

“The Phantom of the Opus”:
The Implied Author in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *A Pale View of Hills*

It is not difficult to identify in Kazuo Ishiguro’s first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982),¹ a concern with spectrality and with the kind of obligation that Derrida advocates in *Specters of Marx* when he writes of “the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born.”² *PV* deals with how a mother in a painful process belatedly develops such respect when in the course of her first-person narrative she comes to own up to her co-responsibility for her first daughter’s suicide. Like a ghost, the dead girl accompanies the conversations this mother has with her younger daughter: “although we never dwelt long on the subject ... it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked” (*PV*, 10). The ghost shapes a narrative which tries to ignore it, claiming the mother’s attention that was denied the child earlier.

A toned-down version of the classic kind of ghostliness, then, is easily found in *PV*, as most critical treatments of the novel have demonstrated.³ At one point, for instance, the mother and her second daughter are for a moment tempted to attribute noises heard from the dead girl’s room to its former inhabitant (*PV*, 95). Cases of ghostliness where an event which should by this-worldly rights inhabit one time level of the novel seems to intrude on another level – spectrality, that is, as the “non-contemporaneity of present time with itself” (*SM*, 25) – have also been discussed in Ishiguro criticism and related to the novel’s theme of unacknowledged guilt.⁴

We can use Fredric Jameson’s comment on the broader sense of ghostliness introduced by Derrida to describe the experience of the narrator-protagonist Etsuko: spectrality holds “that we would do well not to count on (the living present’s) density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us”.⁵ The novel tells how Etsuko’s self-image loses its solidity, when it is measured against the events of her past.

This article is, however, especially interested in an aspect of the novel which is less markedly associated with conventional ghostliness. It is captured in the last clause in Jameson’s statement, which speaks of betrayal. There is a personalised presence in the novel that is capable of such betrayal and spectral in a manner which the instances of ghostliness mentioned thus far do not exhibit. This presence is for the most part less obtrusive than that of the novel’s characters. In fact, it is often so impalpable that many critics even deny its existence: it is the implied author.

¹ Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991). Hereafter cited as *PV*.

² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), xix. Hereafter cited as *SM*.

³ See, for instance, Barry Lewis, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 28-36.

⁴ Erhard Reckwitz, “Der Roman als Metaroman: Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*; Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills*; John Fowles, *Mantissa*”, *Poetica* 18 (1986), 154-157.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter”, in Michael Sprinker, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations. A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1999), 39.

It has been suggested the implied author should be banned from narratological theory, notably by Ansgar Nünning, who called it an “anthropomorphized phantom”, and by a whole movement supporting him.⁶ Similarly, Heinz Antor, quite rightly, denies the implied author an ontological status.⁷ But as Derrida’s jocularly derived term “hauntological” suggests (*SM*, 161), this is no proof that the notion lacks consequence. I shall argue that the concept is a useful one, at least for examinations of the reading experience, and that it can be related to categories established in the psychological and philosophical study of the self-conscious emotions. I propose that in a crucial scene in *PV*, which to my knowledge has to date received no critical attention, the implied author’s unobtrusive inhabiting of the text suddenly attains a palpability which causes a new awareness and re-orientation in the reader. The reader’s reaction to this sudden apparition can be seen in terms of Jean-Paul Sartre’s description of the effect of the Other’s intrusion into the awareness of the self: “The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds ... to a fixed sliding of the whole universe ...”.⁸ This sliding – the betrayal of assumed solidity noted by Jameson – goes along with what in the scene under discussion seems for a moment to be a *moral* betrayal, because the implied author’s allegiance to the reader is given up.

In what follows, first an overview will be given of what has emerged to be a critical consensus on the novel’s theme of the first-person narrator’s unacknowledged guilt, which she treats indirectly by talking about a double of herself. This overview will be enriched by a discussion of hitherto neglected passages. The second part of the article provides a phenomenological analysis of a central passage in the novel which triggers off the main reversal in the reader’s identification with the fictional characters, upon which, in turn, the insight that the novel holds ready for its audience is hinged.

