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A Study of Interpersonal and Symbolic Relationships in Kazuo

Ishiguro's First Novel *A Pale View of Hills*

(Bakalářská práce)

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this present thesis contains a word relationship. Once having been born as human beings and members of society, each of us more or less depend on relationships. Every day we begin, end or deepen either our concrete interpersonal relationships or those more symbolic ones like "relationship" to death, guilt or God. For the purpose of my thesis I venture the opinion that even the latter can be called relationships, despite the fact that the second "involved party" is rather passive.

The universe is interconnected and all beings within it are interdependent. By dealing with relationships, we slowly grow in emotional maturity, we "ripen." They teach us, they form us, in human relationships by reflecting in the other person we can meet our own self.

Needless to say, we usually again and again develop relations with people with the same character flaw or trait, exactly the one, which we would like to get rid of or change within ourselves. It is one of the human habitual tendencies and it is rather an unconscious mental process.

Kazuo Ishiguro's books, as he himself puts it, are concerned not with "solid facts"¹ but with "emotional upheaval."²

¹ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 8.

² Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 8.

Ishiguro is chiefly preoccupied with internal not external issues³.

At first glance each story of Ishiguro's books seems to flow smoothly, but as the narrative evolves and if we scratch beneath the surface what we find are characters plunged into constant emotional turmoil⁴. They are faced with simple situation, but carrying a burden of uncomfortable feelings.

Readers of all Ishiguro's novels have to be alert throughout the whole book. They are required to engage their imagination and do a lot of interpretative work since the facts are of secondary importance to the author. At the end of a book the readers are left alone with their thoughts and mixed feelings and nobody can tell them whether their conclusion, their version of truth is correct or not.

³ Brian Shaffer contemplates on Ishiguro's depiction of history in his book and I add that Ishiguro uses history in such a way that it suits his purpose. In spite of having its functional significance because it powerfully influences the protagonists, it is used in a most efficient way as a background. It closely connects different parts of the protagonists' lives, and creates a coherent framework of the narrative serving as rich soil where deep roots of human misfortunes and good fortunes grow. (Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 8).

⁴ One important driving force behind the emotional upheaval is also nostalgia. Nostalgia, from the Greek words *nostos* "return" and *algos* "pain", plays a significant part in Ishiguro's works. Many of his heroes, deliberately or as a consequence of some situation in their lives, indulge themselves in nostalgia. It is a possible way how to overcome or cope with a difficult situation, how to heal your broken heart. Despite the fact that nostalgia is sometimes perceived as slightly passive feeling, a feeling of return towards the past times, and sometimes implying a pejorative meaning, Ishiguro himself views it as "... the emotional equivalent or intellectual cousin of idealism"... "It's a remembering of a time in your childhood before you realized that the world was as dark as it was. It's a kind of Eden-like memory" ... (Procter, "Kazuo Ishiguro").

Characteristic examples of nostalgia within *The Pale View of Hills* can be found on pages 76 and 77 in the book.

1.1 The goal and the outline of the thesis

According to the arguments presented in the introductory chapter, I would like to focus my thesis on the study of relationships and their psychological aspect, as they are presented in Ishiguro's first novel *A Pale View of Hills*. I am convinced that there is a direct connection between relationships and emotions, as Ishiguro himself argues⁵ that emotions and feelings are the dominant themes explored in his books; they go hand in hand with one another.

Guy Corneau, a Canadian analytical psychologist, says in his book *Anatomy of Love* (orig. *N'y a-t-il pas d'amour heureux?*) that "by maintaining human relationships, we are confronted with emotions which are naturally stirred by this confrontation and these emotions must be expressed."⁶

At the beginning of the survey I give a summary of Ishiguro's biography and bibliography, followed by the main part of my work which is the study of characters. For the purpose of my thesis I have developed a system of two general categories and six subcategories five respectively, since I have finally decided to rethink my original plan and "relationships haunted by guilt" subsumed under the part concerning Etsuko's relationship to herself 3.2.1.3, since Etsuko is the one to whom sense of guilt is relevant.

However, I have to admit that these categories are not strictly defined and that they interweave to some extent. My categorisation is based on predominant feature, emotions respectively, prevailing in each relationship.

⁵ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 17.

⁶ Corneau, *N'y a-t-il pas d'amour heureux?*, 209.

With respect to their behaviour each protagonist more or less fits into any of the six above mentioned categories, nevertheless, I would like to illustrate a typical example of each group.

The aim of my thesis is to prove that not a single relationship, apart from one, which, however, is the exception that proves the rule, can be considered a healthy, caring and loving one, and that all significant relationships are spoilt by sharp pangs of guilt, by neglect, dishonesty or other negative emotions or feelings.

1.2. Basic terminology

Once the outline of my thesis has been drawn, it is necessary to define what a healthy interpersonal relationship, relationship to one own self or symbolic "relationship" to death look like, so as to we are able to clearly distinguish a healthy relationship from a poor one.

I have already stressed the importance of human relationships for one own emotional development. Guy Corneau highlights the necessity of relationships, either positive or negative, since they stimulate our creativity and keep us alive. True creativity is one of the essential aspects of a healthy relationship between two people but also a relationship to one own self. Apart from true creativity, other fundamental aspects are: deep mutual respect, true joy, honesty, confidence and open communication void of criticism and pressure. In every interpersonal relationship it is also crucial to actively maintain a moderate level of purifying fire.

A harmonious relationship to one own self is based on steadfast "self-love", through which we acquire self-confidence. Loving myself means excepting my character flaws, befriending my dark sides and be kind to myself.

Regarding a "relationship" to death, especially our own inevitable death, its perception is explicitly linked with a personal relationship to one own self and it is a question of sophisticated understanding, full acceptance and readiness. It must be void of fear of death.

According to the ideas I have just drawn, when I scrutinise selected relationships presented in the book one by one, what I find are relationships void of the above mentioned aspects, and therefore, from my point of view, my proposed hypothesis is justifiable and can be finally proved true.

2. KAZUO ISHIGURO AS A MAN AND A WRITER

2. 1 Biography of Kazuo Ishiguro



The Booker Prize-winning author of six novels, two original (the third one in collaboration) screenplays, and a collection of short stories Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan in 1954. At the age of six, in 1960, he moved with his family to Britain where his father began research at the National Institute of Oceanography. This early childhood experience, a Japanese boy being brought up by Japanese parents on one hand, and constant contact with English-speaking environment on the other one, must have come as a cultural shock to a small boy.

As a result, from the literary perspective, Ishiguro views himself as being neither "very English"⁷ nor "very Japanese."⁸

He speaks of himself: "I had no clear role, no society or country to speak for or write about. Nobody's history seemed to be my history."⁹

⁷ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 2.

⁸ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 2.

⁹ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 2.

After finishing a grammar school for boys in Surrey, he entered the University of Kent in Canterbury where he studied English and Philosophy.

After graduating in 1978, he worked as a social worker for some time and later enrolled on a course in creative writing, associated with Malcolm Bradbury, at the University of East Anglia. There he met his early mentor Angela Carter. Since 1982 he has completely absorbed himself in writing. He lives in London with his wife Marries Lorna and his daughter Naomi.

Ishiguro launched his literary career in 1981 when three of his short stories were published in *Introductions 7: Stories by New Writers*.

In 1982 his first novel *A Pale View of Hills* saw the light of day, more about its plot to be written later in 3.1 part of the thesis. It won him the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize.

Four years later in 1986 he published his second book *An Artist of the Floating World*. This novel, which in many respects develops concepts and applies ideas which originated in his previous novel, centres on Masuji Ono, an ageing Japanese artist, who is reflecting on his life and career.

It was awarded the Whitbread Book of the Year award and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction.

In 1989 Ishiguro wrote his third novel, probably the most acclaimed, *The Remains of the Day*. Ishiguro's two early novels together with *The Remains of*

the Day are sometimes considered to be a trilogy of a sort with respect to the central theme addressed in the books and the fact that they were all written by Ishiguro in his mid-twenties.

As Amit Chaudhuri points out, they also share protagonists' uneasy feelings of "the shame of being on the wrong side of history."¹⁰

The Remains of the Day tells a story of Mr. Stevens, an elderly long-serving butler of Darlington Hall, who narrates his motoring trip through the English West Country. There are in fact two journeys recounted in the book. The above mentioned car journey being the first one, and the second one, probably more significant, is a personal journey into Stevens past, a study of his personality.

