetics, education and society) or does free will have the power to change what is biologically created? There has been an ongoing debate around ‘genetic determinism’, a term which was formulated in the 1960s, is currently used in biomedicine and conveys that a

person’s physical and psychological characteristics are established by the genes only. This reductionist view postulates that for any biological phenomenon there is always a required genetic structure determining it. Following this ideology, the term “genetic program” has been used for pedagogical purposes in textbooks. Nowadays it is well accepted that a person is born with a biological/genetical potential but that metabolic and environmental factors may influence the expression of such genetic potential (Penchaszadeh, 2002, cited by Silva, Ferreira & Carvalho, 2009:2880-2881)

The mentors of this project accepted as true that the fact alone that the students were clones did not impede them from being like any other person, as long as they received the same upbringing and education and were placed in a similar environment. The guardians' plan is much in accordance with 'social constructionism', as defined by Margot L. Lyon:

culture is seen to mediate social processes and is construed as the source of real phenomena, that is, as determining the very structure and substance of human existence. Within the cultural constructionist approach, our categories of thought (and thus the ideas we have), how we talk (and thus what we say), our experiences and feelings, and what we express and do are primarily determined by the culture in which we live. From this perspective, culture is the source and the locus, to use a more sociological language, of the norms, values, and rules, the internalized 'guidelines', in terms of which we live. (Lyon, 1995:244)

Although the title of the novel derives from the name of a song in Kathy's precious tape, there is another allusion to it: near the end of the novel, Tommy wants Kathy to stop being his carer and describes his dream to her:

I keep thinking about this river somewhere, with the water moving really fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but in the end it's just too much. The current's too strong. They've got to let go, drift apart. That's how I think it's with us. (NLMG 277)

Kathy summarises succinctly and accurately her thoughts about her memories of her past:

I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them.(...) It's like with my memories of Tommy and of Ruth. Once I'm able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away. (NLMG 280-1, my ellipsis)

What Kathy means (and scientific experiments have proved it), is that if the events cause or are related to some type of emotion, they tend to be further remembered (Wolfe 102).

The novel ends up with Kathy driving around the country without knowing exactly where she is and imagining that she is finally with Tommy, when in fact she will have the same as him, which is to become a donor and eventually complete.

It is interesting to note that the recipients of the organs are never to be seen, as the parents of the “students”, because interviewed by Jennie Rothenberg, Ishiguro claimed that

I wrote this book primarily as a metaphor for the conditions under which we all live. We all have a limited lifespan, and we all have to accept at some point that our bodies will fall apart and we'll die. We live with this knowledge that we peak and then deteriorate.<sup>56</sup>

Ruth Scurr calls it “a dystopian vision of the brave new world that medical science might inaugurate”, a world in which clones are made to “postpone death indefinitely by finding protection in everlasting biological health”<sup>57</sup>. Using a controversial and present theme, which Ishiguro seems to condemn, he intended not only to touch upon issues related to cloning, but especially to criticise the way people live their lives sacrificing others for their own well-being. Cloning served as a perfect metaphor, for

(M)ore important than discovering the wheel, exploding an atom bomb, or travelling between the planets, human cloning should be regarded as the greatest scientific achievement in human history. For the first time, human beings have made it possible to stretch life beyond any given generation without resorting to sex.<sup>58</sup>

Margaret Atwood viewed the children at Hailsham as human sacrifices, “offered up on the altar of improved health for the population at large”<sup>59</sup>. The plot thickens as these same clones become so “humanised” that they too want to live and experience all the things they feel entitled to.

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<sup>56</sup> Gritz, Jennie Rothenberg. “Myths and Metaphors”, Interview, April 7, 2005 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200504u/int2005-04-07>> retrieved on March 13, 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Scurr, Ruth. “of *Never Let Me Go - The Facts of Life*”, March 2005

<[http://www.powells.com/review/2005\\_03\\_13.html](http://www.powells.com/review/2005_03_13.html)> retrieved on March 18, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Sid-Ahmed, Mohamed. “On Human Cloning”, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 9-15 January 2003, Issue no. 620 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/620/op3.htm>>, retrieved on March 27, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Atwood, Margaret. “Brave New World: Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel really is chilling”, posted April 1, 2005 <[www.slate.com/id/2116040/](http://www.slate.com/id/2116040/)> retrieved on April 12, 2008.