1.

In her home in the English countryside, the Japanese narrator Etsuko tells of the recent visit of her British-born daughter Niki by her marriage with her deceased English husband. Niki wants to support her mother during the mourning over her older sister Keiko, born in Japan in Etsuko’s first marriage with a Japanese. It transpires that Keiko hanged herself, because she had failed to master life in England, where her mother took her as a child. These recent events lead Etsuko to reminisce over yet another, much more distant, layer of the past, her life in Nagasaki after World War II, when she was pregnant with Keiko.

The Nagasaki narrative concerns a few weeks at the time of the Korean War, when Etsuko made friends with a widowed mother from Tokyo who

⁶ Ansgar Nünning, “‘But why *will* you say that I am mad?’ On the Theory, History, and Signals of Unreliable Narration in British Fiction”, *Arbeiten zu Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 22 (1997), 86. See also Ansgar Nünning, ed., *Unreliable Narration. Studien zur Theorie und Praxis ungläubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1998).

⁷ Heinz Antor, “Unreliable Narration and (Dis-)Orientation in the Postmodern Neo-Gothic Novel: Reflections on Patrick McGrath’s *The Grotesque* (1989)”, *Miscelanea* 24 (2001), 11-38.

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, transl. by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1969), 255.

lived in the neighbourhood with her little daughter. The narrator does not make any evaluative comments on the relationship between this mother, Sachiko, and her daughter, Mariko, but still the following picture emerges: under the strain of financial and other difficulties following the dropping of the atomic bomb the once wealthy Sachiko neglects and perhaps abuses her child, who is also suffering from the traumatic experiences of the war. Sachiko hopes to solve her problems with the help of her American lover Frank. For this reason, it is often Etsuko who looks after Mariko, so that her concern for the neglected child enlists the sympathies of the reader, while Sachiko, despite the absence of overt criticism directed against her, appears as reproachable. The general feeling conveyed by Etsuko's narrative is that Mariko would be better off with her as mother.

Etsuko's memory is admittedly fallible (*PV*, 41, 156), and caution about her reliability is also suggested by the remark that she harbours a "selfish desire not to be reminded of the past" (*PV*, 9). Her reported attitude towards motherhood, for instance, is contradictory (*PV*, 24, 112). Etsuko thus shows an unreliability which is similar to Sachiko's, whose interpretations of her relations with Frank self-servingly waver in accordance with the varying circumstances. When the chances that he will keep his promise to take Sachiko and her daughter to the United States seem bad, she finds it would be "unsettling" for Mariko "finding herself in a land full of foreigners" (*PV*, 86). When Sachiko is more confident about her lover, she thinks "America ... a far better place for a young girl to grow up" than Japan (*PV*, 170).

Various other parallels between the two mother/daughter pairs will impress themselves on the reader at some point or other, notably that Sachiko's hope to marry a Westerner and leave Japan with an unwilling child echoes Etsuko's marriage to a foreigner and her moving to England despite her apprehensions concerning Keiko. As Etsuko remarks, an "eerie spell" seems to bind her and Sachiko together (*PV*, 41).

A prominent motif that is recurrent in both the English and the Japanese levels of the story and thus suggests an analogy between the two is death through asphyxiation, i.e. hanging or drowning. Etsuko is haunted not only by the image of Keiko hanging in her room but also by a dream of a girl whom she at first takes to be on a swing, but then recognises to be hanging from a tree, probably one of the victims of a series of child murders in Nagasaki (*PV*, 95-100). The killing of children also plays a part in what Sachiko tells about the origin of her daughter's disturbing traits and the child's obsession with a mysterious woman: one day in Tokyo Mariko ran away, and her mother followed her to a canal where they saw a woman immersing something in the water: "she turned round and smiled at Mariko Well, she brought her arms out of the canal and showed us what she'd been holding under the water. It was a baby" (*PV*, 74).