It won Ishiguro the Booker Prize for Fiction, one of England's most prestigious literary awards, and in 1993 a successful film based on this novel was made, featuring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson.

In his fourth book, an eloquent novel *The Unconsoled* (1995), twice or three times longer than his previous works, Ishiguro diverts his attention away from protagonists with a faulty memory, protagonists who try to retrace their past lives while going through their subjective experience.

He breaks with the conventions of his three previous novels and sets out to explore a new land in terms of style and content. However Cynthia F. Wong in her study of Kazuo Ishiguro suggests calling this change in course "an artistic maturation of Ishiguro's vision"¹¹ more likely than a "departure"¹².

¹⁰ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 8.

¹¹ Wong, preface, viii.

¹² Wong, preface, viii.

The book narrates a story about Ryder, a famous pianist and the main character, who arrives in a European city to perform his concert. He seems to have lost his memory and he is plunged into utter chaos roaming through the town.

Apparently, the readers and reviewers of *The Remains of the Day* were not able to swallow such experiment and the book received hostile reviews.

Nevertheless, it won Ishiguro the Cheltenham Prize later in the same year.

His fifth book *When We Were Orphans* (2000) is a "conservative" novel in terms of return to the conventions and themes of his early work, yet still innovative as Ishiguro introduces a detective story. The main protagonist, a detective Christopher Banks from London, returns to Shanghai in order to clear up the mystery of his missing parents. This time the reviews were more positive and it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

Ishiguro's last book to date *Never Let Me Go* (2000) is a novel set at the mysterious boarding school of Hailsham in East Sussex. The name of the book implies a fictional song which the main character Kathy listens to and dances while embracing a pillow. It was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and many other awards in Britain and abroad, it has been widely translated into many languages and it was adapted for a screen in 2010.

In 2009 a collection of short stories *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* was published.

Kazuo Ishiguro is currently considered to be an accomplished and distinguished, humanistically-oriented contemporary writer who has received significant international acclaim. In 1995 he was bestowed by the Queen the Order of the British Empire for service to literature.

2.2 Kazuo Ishiguro in British literary context

Kazuo Ishiguro belongs to the generation of the British authors that began their literary careers in the last twenty years of the twentieth century, so called Fin de siècle writers.

His six novels to date are rooted in the European literary tradition "seasoned" with modern psychology.

Kazuo Ishiguro himself speaks of having drawn his inspiration from Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, A.P.Chekhov, and F.M.Dostoyevsky. Brian Shaffer says about Ishiguro: "Ishiguro's work also betrays the influence of such modern novelists as E.M. Foster , for his "plain" style of writing and for his interrogation of the idea and ideal of England, Ford Madox Ford , for his vivid portrait of character and narrative repression, Henry James, for his ability to show "us people changing their self-images – gradually, hesitantly, yet with lasting, troubling consequences" and, more recently, Franz Kafka, for his depictions of the uncanny."¹³

Ishiguro himself describes his literary goal using the following words: "I am a writer who wishes to write international novels. What is an "international" novel? I believe it to be one, quite simply, that contains a vision of life that is

¹³ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 6.

of importance to people of varied backgrounds around the world. It *may* concern characters that jet across continents, but may just as easily be set firmly in one small locality."¹⁴

3. A PALE VIEW OF HILLS

3.1 Brief plot summary

Ishiguro's first novel is set in England. The compelling story opens one cold and rainy day in April with Etsuko, a Japanese lady, mother and a first-person narrator, that is expecting an arrival of her younger daughter Niki, whose older stepsister Keiko died recently when she committed suicide, and the story ends only five days later when Niki returns back to London, her home. Her daughter's visit breathes a touch of new life into Etsuko's house for a short time. Within those five days there are moments when the two protagonists meet and talk about old times, carefully avoiding Keiko and her death.

As Etsuko's memory begins to stir, a complex, moving and sometimes poignant story emerges. We are like space travellers exploring *tabula rasa*. The narrative moves unpredictably here and there, back and forth, from the present to the past over different parts of Etsuko's life forming a broad river of sadness, futility and loneliness.

¹⁴ Procter, "Kazuo Ishiguro."

3.2 Characters in relationships

There are very few protagonists in Ishiguro's first novel *A Pale View of the Hills*. Each of them, however, is finely developed and represents a diverse and sometimes bizarre "collection" of character traits forming a hero that is unique to the book. They are ordinary people like us, suffering series of minor mishaps, however they are exposed to unfavourable circumstances.

The following protagonist are here to serve the purpose of my thesis: Etsuko, Keiko, who was born to Etsuko and Jiro in Japan, Niki, who was born in England, Jiro, Etsuko's first husband, Ogata-San, Jiro's father, Sachiko, Etsuko's "friend" of one summer back in Japan, Mariko, Sachiko's daughter and Mrs. Fujiwara.

3.2.1 Interpersonal relationships

3.2.1.1 Relationships between protagonists sharing the same personal experience

In Ishiguro's novel *A Pale view of Hills* is a relationship between protagonists sharing the same personal experiences the one of Etsuko and Sachiko.

Etsuko developed her short-time relationship with Sachiko during one hot summer back in Japan. The world war was over at that time, but American soldiers were still present in the streets, since there were military operations in Korea. Etsuko was 4 months pregnant expecting her first daughter Keiko. She was very fond of solitude and preferred staying out of gossips at that time.

She comments on it: "It was never my intention to appear unfriendly, but it was probably true that I made no special effort to seem otherwise."¹⁵ These are the words that Etsuko uses to describe her state of mind, and in the lines above the circumstances surrounding Etsuko that scorching summer when she met Sachiko for the first time are mentioned.

Etsuko describes her first impression of Sachiko with these words: ... "that aloofness¹⁶ I had noticed about her when I had watched her from afar."¹⁷

When Sachiko of about thirty years of age with her daughter Mariko of about ten years of age entered her life that summer, a tangled string of events, all happening in a brief span of time, began to untie, roughly coinciding with one another, and changing Etsuko's pace of life.

Despite the fact that the name of my first category is neutral in tone, it also belongs to the category of ambivalent relationship as it is to be proved later.

Ishiguro tries to provide us with a misleading impression about Etsuko and Sachiko having different personalities. Assuming that every novel needs a hero of a good character and a villain, thus Etsuko would portray the former, and Sachiko the latter. On the surface and for a lay or first-time reader this

¹⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 13.

¹⁶ Regarding Sachiko's character, a puzzling aspect of her personality can be observed. From my point of view, many times she says things in order to catch people's attention, to make people become interested in her, to be asked questions. When she unveils her grandiose plan to go to America with Frank, she expects Etsuko's shrieks of surprise. "Aren't you going to ask me anything more? Aren't you going to ask me why I'm going? And who I'm going with?" (Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 37). Sachiko even keeps emphasizing the fact that she is not ashamed or embarrassed about anything from her past that she is open and willing to discuss any topic. She tells Etsuko: "You can feel free to ask whatever you like." (Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 71).

¹⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 13.

might seem a satisfactory explanation. However, as stated above, these ladies established a friendship of a kind. Yet a short-term one, it was still a friendship. My question is: supposing Etsuko had a 100 % lovely personality, she seems to be caring, helping Sachiko with her daughter, she seems to be a dutiful wife, would she socialise with someone like Sachiko? And would there be possible to build up a friendly and intimate relationship between such people? I say no, and this is the first contradiction.

People usually again and again establish friendships or relationships with people who mirror their character flaws, until they spot them and change themselves. Suffice to say, birds of a feather flock together.

In respect to the above written words, under the surface, as Brian Shaffer puts it in his study, striking similarities in the lives of both women can be found¹⁸. These clear similarities in their characters are revealed through uttered pieces of their personal history.

In this place I would like to focus on two parallels between Etsuko and Mariko which Shaffer speaks of: both women were offered refuge by their relatives, and both experienced an unhappy marriage¹⁹.

However little is said about the former parallel, especially the one concerning Sachiko, a few sentences might be found to support that argument.

Sachiko confides to Etsuko early in the book: "We were staying at my uncle's house."²⁰ ... "A most beautiful house. With a pond in the garden.

¹⁸ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 15.

¹⁹ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 15.

²⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 19.

Very different from these present surroundings."²¹

In spite of Sachiko being quite reluctant in terms of talking about her previous lodging, Etsuko managed to shape some basic idea about her uncle: "...the uncle was not, it seemed, related by blood, but was a relative of Sachiko's husband ... the uncle was wealthy."²² These are the clues which arouse reader's suspicion about Sachiko's past life, in terms of an assumption, that something terrible must have happened to her, and the reader is convinced to agree with Shaffer.