## Conclusion

Ishiguro holds emotion prisoner  
in a castle of ice. (Vianu, 2006:173)

(...) they remember in order to forget;  
they reconstruct the past in an effort to  
obliterate it.  
(Wong, 1995)

The reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels has provided me with many hours of pleasure and joyful imagination: I have suffered alongside Etsuko when she cries for the end of her marriage and the loss of her homeland, Japan, and her daughters (one has committed suicide and the other has a shaky relationship with her mother); I have laughed out loud reading Ryder's dreamy descriptions of the city where he "lands" and the dim situations he puts himself into; I have felt sorry for Kathy H. and the other clones, created only to be used as "parts" for the well-being of the human race, dreading this is a future too close from my present; I have pitied the character Banks, protagonist in *When We Were Orphans* (2000), who is also a victim of loss and displacement and estrangement, as he sees his parents captured by Japanese traffickers and is thus sent to live with his aunt in England; I have learnt about the Japanese ways and customs through Etsuko's treatment of her father-in-law and the father figure in the short story "A Family Supper". This short story describes a family gathering with a supper possibly consisting of the potentially lethal fugu fish, which demonstrates one of the many prejudices about the Japanese, their predilection for suicide. I have also watched the film *The White Countess*, based on Ishiguro's script. Novels and stories in general do not replace travelling with a passport in hand, but surely provide a magnificent time of nomadic imagination.

Ishiguro is driven by his personal desire to preserve in his books the Japan he barely knew. The novelist himself has stated that,

I think one of the real reasons why I turned to writing novels was because I wished to re-create this Japan – put together all these memories, and all these imaginary ideas I had about this landscape which I called Japan. I wanted to make it safe, preserve it in a book, before it faded away from my memory altogether. (Shaffer, 2008:53)

Although Ishiguro reiterates the theme of memory in almost every one of the six novels and three collections of short stories published so far, the last being *Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*, published in September, 2009, he manages to do it in an innovative way. In his interview with Ishiguro, in 2001, Lewis Burke Frumke cites a Book magazine critic who states:

The maze of human memory - the ways in which we accommodate and alter it, deceive and deliver ourselves with it – is territory that Kazuo Ishiguro has made his own. (Shaffer, 2008:190)

His debut novel *A Pale View of Hills* uses memory as a facilitator that allows Etsuko to come to terms with her guilt on a number of issues by microscopically analysing her life in Japan and later on in England. This novel is

a gentle meditation on memory and sublimated pain, which uses fantasy and displacement to reveal indirectly the distress of a woman who has lost her homeland, her husband, and her elder daughter (Childs, 2005:123)

However, “the past can function as both poison and remedy” (Petry, 1999:36), and this aching woman and mother might not get the peaceful closure she seeks. Etsuko uses memory (or memories, as she resorts to snapshots of her episodic memory and autobiographical memory) with three distinct but interrelated functions: as a means to form her own identity in the present time; to free herself from the responsibility of her past life in Japan and her daughter’s suicide; and to overcome the loss of her husband and her homeland by relocating her story and her guilt in her alter-ego, Sachiko (who the reader comes to realise is merely an imaginary character in whom the narrator mirrors her own life and ill-deeds).

About Etsuko, John Freeman has concluded that Ishiguro made this character, like others in his novels, a “reliably unreliable” narrator<sup>60</sup> and that these characters disguise themselves in such a manner that,

even after we have heard and seen them through an entire novel they remain somewhat mysterious (Shaffer, 2008:195)

The same feeling is aroused by the character Ryder, who the reader journeys with around that maze-like town with cartoon-like and odd characters. Although memory is a *leit-motif* in the novel, the author’s real intention was to demonstrate how a public figure’s social life can interfere and impoverish their personal life to the

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<sup>60</sup> Wood, James. “Review of *Never Let Me Go - The Human Difference*”, May 2005. <[http://www.powells.com/review/2005\\_05\\_12.html](http://www.powells.com/review/2005_05_12.html)>

point they feel completely lost and amnesiac. Ryder seems to suffer from amnesia and has no recollection of his past, failing to recognise characters who are apparently old friends, acquaintances and even family, and always moving within two parallel worlds.