Concerning Etsuko, same level of lingering suspicion harbours in the reader's mind from the very beginning, and once a half of the book has been read, the reader is certain.

One morning when Ogata-San, who came to visit the young couple that summer, a social occasion which was going to be a brief, few-day visit, finally turned out to be a few-month one, holds an everyday conversation with Etsuko, Etsuko remarks: "You were like a father to me once."²³ ... "I must have been such a burden to you in those days."²⁴ ... Ogata-San disagrees: "You were shocked, which was only to be expected. We were all shocked, those of us who were left."²⁵

Although these little pieces of conversation do not say much about women's personal history, they offer a partial explanation. Both women apparently lost

²¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 21.

²² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 100-101.

²³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 34.

²⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 57.

²⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 58.

their close relatives due to some tragic circumstances, particularly owing to war and subsequent bombing, and this experience links the women with each other, forming one of the connections in their relationship.

In the course of her life Etsuko adopted attitudes similar to those of Sachiko, in terms of Etsuko leaving Japan for England, while Sachiko leaves or intends to leave Japan for America, and this experience made their lives even more similar.

Cynthia Wong partially supports my argument of significant similarities in Etsuko and Sachiko's life by saying: "...while the outcomes of their lives were very similar, there remains much that will be unexplained."²⁶

Second parallel alluded by Brian Shaffer concerns unhappy marriages.

Etsuko's marriage to Jiro defies general (or mine) description of a good relationship, assuming marriage is a relationship in many aspects, and is predominantly marked by indifference. Therefore I would like to discuss it later within a different category in the part 3.2.1.2 of the thesis.

Nevertheless, the subject of the second parallel should not escape our attention at this stage because it serves as a significant element in personal history shared by both women.

Etsuko contemplates on her life as a wife one afternoon, and her thoughts betray her deep unhappiness. "I spent many moments - as I was to do throughout succeeding years – gazing emptily at the view from my apartment

²⁶ Wong, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 32.

window."²⁷ ... "It was not an unpleasant view, and on occasions it brought me a rare sense of relief from the emptiness of those long afternoons I spent in that apartment."²⁸

In respect to Sachiko, her marriage left her with similar uneasy feelings. On a trip one scorching summer day Sachiko speaks of her wish to learn English well enough to be able to read books which her father brought her from America: "When I married, my husband forbade me to continue learning. In fact, he made me throw the book away."²⁹ ... "My husband was like that ... very strict and very patriotic. He was never the most considerate of men."³⁰

On the basis of the theoretical background of a healthy friendship or relationship given in part 1.2 of my thesis I can say that, no matter how close Etsuko and Sachiko's friendship may seem at times, both women spend a lot of time joining in conversation, they made a day trip outside Nagasaki, they share some aspects of personal history, it was not a healthy friendship. Their polite conversation and respect were rather dictated by Japanese cultural conventions and thus were not genuine.

Remaining polite under all circumstances that is the way, how people were brought up in those parts of the world.

Despite all her politeness Sachiko hardly ever misses any chance to make catty remarks about Etsuko concerning her opinions, behaviour which is not justifiable, not even in the light of Etsuko and her "That would be a pity"

²⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 99.

²⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 99.

²⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 110.

³⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 100.

sentence. This is Etsuko's universal answer, which she provides in her complete submission³¹ to Sachiko and people in general, an impression, which I have gathered, no matter how important or sad words are told to her.

In conclusion, from my point of view, Sachiko and Mariko's friendship was a friendship mainly based on profit, money and Etsuko who substituted for some of Sachiko's maternal roles, despite the fact that Mariko rather deeply resented Etsuko. Within this friendship it was Sachiko who gained the profit.

Although it may seem somewhat contradictory in terms of what I have just written, both women had big character flaws and their friendship was very ambivalent. Brian Shaffer even goes bravely and deeply under the surface when he argues that Sachiko is in fact Etsuko's projection created by Etsuko in order to be able to reflect on her painful past and ameliorate her own situation.³² This idea is also far more discussed by Cynthia Wong. With respect to this Etsuko would 'co-play' or share the role of a villain with Sachiko, by Sachiko being her alter ego. Since I find it a very interesting idea, I would like to discuss the probability of Sachiko being Etsuko's projection in the part 3.2.1.3 of my thesis which deals with Etsuko relationship to her own self.

³¹ On the contrary, Cynthia Wong argues about Etsuko being a heroine with "a more rebellious nature than she lets on" when pointing to her exile in England (Wong, Kazuo Ishiguro, 35). Despite the fact that she seems to always display appropriate and expected behaviour.

³² Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 21.

3.2.1.2 Protagonists' relationships shaded by indifference or negligence

This category encompasses a marital relationship between Etsuko and Jiro, and Sachiko and her husband, and thirdly a parent-child relationship between Sachiko and her daughter Mariko.

Concerning Sachiko's marital relationship to her husband, a few observations can be offered to that, what has already been said in part 3.2.1.1 of this present thesis. According to several allusions that Sachiko made to her husband's personality, the reader can learn that her husband "came from a highly distinguished family and my parents considered it a good match."³³ Sachiko's parents' decision, which she describes, seems rather unfortunate, and makes me think that her husband was apparently chosen according to a Japanese tradition, and not that Sachiko would have chosen him because she loved him and they got on well with each other.

In my opinion, such a traditional pragmatic approach to choosing a marriage partner was doomed to failure from its very beginning. However this was a part of traditional culture, and I am not in a position to judge the adequacy or inadequacy of such principles, moreover this is not the subject of my thesis. Therefore I will not look at it in detail.

³³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 110.

Marital relationship Etsuko to Jiro, her first husband, is characterised by indifference and is slightly similar to one of Sachiko in terms of Japanese traditions.

Etsuko recalls her husband as a "stocky man wearing a stern expression; my husband was always fastidious about his appearance."³⁴

Jiro was hard-working, which is a character trait ascribed to Japanese people in general, or at least he pretended to be hard-working, or more precisely, he spent many hours at work.

However, what is more certain is that he was bossy. Brian Shaffer highlights the fact of Jiro being called a "Pharaoh" for his attitude towards his subordinates.³⁵

When two of his colleagues pay Jiro an unexpected visit one day, they were just passing by his house, one of them makes remarks about Jiro's behaviour at work: "...he urges the rest of us to work like slaves while he does nothing himself"³⁶ ... "Then he sits down and reads the newspaper."³⁷, which is an activity that he more or less always does at home.

Although even more alarming is the fact that Jiro adopted similar dismissive attitude towards his wife. Shaffer dares to speak of "abuse" or "bullying."³⁸

Here are more sentences which were uttered in that evening justifying Shaffer's words. "They had been playing for some time when there was a knock at the door. Jiro looked up and threw me a glance. I put down my

³⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 28.

³⁵ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 13.

³⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 61.

³⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 61.

³⁸ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 10.

sewing and got to my feet."³⁹ He did not ask Etsuko, he just "put her a glance" and she knew what she was supposed to do. Later, despite the fact that Etsuko was already in the kitchen preparing tea for Jiro's colleagues, Jiro ordered Etsuko around: "Etsuko, get some tea for the gentlemen."⁴⁰

Of a similar kind is another incident which happened one morning when Jiro could not find his silk tie. Jiro's behaviour that day not only confirms Etsuko's words about him being "fastidious", but also and mainly being downright rude to his wife. Jiro snaps at Etsuko: "I wanted my black silk tie today, but you seem to have done something with it. I wish you wouldn't meddle with my ties."⁴¹

When Jiro gets promoted to the end of the book and he returns home from work, he orders his wife about: "Why are you standing there like that?... I wouldn't mind some tea, you know."⁴²

If a reader wants to better understand Etsuko and Jiro's relationship, they can try to outline the background of their first interactions. When we trace the beginning of their relationship, Etsuko met Jiro when she was taken in by Ogata-San into his family, when she lost her own. The reader unfortunately does not know any details about the times when the young people were dating each other, supposing they were. Nor we knew how old Etsuko was when she became a member of Ogata-San's family.

³⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 60.

⁴⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 61.

⁴¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 132.

⁴² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 154.

However, when I consider possible driving force behind Etsuko's decision to marry Jiro, among the motivations which come into my mind are Etsuko's unhappiness at that time as the first possible motivation; Mrs. Fujiwara comments on it: "...I remember you were very heartbroken once"⁴³, or/and gratitude towards Ogata-San as the second one. The gratitude can be demonstrated on the following Etsuko's sentences when she visits Mrs. Fujiwara one day: "...I was fortunate. Ogata-San was very kind to me in those days. I don't know what would have become of me otherwise."⁴⁴

However as Ogata-San conveys, a path to the wedding must have been a very long and winding one. "Just when I thought it was all settled at last, and you were finally to become my daughter-in-law, you told me there was one thing more, you wouldn't live in a house without azaleas in the gateway."⁴⁵

From this perspective there remains a question whether a marital relationship motivated by unhappiness or gratitude, as motivation being crucial in any activity, can bear fruits, flourish, and finally evolve into a strong harmonious marriage. In my opinion, the situation, as it was at that time, was not a good matrix where a strong and harmonious relationship could blossom.

From my point of view, the main argument why the latter could not happen is a sheer lack of open verbal communication. As I have already mentioned, open communication is one of the pillars of a healthy relationship.

⁴³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 76.

⁴⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 76.

⁴⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 136.

As the narrative moves back and forth, there are obvious examples of poor communication between both partners. All of them touch upon the issue concerning Shigeo Matsuda publicly criticising his former teachers among whom Ogata-San was. As Etsuko confides with the reader: "As it was, however, I restrained from mentioning the subject that night, just as I had done on previous occasions."⁴⁶ If the reader pays attention to the second part of the sentence, it becomes clear to them that this was a usual pattern of communication in their household. "And in any case, it was never in the nature of our relationship to discuss such things openly."⁴⁷ Finally and generally: "Jiro was often tired after a day's work and not in the mood for conversation."⁴⁸

Third relationship which belongs to this category is parent-child relationship between Sachiko and Mariko. It appears seemingly obvious that Mariko's behaviour bears some signs of bizarreness, to some extent could be also classified as antisocial behaviour, however the reader is not familiar with the particular circumstances surrounding the development of her personality. The reader is not aware whether her strange behaviour with tendencies to solitude, she was a wanderer by life, is caused by constantly changing living conditions such as her parents' divorce, war, moving house, or as a result of her mother's poor treatment.

⁴⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 126.

⁴⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 127.

⁴⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 36.

There are several examples of Sachiko's deliberate parental (emotional) neglect as it takes many forms.

Sachiko, although being over thirties, she appears fairly naïve, unprepared and immature for a care-giving maternal role. Her words sound seemingly contradictory. There comes the time when oblivious Sachiko, who comes across as a really careless mother, despite her repeated assurances how much she loves her daughter Mariko, how important her daughter's well-being is, assures Etsuko. "My daughter's welfare is of utmost importance to me, Etsuko. I wouldn't do any decision that jeopardized her future. I've given the whole matter much consideration..."⁴⁹

Slightly different sentences from Sachiko's mouth can be found throughout the book, so the reader becomes increasingly suspicious about their rightness, in terms of a saying "the more you say them, the more you believe them." They apparently foreshadow that Sachiko lives a lie⁵⁰ and that she does not act accordingly.

The first of various forms which Sachiko's negligence takes are keeping Mariko away from school. Mariko retorts to Etsuko: "I don't go to school"⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 44.

⁵⁰ Lie, self-defence and self-deception all play substantial roles in Sachiko's life, yet obviously not only in hers. A scene which serves as an excellent example takes place one sunny morning when Sachiko visits Etsuko in her flat to convey the latest news of Frank. She experiences fuzzy feelings. On one hand, she is apparently sadly disappointed in Frank, since he vanished into thin air, but attempts to hide her disappointment and even pretends to expect such behaviour. "...To tell you the truth, I half expected this..." (Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 68).

On the other hand, there is a spark of remaining hope for Frank. It harbours in Sachiko's words. "...Besides, if he really meant to leave me, he would have left a note of some kind...he hasn't gone far. He knows, I'll come and find him...He came down all this way to Nagasaki to find me...why would he have done that if he didn't mean everything he's promised?" (Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 69).

⁵¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 16.

and her mother adds: "She could help at the noodle shop. She's quite capable of being useful."⁵² Nevertheless, Etsuko disagrees: "After all, Mariko should in reality be at school during the day."⁵³

The second form of Sachiko's "maltreatment" is letting Mariko fiercely fight with other children from the neighbourhood.

One day Etsuko catches up with Sachiko on her way to the downtown and Etsuko reports to Sachiko what she has just seen "...it did look quite a nasty fight. In fact, I think I saw a cut on your daughter's cheek."⁵⁴ Sachiko, however, does not seem to be alarmed by Etsuko's utterances, she seems unconcerned, and she even considers Etsuko to be an intruder: "Are you not used to seeing children fight?"⁵⁵

In addition to previous mentioned forms of neglect, Sachiko lets her daughter roam outside at uncivilized hour in spite of a phantom lady which Mariko repeatedly mentions. To this Etsuko objects by saying: "But, it's very late."⁵⁶ And Sachiko snaps: "Leave her. She can come back when she pleases."⁵⁷

The first of last two Sachiko's "transgressions" is hitting Mariko, and it is not important whether rightfully or not, as Etsuko describes: "With her free hand, she slapped the child sharply on the back of her thigh."⁵⁸

⁵² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 20.

⁵³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 20.

⁵⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 14.

⁵⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 14.

⁵⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 85.

⁵⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 85.

⁵⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 85.

The second one is leaving Mariko alone and unattended, arguing that Mariko is old enough to look after herself. It is necessary to emphasise that Sachiko uses this argument only when or because it serves her purpose, for instance when she wants to go out to look for Frank when he "accidentally left himself in the pub." "Mariko should be capable of being left on her own by now."⁵⁹

Needless to say, Sachiko's mother-child relationship to Mariko is far from something what could be called a healthy relationship. Still and therefore, if I take into consideration all above mentioned arguments, it would be worth our attention to think about a possible motivation which governs Sachiko's behaviour.

Etsuko tells about Sachiko's "aloofness" when she meets her for the first time. To the reader and throughout the book, Sachiko gives a false impression of being somewhat better, and she believes that.

Just once, at a rare moment and to the end of the book, when both women are engaged in conversation and Sachiko sorts through and packs up her belongings before their journey to America, she does stop pretending and realizes that for that very moment, there is no point in pretending to be someone better, to hide, because they are about to leave that place forever. She loosens the manacles which hold her suppressed fear and anxiety, since they are there, deeply sleeping in her soul, whether she is willing to accept them or not, and she openly voices her gnawing doubts about being a good mother. "Do you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother to

⁵⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 73.

her? ""⁶⁰ For that fleeting moment she uncovers her human face, she becomes more "normal", but when she realizes that she has let herself be sincere, she immediately puts on her protective mask and hides herself from feelings, truth and outer world again.

Sachiko might not have wanted to get married in general or to her husband perhaps, or not at that time, as she confides to Etsuko: "Things were very difficult. Perhaps it was foolish to have married when I did"⁶¹, but she did and she gave birth to a daughter.

Apparently, she is not satisfied with her present life. She would like to leave Japan for America with Frank, who is an apparent American drunkard, who is everything but frank, and who is scared of children as Sachiko concludes:

"And that's what he is scared of, anyone can see that. He's scared of Mariko."⁶² Although is not Sachiko, indeed?

Her escape to America could be seen not only as a physical escape from a miserable life in Japan those days, but in a more symbolic way as an escape from herself, incidentally which is a parallel with Etsuko.

In respect to these arguments Mariko is thus an obstacle in the path of Sachiko's happiness, or in other words, from her point of view, Mariko can be perceived as the one who is responsible for Sachiko's misfortunes. She blames her, and with the blame goes hand in hand the way she treats Mariko. One sound argument which speaks in favour of Mariko being an obstacle on

⁶⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 171.

⁶¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 75.

⁶² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 86.

her path is that when Sachiko talks about Frank taking them to America, she does not say "us" but "me": "...what he wants most is to take me to America."⁶³

From a psychological point of view the whole process of blaming Mariko is deeply unconscious. In order to be able to change her attitude towards her daughter, Sachiko would have to first change herself through admitting that she is not as good as she thinks. She would have to abandon her old set of values and follow a new one, directly address her problems and admit that she has made mistakes.

In general, it would be crucial to her to bring the process in consciousness, "accept her own responsibility for her life and her happiness"⁶⁴ and truly and bravely meet her deeper self. Since this would be a rather painful process for Sachiko, and she is not capable of doing that, because she is not aware of that, she directs her anger towards Mariko, the kittens respectively.