According to Geoffrey Maloney in his article “Distortions of the Artist in Space and Time - The Speculative Nature of Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled*”,

Ishiguro’s handling of Ryder’s experience of these alternative worlds is not simply a case of moving his character from one world to the other and seeing how the character deals with the distortions that arise. (...) His [Ryder’s] memories are constantly filtered through the perception of another self who has not lived through the exact same events that Ryder, the narrator, has.<sup>61</sup>

In his 2005 novel often mistakenly regarded as just about cloning, Ishiguro places Kathy in search for answers about her role and function in the world in her own childhood memories. It is there that she expects to understand and be at peace with what she has been “designed” to be.

Some scholars have argued that the novels *The Unconsoled* and *When We Were Orphans* can be classified as novels of childhood or ‘romans d’enfance’, for the reason that they are,

des récits sur l’enfance et en meme temps des récits perçus du point de vue de l’enfance. (Veyret, 2005:109)

The character Christopher Banks in *WWWO* is not a literal orphan, because his parents, although in captivity, are still living, but presumably what the author wished to explore was the way children are freed from the protective bubble of their childhood into a crueller world. Similarly, in *TU*, the protagonist Ryder ‘rides’ through the novel in continuous search of his parents, who are supposed to come to the recital, but never do. He feels ‘orphaned’ and abandoned, but mirrors this condition by doing the same with his son, Boris. Childhood and memory are two key-concepts in many of Ishiguro novels, as childhood functions as a repository of memories which can sometimes be used to explain the present:

La clef de l’énigme se trouve dans l’enfance, dans cette superposition entre le passé et le présent, l’enfant et le narrateur. L’enfance est cette enveloppe poreuse qui dissout les differences et résout les oppositions du récit (Veyret, 2005:110).

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<sup>61</sup> Maloney, Geoffrey. “Distortions of the Artist in Space and Time”, posted on Januar 1, 2006 <<http://www.fantasticmetropolis.com/i/ishiguro-distortions/>> retrieved on November 12, 2009.

To this relation and dependence between childhood and memory in Ishiguro's novels, I would dare include *Never Let Me Go*, as the time of childhood and pre-adulthood are synonyms for tranquillity, safety and learning (despite the many uncanny aspects in the characters' lives in Hailsham). Leaving Hailsham, which may be viewed as a metaphor for childhood, Kathy and the other clones are freed into a world where they depend on themselves and each other to live as 'normally' as possible.

Something Ishiguro's novels share is the fallibility of memory or the unreliability of the narrators. Lecturer in clinical psychology, Janet Feigenbaum's article "How We Tell It and How It Was" clearly focuses on the separateness between what we remember and what exactly happened, as the time that parts these two events and everything that happens during that time reshapes what and how facts are remembered. The same article examines the importance of memory in the construction of identity, as the latter relies heavily on the first, and this reliance is clear in the character Ryder, for his amnesia prevents him from living a sane life and pursuing an affectionate relationship with his family:

When memory goes, as in severe dementia or head injury, the person ceases to be 'themselves'. (Feigenbaum, 1998:14)

Ishiguro has repeatedly and diversely used memory as a literary trope, as a mechanism to enrich his characters and his plot. His novels are fictional memories written by ordinary people tormented by guilt and doubt. As stated by A. Nogueira,

[O] conflito gerado pela necessidade de "acertar as contas" com esse passado culposo e a impossibilidade de fazê-lo vai produzir um texto notavelmente ambíguo e reticente. (Nogueira, 2002:2)

Usually, the moment of remembering occurs at a time of crisis, when the narrators are nearing death or the end of their productive lives. Instead of bringing peace, this introspection makes the characters aware of their faults, personal failures, and past mistakes. Memory is then a cathartic filter which allows for manipulation by the narrators so as to provide them with what they need.

It could then be said that Ishiguro's work can be mapped in two dominant areas which are no more than two dependent forms of memory poetics. The first constitutes the novelist's experiments around the fallibility of memory, in novels such as *A Pale View of Hills*, *Never Let Me Go*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*. The second corresponds to experiments with the absence of memory, which is the case in *The Unconsoled*.

With his literary approach to the subject of memory, he has contributed to the understanding of how the human mind works and how memory plays such an important role in the structuring of our life. As summarised by Suzanne Nalbantian, the marking of the literary pathways can lead toward new frontiers of such consilience, with the recognition that literary writers provide beacons particularly into the dark corridors of unconscious memory yet to be explored. (Nalbantian, 2003:152)

Kazuo Ishiguro has added to the variety of perspectives through the use of memory and, given his past and his personal experience of being torn between two cultures and two realities, he will surely continue to do so.



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