With respect to the latter, I dare to proceed further by saying that since killing her daughter in reality would be unthinkable and morally unacceptable, despite the fact she does that, slowly and in a more symbolic meaning, she takes away the kittens from her daughter, take them down to the river, and gets rid of them in a violent way by drowning them. That is a heinous act in which the kittens symbolise her daughter.

⁶³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 69.

⁶⁴ Corneau, *N'y a-t-il pas d'amour heureux?*, 240.

The whole act is even more outrageous in terms of the kittens and their importance to her daughter, of which Sachiko is fully aware, and in the light of the promise which Sachiko has given to her daughter: "Yes, we can keep the kittens."⁶⁵

The kittens are the only friends of Mariko's; she spends hours playing with them, as she reports to Etsuko when she asked about Mariko's occupation that day: "I played with Atsu and Mee-Chan."⁶⁶ Furthermore, they are the objects of her caring love.

Mariko and Sachiko's attitude towards the kittens vividly contrast in the following pieces of utterances. During Etsuko, Sachiko and Mariko's trip outside Nagasaki, Etsuko wants to play a *kujibiki* game in order to win a basket for the kittens: "I want the basket. The kittens need a basket of their own now."⁶⁷ ... "We could put rugs inside it and that could be their house."⁶⁸

On the contrary, her mother's harsh language which she uses when she addresses the kittens as "creatures"⁶⁹ or "filthy little animals"⁷⁰ draws a sharp contrast.

Sachiko's last sentence clearly reflects her approach to the whole matter. "What does it matter about the dirty little creatures?"⁷¹ There the sentence could be understood as: "What does it matter about you, my daughter."

⁶⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 124.

⁶⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 79.

⁶⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 122.

⁶⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 124.

⁶⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 164.

⁷⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 165.

⁷¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 165.

3.2.1.3 Etsuko relationship to her own self

In the introductory chapter of Stanislav Groff's book *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* two quotations can be found; the first one is from the Bible and the second one is by LaoTsu. The former says:

"If you will know yourselves,
then you will be known and
you will know that you are
the sons of the Living Father.
But if you do not know yourselves,
then you are in poverty
and you are poverty. (Jesus, *The Gospel According to Thomas*,
Legion,3)"⁷²

And the latter:

"Knowing others is wisdom;
Knowing the self is enlightenment.
Mastering others requires force;
Mastering self needs strength. (Lao Tsu, *Tao Tche Ching*
XXXII)"⁷³

Etsuko as a central figure and her relationship to her own self is the most complicated and multi-layered relationship of all from the book. It is full of contradictions as Etsuko experiences a sense of personal failure.

Etsuko's present situation in those days when Niki came to pay her a visit seems to be very desperate. She is facing personal chaos. In order to be able to carry on living and overcome Keiko's death, she must find a way out of her

⁷² Grof, preface, xi.

⁷³ Grof, preface, xi.

tragic situation. To achieve acceptance and recover from her deep grief, she has to discover a way to her own self, to her deeper self. She has to understand and comprehend. In her quest for a way back to her own self, Etsuko decided to anchor in a bay of her own memories. Her search is a path to solace.

Brian Shaffer touches upon one of Etsuko's contradictions. However Etsuko admits her "selfish desire not to be reminded of the past"⁷⁴, this is precisely what her narrative, at least indirectly, is all about.⁷⁵

With respect to Shaffer's observations, Etsuko's adventure which she embarks on might be seen as slightly sadomasochistic, although Etsuko herself does not appear to be a little upset by her memories. They seem not to elicit any emotions at all, or in other words, Etsuko appears to be "dispossessed" of them.

From a psychological point of view a person who is suffering a personal misfortune has, among others, two different ways of handling the problem if they are not able to face it directly or articulate it openly. They can either create a pseudo-problem and devote all their energy in battling that problem, which is a way of suppression, OR a so called depersonalisation when a person creates an imaginary or half-imaginary he or she who can be based on some real person, an individual upon whom, they imprint their own past undesirable behaviour, so as to make it bearable or more palatable, or justify it

⁷⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 9.

⁷⁵ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 16.

to themselves. Through distancing ourselves from the problem, we can sometimes come to understand our own selves.

At this stage it is necessary to pose a question. Why does Etsuko bring back those particular memories of Sachiko and Mariko and their short friendship? Is there Etsuko's hidden motivation behind it; hidden away from the reader? Assuming yes, then it takes us back to Brian Shaffer's argument articulated in the part 3.2.1.1 of my thesis about Etsuko and Sachiko being imaginary figures who could serve the purpose of projection through which Etsuko tries to understand, to cope with Keiko's premature, unnatural death.

I would partly not fully agree with Shaffer upon his idea since some of his suggestions are, softly said, very brave.

Etsuko's relationship to her own self is significantly affected by a feeling of intense guilt. It is a sense of guilt which is deeply embedded in her conscious, and which arises from a feeling that she is jointly responsible for her older daughter's death. However she cannot fully understand its reasons, Etsuko assumes that her state of mind characterised by unhappiness at the time of her pregnancy, her emigration to England, and her volatile relationship with Keiko, especially their inability to approach each other, were bound to lead to Keiko's suicide. In these few lines several parallels between Sachiko and Mariko's parent-child relationship can be found, and they advocate Shaffer's argument of Sachiko and her daughter being imaginary figures who, in fact, serve as Etsuko and Keiko's projection.

I would like to discuss the above mentioned potential sources of Etsuko's guilt one by one in detail, as well as Sachiko and Mariko's relationship versus Etsuko and Keiko's relationship with respect to the former playing the role of imaginary persons for the latter.

With respect to the first potential source of Etsuko's guilt which was her uneasiness when having been an expectant mother, Stanislav Grof emphasises in his book *The Adventure of Self-Discovery*⁷⁶ the importance of being happy and well-balanced since for a child the antenatal period and especially feelings and emotions which the mother experiences during this period are crucial for the child's future life. The child needs to feel deep affection and a feeling of being heartily welcomed by their mother.

Etsuko's acquaintance, Mrs. Fujiwara, supports that idea by telling Etsuko: "Your attitude makes all the difference. A mother can take all physical care she likes; she needs a positive attitude to bring up a child."⁷⁷

In accordance with the mentioned idea if the reader follows Etsuko's memories back to Japan of those scorching summer days, to the reader it soon becomes glaringly apparent that Etsuko was not in high spirits at all despite her repeated assurances. Etsuko's unhappy marriage, her frustration and her fear of motherhood at the time could serve as premonition of Keiko's future sad life and her broken relationship to her parents and her younger sister Niki. Several times Etsuko expresses her "misgivings about motherhood"⁷⁸ which prompt the reader to think that Keiko was rather unwanted child, or at least

⁷⁶ Grof, *Adventure of Self-Discovery*.

⁷⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 25.

⁷⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 99.

expected with mixed feelings of fear and uncertainty, and thus Keiko's fate was sealed.

Even those many assurances about Etsuko "making a splendid mother," the words, which come out of Sachiko's or Mrs. Fujiwara's mouth, seem to be of no help.

There are several examples of Etsuko persuading the reader and especially herself about being content with her life. Mrs. Fujiwara comments on Etsuko's face looking miserable twice, at different times, when Etsuko visits her in her noodle shop. Etsuko replies: "Miserable? I certainly don't feel it. I'm just a little tired, but otherwise I've never been happier."⁷⁹

And later: "Unhappy? But I'm not unhappy at least."⁸⁰

And third, one morning when Etsuko exchanges words with Ogata-San, she says: "I couldn't be happier."⁸¹

In respect to the second potential source of Etsuko's guilt regarding her departure from England, which was preceded by a divorce and followed by a marriage to an English man, there are several sentences which express Etsuko's doubt over the rightness of her decision in terms of Keiko having been uprooted. Etsuko seems to regret her decision, however all details concerning its background are hidden to the reader, yet in her quest for solace, she pleads for a voice which would advocate her decision, support it and justify it.

⁷⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 24.

⁸⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 77.

⁸¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 34.

Here, before I approach the topic of Niki, who serves as the soothing voice for Etsuko's soul, I would like to quote those several sentences surrounding Etsuko's decision. "But you see, Niki, I knew all along. I knew all along she wouldn't be happy over here. But I decide to bring her just the same."⁸² When Etsuko is left alone, she ponders again, but at this time more assertively: "My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept Keiko's interests very much at heart."⁸³ Especially the second part of the sentence reminds the reader of Sachiko's words concerning her daughter's well-being; they seem to clearly echoed one another, and again support the connection between Etsuko and her alter ego Sachiko, a topic which would be discussed later in this category.

Brian Shaffer comes up with an idea which states that Niki "functions as Etsuko's rationalizing voice."⁸⁴ I fully agree with him. Niki, whose name was chosen by Etsuko "out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past"⁸⁵, is there to provide Etsuko with words that she wants to hear so much.

Niki, who serves in favour of Etsuko, acts in "the present", assuming there are two levels of reality in the book, in comparison to Sachiko and Mariko who both act "in the past", in Etsuko's memories⁸⁶.

⁸² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 176.

⁸³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 91.

⁸⁴ Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, 25.

⁸⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 9.

⁸⁶ In terms of the past and the present, the reader might perceive the book from two different perspectives and thus the characters can be divided into two groups. The first one, the present perspective, is a story of Niki's visit which is happening now. We follow Etsuko and Niki and their clumsy attempts to enjoy each other's company. With reference to my previous sentence, Etsuko and Niki are only two real or at least alive protagonists. The rest of the plot is based on Etsuko's memories, her solo voyages into the past, and thus all remaining protagonists are existing in the past.

One day during her visit Niki tells her mother about a friend of hers who praises Etsuko's bravery regarding leaving Japan. "I was telling her about you...and Dad and how you left Japan. She was really impressed. She appreciates what it must have been like, how it wasn't quite as easy as it sounds."⁸⁷

And later: "You are the last person anyone could blame"⁸⁸ for Keiko ending her own life. Niki's words serve a purpose of bringing comfort to Etsuko.

Third potential source of Etsuko's guilt is connected with a strained relationship between Keiko and Etsuko, her family respectively. Etsuko provides the reader with several hints about Keiko's weak personality in which a careful reader can find remarkable similarity between Keiko and Mariko's personalities, hints that refer to the "alter ego theory" of Keiko versus Mariko. Etsuko speaks of Keiko as showing "rather aggressive regard for privacy."⁸⁹ She describes how quickly her daughter changed, how she saw her "vanish beyond my reach; all I saw was that my daughter, unhappy as she was at home"⁹⁰, and she confides to the reader her second husband's opinion about Keiko being "a difficult person by nature and there was little we could do for her."⁹¹ She also speaks of Keiko's antisocial behaviour and connected relations with other members of the family: "For the two or three years before she finally left us, Keiko had retreated into the bedroom, shutting us out of her

⁸⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 89.

⁸⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 176.

⁸⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 94.

⁹⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 88.

⁹¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 94.

life."⁹² ... "The room ... was in a terrible condition. An odour of stale perfume and dirty linen...."⁹³

Niki reveals her relationship to her sister when she advocates her absence from her sister's funeral by saying: "She was never part of our lives – not mine or Dad's anyway"⁹⁴, and to reinforce her argument she adds: "I don't even remember what she looked like now. ... I just remember her as someone who used to make me miserable."⁹⁵

Nevertheless, once, in an intimate moment, she criticises her beloved deceased father and his hostile attitude towards Keiko: "...Dad should have looked after her a bit more...He ignored her most of the time...It wasn't fair really."⁹⁶

As obvious from the book both stepsisters were of similar personalities when they were children, however Niki has grown up, becoming a young independent woman⁹⁷, yet nowadays slightly drifting along in her life⁹⁸, on the other hand, Keiko, after a limited time of desperate struggle, committed

⁹² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 53.

⁹³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 54.

⁹⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 52.

⁹⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 10.

⁹⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 175.

⁹⁷ Niki embodies a young heroine who undermines the traditional structures. One day to the end of the book when Niki is about to return back to London where she lives, she, in front of her mother, passionately argues in favour of herself: "So many women just get brainwashed. They think all there is to life is getting married and having a load of kids." ... "there are plenty of things I could do. I don't want to just get stuck away somewhere with a husband and a load of screaming kids." (Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 180).

⁹⁸ However the reader does not know whether her present way of life is just a temporary state caused by a personal tragedy of her sister's sudden death and the following disillusionment, or whether it is a long-term wait-and-see approach to her life.

suicide. It remains a question whether or to what extent her suicide was instigated by her mother taking her from Japan.

Finally, in the last part of this category, a parallel between Sachiko and Mariko relationship versus Etsuko and Keiko relationship is to be discussed. In all previous paragraphs concerning individual "potential sources of Etsuko's guilt" a single example of existing parallel between the former and the latter protagonists has been mentioned.

However, from my point of view, there once was a real lady with her daughter playing a lesser role in Etsuko's life, not a significant one as Etsuko tries to mislead the reader, but the chief purpose why Etsuko recalls Sachiko and Mariko from her memory is to reconstruct and understand her own life and possibly Keiko's life and death; reconstruct on the basis of their story. They are a projection of her mind.

A relevant fact that strongly supports this idea is Etsuko's faulty memory upon which she touches many times. "Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing, often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances, in which one remembers..."⁹⁹..."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."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 156.

¹⁰⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 41.

The final hint that convinces the reader to eventually find the courage to believe into the game where Etsuko disguised herself as Sachiko and Keiko is disguised by her mother as Mariko is, as Cynthia Wong puts it in her book¹⁰¹, the moment when Etsuko searches Mariko, or at least the reader is deceived into thinking that, along the river one moonlit night after Mariko runs away because she does not want to go to America with her mother and Frank.

It is such a turning point. There is no "partition", and the previous text tells a story of Sachiko and Mariko about their forthcoming trip to America and then, suddenly, the names disappear from the text, and there is a girl and a woman and she speaks to the girl. The whole scene is very bizarre and the atmosphere gloomy. "...You'll like it over there....Everything will turn out well, I promise...If you don't like it over there, we'll come straight back."¹⁰²

Since the background and reasons of Etsuko's departure to England remains hidden, the reader is left to indulge in continuing speculation.

Etsuko's memory gives her a helping hand and together with her admission, the former and the latter play a symbolic hide and seek, which, however, gradually helps her to untangle the string of her life and decipher its meaning, and last but not least, find a way back to her own self.

¹⁰¹ Wong, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 31.

¹⁰² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 172-173.

3.2.1.4 Protagonists' relationships based on mutual respect (the exception that proves the rule)

Although the relationships in the title of this part of the thesis are in a plural form, it would be much appropriate to use a singular one. Protagonists' relationship based on mutual respect in *Pale View of the Hills* is that of Etsuko and Jiro's father Ogata-San. It serves as a balm to reader's soul; it is an oasis of peace and sanity amid the surrounding chaos, faulty memory and pretence. Cynthia Wong comments on Ogata-San and Etsuko's relationship: "Etsuko's exchanges with her father-in-law suggest an easy relationship between them."¹⁰³

At the core of my argument, this one-to-one relationship in its positive aspect might seem as an element which undermines my central proposition related to all relationships which are presented in the book being in a certain state of emotional decay. However, as I have alluded in the title, this is the exception that proves the rule.

Being precise, Mrs. Fujiwara, an old lady who runs her own noodle shop, and her relationship between Ogata-San, Etsuko respectively, may be considered as another friendly relationship, however there is very little said about it and their meetings are not very frequent. Indeed, I find it worth saying that Mrs. Fujiwara might be apprehended as an embodiment of hopes for a better future,

¹⁰³ Wong, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 34.

especially by heartening Etsuko: "But that's all in the past now."¹⁰⁴ ... "You have everything to look forward to now."¹⁰⁵

There are very few touches of gentle humour that I found in the book apart from those humorous moments when Etsuko and Ogata-San are left alone. The contrast between the pleasant atmosphere of their dialogues and the atmosphere of the dialogues between other protagonists from the book are highly visible.

There appears to be a long-standing and caring relationship between these two people, as Ogata made Etsuko a part of his family, and when they spend their time together at home, they are both in a playful mood. In those rare moments of harmony that come into her life, Etsuko gently teases her father-in-law by making innocent remarks about him and since he understands, he teases her too.

One morning at breakfast time when Etsuko prepares a lunch box for her Father, as she calls him, Ogata expresses his wish to learn Etsuko's culinary arts. Etsuko: "I'm adding an omelette. You're very fortunate, Father, I'm in such a generous mood."¹⁰⁶ Ogata: "... " You must teach me how to do that. Is it difficult?"¹⁰⁷ Etsuko: "Extremely difficult. It would be hopeless you trying to learn at this stage."¹⁰⁸

And later one afternoon Etsuko comments on Ogata-San's musical sense:

"Well, I'd much rather you occupied yourself with chess. Your musical

¹⁰⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 33.

recital earlier was hideous."¹⁰⁹ Ogata-San retorts playfully: "How disrespectful. And I thought you'd be moved, Etsuko."¹¹⁰

Even though their relationship is assuredly partly based upon mutual respect for older people, especially parents, demanded by a traditional cultural approach, as I have mentioned that in the part 3.2.1.1 of the thesis, it is still genuine. Their relationship bears signs of real love and open communication.

3.2.2 Symbolic relationships

3.2.2.1 "Relationship" to death

Things change every moment and life is impermanent. Every our single breath, deep or shallow, brings us step by step nearer to death. Sooner or later, we all will have to confront it face to face. Once we were born, the death is inevitable, it is our only certainty. Nagarjuna says:

"Life flickers in the flurries of a thousand ills,
More fragile than a bubble in a stream.
In sleep, each breath departs and is drawn again;
How wondrous that we wake up still!"¹¹¹

It is beneficial to live well with a peaceful mind, so as not we would have to regret our past deeds when the death finally approaches.

There are two general attitudes towards death in society. The majority of people try to simply ignore it and "consume life", like there was no death

¹⁰⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 56.

¹¹⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 56.

¹¹¹ Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, 41.

existing at all, the minority, on the other hand, try to think about it, attempt to comprehend it, make it an integral part of their lives, or even adequately prepare for it.

Death in *A Pale View of Hills* dons many masks. However it is not much spoken in the book, it is always present there, it follows the protagonists' steps wherever they go, and a "relationship" between them and the death gradually develops. Etsuko contemplates on this matter by saying: "it was never far away, hovering over us."¹¹²

There are two central aims which I have set for the final part of my thesis and which coincide with one another. The first one is to discuss notable examples of "relationships" between the protagonists and the death; those are "relationships" of Keiko, Etsuko and Mariko. The second aim is to depict the situations and objects in which the death reflects, and through which a distinctive smell of death emanates towards the reader, and the most significant examples of the situations and the objects discuss in this part of my thesis.

The category of situations covers Keiko's suicide. The category of objects covers the following: the river in the immediate vicinity of Etsuko and Jiro's flat, Sachiko's shabby house, Keiko's old room in her parents' house and her room in Manchester and the kittens.

From a general point of view, death can be classified into two groups. The first group encompasses "natural death", "natural" in terms of being caused by

¹¹² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 10.

some external factor, e.g. age, illness, in comparison to the second group which includes suicide.

Despite "natural death", suicide, according to one possible explanation, is chosen by a desperate person, assuming they do not suffer from bipolar disorder or any other mental illnesses, who looks for an ultimate solution to their problems because they are not able to battle them. Such a person must first annihilate their inner judge to be able to commit it.

Sigmund Freud describes suicide as "a result of aggression turned inward", characterised by "the collapse of the ego" and it is a "self-punishment for the desire to kill someone."¹¹³

With respect to Keiko, there are two key aspects, aggression and grievance, which finally could have driven her into arms of death. They coincide with one another too.

However little is known to the reader about Keiko's life, from my point of view, there must have been pent-up aggression once and since the moment her mother took her from Japan. First, at Keiko's early age, the aggression was probably unconscious, hidden, she could not understand it, but later, when Keiko became a young lady, a teenager, the aggression exhibited itself.

Hand in hand with the aggression goes a feeling of great grievance. Once Keiko grew up, she might have felt aggrieved at life and world having been unjust to her, since she was brought to a distant country, England, at her early

¹¹³ Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*.

age. She grew up in a family with a stepfather who was not very fond of her, with a stepsister whose relationship to her was probably likewise, and her mother who, I am not really sure, could have truly loved her since she wanted "not to be reminded of past"¹¹⁴, which also means of Jiro, and Jiro was Keiko's father and Keiko was a half of Jiro.

Keiko's child's fear of a foreign country and her near future is best portrayed in the dialogue between a girl and a woman in 3.2.1.3 part of my thesis where the girl symbolises Keiko and the woman Etsuko. Keiko's resentment is obvious. Her aggression grew year by year and since she could have not displayed it, she directed it against herself. She committed suicide by hanging herself in her Manchester room. Keiko is the one, who, symbolically, managed to develop the most intimate "relationship" with death. She "sealed" her relationship by entering the realm of death.

In my opinion, regarding Etsuko's "relationship" to death, it is rather an indirect "relationship" since she meets it vicariously; it speaks to her through Keiko's death. Nevertheless, she can no longer fit into that category of those who ignore it, since death circulates too close round her and her experience of it is too personal. Etsuko best describes her "relationship" to death through contemplation on Keiko's suicide: "The horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter; as with wound on one's own body; it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing things."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 9.

¹¹⁵ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 54.

Etsuko is on her way to find acceptance of Keiko's death and on the basis of her daughter's death, she can find a way to her own end of the present human life.

Mariko's "relationship" to death is very ambivalent. She fears it, on one hand, and feels attracted to it, on the other. Her fear of death is symbolised by a mysterious lady, whom Mariko persist in seeing. "The woman came round again....Last night. While you were gone."¹¹⁶ ... "She's going to show me where she lives."¹¹⁷

In comparison, her attraction to death is symbolised by her night trips in the neighbourhood, especially along the river, and her stubborn insistence upon being let alone wander outside. "I want to go out, now."¹¹⁸

Concerning the river itself, a polluted and muddy stream, Shaffer views a connection between this river and the Greek mythological river Styx.¹¹⁹ Both form some boundary, here, in *A Pale View of Hills*, it is a boundary between residential and unpopulated area. Etsuko speaks about the part of the town behind the river in the beginning part of the book: "before the war a small village had grown up on the riverbank."¹²⁰ And Sachiko says about that area: "...I haven't seen anyone there."¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 28.

¹¹⁸ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 79.

¹¹⁹ Shaffer, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 33.

¹²⁰ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 11.

¹²¹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 22.

The last to be discussed in this part of the present thesis are interiors. All of them such as Keiko's room in her parents' house, her room in Manchester or Sachiko's shabby house are a rich source of nagging fear and disturbing thoughts. Especially Keiko's old room in her house gives Etsuko and Niki eerie feelings. Etsuko says the room "has been Keiko's fanatically guarded domain for so long, a strange spell seemed to linger there."¹²²

One morning later Etsuko suddenly woke up because "I was sure I had heard a sound come from within Keiko's room."¹²³ Neither Niki can drift into much-needed sleep when on her visit to her mother's old house: "I don't seem to sleep very well."¹²⁴

In conclusion, since we will not live forever and the time when we will die is unpredictable, it is very beneficial to establish a healthy "relationship" with death and prepare. Keiko has already cross the river Styx, Mariko got probably lost in Etsuko's mind, yet for Etsuko there is still time to change things.

To the reader the whole story told by Etsuko might seem to be a posthumous tribute act to Keiko. It is Etsuko's attempt to compensate for her parental neglect, her disregard; it is an attempt to attain personal salvation.

¹²² Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 53.

¹²³ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 174.

¹²⁴ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 175.

4. CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to analyse interpersonal relationships between protagonists of Ishiguro's first novel *A Pale View of Hills*. A category of symbolic relationships was also encompassed in the thesis. The paper focuses primarily on psychological aspects of relationships which the characters developed in the book.

I have provided a theoretical background, presented in the first and the second part of my thesis, which also includes Ishiguro's biography and bibliography and categorisation of relationships.

In the introductory part 1.1 I have proposed a hypothesis suggesting that all significant interpersonal and symbolic relationships presented in the book, apart from one, are unhealthy and affected by various negative emotions. The following practical part of my thesis was aimed at accepting or rejecting the hypothesis.

After I have scrutinised selected protagonists' relationship, and my arguments supported by clear examples from the book in parts 3.2.1.1 – 3.2.2.1 of the present paper, now, at the end of my survey, I can confirm my hypothesis. All interpersonal relationships are in a certain stage of decay, or as Corneau puts it in his book, they can be described as "run away from me, I will catch you, try to catch me, I will run off."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Corneau, *N'y a-t-il pas d'amour heureux?*, 179.

There is a symbol in *A Pale View of Hills* that may represent all relationships and communication between the protagonists. It is the loan, money, for which Sachiko hesitantly asked Etsuko. The scene is described using these words: "I took out the envelope containing my money...before leaving the room; I opened the wardrobe, chose a silk scarf of a suitably discreet pattern, and wrapped it around the envelope."¹²⁶

As apparent, for every communication a suitable wrapping or veil of dishonesty or insincerity is chosen by the speaker, and thus the protagonists are unable to truly meet one another.

The "only" positive interpersonal relationship, which tries to compete with the negative ones, is a friendship between Etsuko and Ogata San, described in detail in part 3.2.1.4 of the thesis. A friendship between Etsuko and Mrs. Fujiwara which is briefly touched upon in the same part, yet playing a lesser role, it is worth mentioning since Mrs. Fujiwara attempts to provide Etsuko with unwavering support repeatedly, despite her own unfortunate situation. Both friendships bear many signs of a healthy relationship.

The category of symbolic relationships is represented by a "relationship" to death which is the part 3.2.2. Out of 3 characters that are discussed in this part of my thesis only Etsuko remains, and in terms of her "relationship" to death, she is at a turning point. Keiko is dead and Mariko's steps cannot be traced.

¹²⁶ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 71.

Moreover, in respect to a second published Ishiguro's novel called *An Artist of the Floating World* and his third one *The Remains of the Day* same behavioural patterns can be observed, as far as I am concerned.

In addition to the above mentioned conclusions, it has been found out that Sachiko and Mariko serve as imaginary persons, as Etsuko and Keiko's alter egos, which Etsuko uses in order to be able to reconstruct her past life and start a new one where she could build a healthy identity.

Last but not least, on the basis of this present study of relationships, the importance of a healthy and friendly attitude to one own self and the need of a good portion of self-love seem crucial to a human life; as Buddha said: "You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere."¹²⁷ This principle should be especially applied by Etsuko to her own life.

The thesis is imperfect in many ways, obviously. The book is a fertile source of ideas and the relationships which are portrayed there and were the focus of my paper can be grouped on the basis of different criteria, studied from a different perspective and thus they are open to further research.

The conclusions which I have reached are based on my point of view and reflect my observation.

¹²⁷ Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, 223.

5. ZÁVĚR

Cílem mojí bakalářské práce bylo analyzovat mezilidské vztahy mezi postavami v Ishigurově prvním románu s názvem *A Pale View of Hills*. Do své studie jsem též zahrнула kategorii symbolických vztahů a celá práce se u obou skupin zaměřuje především na jejich psychologické hledisko.

V úvodní první a druhé teoretické části práce jsem představila stručný životopis a díla Kazua Ishigura a vztahy rozčlenila do skupin. Část 1.1 obsahuje hypotézu, která je následně v praktické části práce obhajována. Předmětem hypotézy je předpoklad, že všechny klíčové mezilidské vztahy, které se v knize objevují, stejně jako vztahy symbolické, až na jeden jediný, jsou nefunkční a poznamenány různými negativními emocemi.

Poté, co jsem v praktické části 3.2.1.1 až 3.2.2.1 provedla analýzu vybraných vztahů a studii jsem podpořila konkrétními ukázkami z knihy, jsem obhájila svou hypotézu a dospěla k závěru, že byla pravdivá. Každý jednotlivý vztah se nachází v různém stupni rozkladu. Je též možné použít přirovnání, které nabízí ve své knize Guy Corneau: „Utíkej přede mnou, budu tě sledovat, sleduj mě, uteču ti”.¹²⁸

V knize, která je předmětem mého zkoumání se nachází důležitý symbol, který může charakterizovat veškeré vztahy i komunikaci mezi jejími hrdiny.

¹²⁸ Corneau, *N'y a-t-Il pas d'amour heureux?*, 179.

Je to půjčka, peníze, o které Sachiko požádala Mariko. Scéna je v knize popsána následujícími slovy: „Vzala jsem obálku, která obsahovala peníze...a než jsem opustila pokoj, otevřela jsem skříň, vybrala hedvábný šál s vhodným a nenápadným vzorem a obálku do něj zabalila”.¹²⁹

Jak je patrné, jednotlivé postavy se snaží každý svůj projev zahalit do obalu či závoje z neupřímnosti a nepoctivosti a díky tomu jsou neschopni se skutečně setkat jeden s druhým.

„Jediný” kladný mezilidský vztah, který se snaží porazit své záporné protějšky, je vztah Etsuko a Ogata San, jež je detailně popsán v části 3.2.1.4 mé práce.

Přehlédnout též nelze přátelství mezi Etsuko a paní Fujiwarou, o kterém krátce pojednávám ve stejné části. Přestože hraje menší roli, nepochybně stojí za zmínku, neboť paní Fujiwara se snaží Etsuko neustále povzbuzovat navzdory své vlastní neutěšené situaci. Obě přátelství nesou mnohé známky zdravého funkčního vztahu.

Kategorie symbolických vztahů je reprezentována vztahem ke smrti, což je část mé práce s číslem 3.2.2. Z 3 hrdinů, kteří jsou v této části popisováni, je naživu pouze Etsuko; Keiko spáchala sebevraždu a osud Mariko nelze vysledovat.

¹²⁹ Ishiguro, *Pale View of Hills*, 71.

V souvislosti se dvěma následně publikovanými Ishigurovými romány *An Artist of the Floating World* a *The Remains of the Day* mohu konstatovat, že se v nich objevují podobné vzorce chování.

Kromě potvrzení mé hypotézy se mi též podařilo zjistit, že Sachiko a Mariko zaujmají v knize funkci fiktivních postav, jsou alter egem Etsuko a Keiko, které si Etsuko vytvořila, aby mohla porozumět svému dosavadnímu životu a začít život nový, ve kterém si bude moci vybudovat zdravou identitu.

Na závěr bych chtěla uvést, že na základě této studie vztahů, se znovu potvrzuje důležitost zdravého a přátelského přístupu k vlastnímu já a potřebu zdravé dávky sebelásky v životě každého jedince. Jak praví Buddha: „Můžeš hledat v celém vesmíru člověka, který si více zaslouží tvoji lásku než ty sám, avšak nikoho takového nenajdeš”.¹³⁰ Tento princip by měla přijmout za svůj především Etsuko.

Má bakalářská práce není dokonalá v mnoha směrech. Kniha slouží jako bohatý zdroj myšlenek a vztahy, které jsou zde zastoupeny a byly předmětem mé práce, mohou být stejně tak rozčleněny dle jiných hledisek a zkoumány z jiného pohledu. Je zde proto prostor pro další zkoumání. Závěry, ke kterým jsem dospěla, jsou navíc ovlivněny mým subjektivním názorem a mými pozorováními.

¹³⁰ Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, 223.

6. ANNOTATION

- *Author:* Jana Sysová
- *Faculty and department:* Philosophical Faculty, Department of English and American Studies
- *Title:* A Study of Interpersonal and Symbolic relationships in Kazuo Ishiguro' First Novel *A Pale View of Hills*
- *Supervisor:* Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
- *Number of characters:* 86 135
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- *Keywords:* Kazuo Ishiguro, first novel, *A Pale View of the Hills*, study of the relationships, death
- *Description:* The aim of the thesis was to analyze protagonists' relationships in the first Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills*. The theoretical background has been given in the first part, including Ishiguro's biography and bibliography. The practical part of the thesis looks at selected relationships and the arguments are supported by clear examples from the book. The aim of the second part is to accept or reject a hypothesis which says that all significant relationships in the book are unhealthy or failed. The hypothesis has been proved to be true for all relationships except for one, two, possibly. In addition, it has been found out that two of the protagonists are rather imaginary and that they serve as alter egos of two other characters.

7. ANOTACE

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- *Vedoucí práce:* Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.
- *Počet znaků:* 86135
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- *Počet titulů použité literatury:* 20
- *Klíčová slova:* Kazuo Ishiguro, první román, *A Pale View of Hills*, studie vztahů, smrt
- *Popis:* Cílem předkládané bakalářské práce byla analýza vztahů v Ishigurově prvním románu *A Pale View of Hills*. V první části je podán teoretický výklad včetně životopisu a přehledu děl Kazua Ishigura. V praktické části jsou poté zkoumány vybrané vztahy a vznesené argumenty podloženy praktickými ukázkami z knihy.
Cílem druhé části práce je potvrzení nebo vyvrácení hypotézy, která říká, že všechny stěžejní vztahy, až na jeden respektive dva, jsou nezdravé či nefunkční. Hypotéza byla potvrzena jako pravdivá a současně se podařilo zjistit, že dvě z postav jsou spíše postavami fiktivními a v knize slouží jako alter ega jiných dvou hrdinů.

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