Mariko frequently mentions “the other woman” to Etsuko, and early on there are hints at an identification between Etsuko and this woman. It is striking that Mariko is mysteriously suspicious of Etsuko from the start despite the benevolence that the woman displays (*PV*, 17). This suggests that Etsuko is omitting something from her relation that would explain the child’s wariness. The passage just quoted makes it understandable that Mariko mistrusts persons who show an outwardly friendly behaviour like the mother who smiles while drowning her child. In an account of a search for Mariko with a lantern associated with the mysterious woman Etsuko remarks on the shadow it casts. The shadow conjures up the suggestion of a double presence which through the lantern is connected with the other, child-killing woman (*PV*, 19, 171).

Mariko is particularly worried about her mother’s intention to drown her kittens when they leave for America. The girl identifies herself with her kittens in a scene in which she contemplates eating a spider, saying that her old cat used to do the same (*PV*, 78-82). Etsuko significantly declines to take one of the pets to save it from being killed. The pregnant woman’s refusal of a kitten identified with a human child casts a shadow on her future behaviour as a parent when read along with her “misgiving about motherhood” (*PV*, 17).

When Etsuko, in care of Mariko, follows her to the bank of a river – an echo of how Sachiko had followed the girl to the canal where the deranged mother killed her child – the following dialogue occurs. It combines several crucial motifs and shows Ishiguro’s typical dialogue structure of repetitious utterances seemingly exchanged at cross-purposes which appear to refer to issues left implicit. In the scene an indirect explanation for Mariko’s unaccountable misgivings about Etsuko is given:

“What’s that?” she [Mariko] asked.

“Nothing. It just tangled on to my foot when I was walking.”

“What is it though?”

“Nothing, just a piece of old rope. Why are you out here?”

....

“Why have you got the rope?”

I watched her for a moment. Signs of fear were appearing on her face.

“Don’t you want a kitten then?” she asked.

“No, I don’t think so. What’s the matter with you?”

Mariko got to her feet. I came forward until I reached the willow tree. ... I could hear Mariko’s footsteps running off into the darkness. (*PV*, 84)

The reference to the willow tree with its uncanny folkloric associations reinforces the danger that the child perceives in the rope.⁹ The subliminal suggestion is that Etsuko’s refusal of a kitten identified with Mariko amounts to the threat to hang her. At the same time the rope connects this threat with Keiko’s suicide. The ghostly agency that Mariko fears from Etsuko

⁹ Isabelle Joyeau, “Le discours du leurre dans les romans de Kazuo Ishiguro”, *Études anglaises* 50.2 (April-June 1997), 241.

here is thus transferred to the mother's role in the context of Keiko's death.

The water/death motif comes to a climax with Sachiko's drowning of the kittens (*PV*, 165-168). This killing is pointedly merged with Mariko's fear of Etsuko in the following exchange about Sachiko's lover and the prospect of leaving Japan:

"I don't want to go away. And I don't like him. He's like a pig."
"You're not to speak like that," I said, angrily. "He's very fond of you, and he'll be just like a new father. Everything will turn out well, I promise. If you don't like it over there, we can always come back. But we have to try it and see if we like it there. I'm sure we will." (*PV*, 172-173)

As most commentators on the novel have observed, at this point there is a conflation between the two women expressed in Etsuko's use of "we" instead of "you", when she talks about her friend's, not her own, leaving for America. Recalling the earlier remark that the subject of Keiko's death is omnipresent, we recognise in this passage the veiled version of an exchange that may have occurred between Etsuko and Keiko before their departure to England. Etsuko's threatening role is underscored when in the following conversation Mariko asks about an unnamed item in Etsuko's hand. In view of the scene discussed above we assume that what upsets the child is again a rope. The ghostliness that lies in the transference of the threat from the pet-killing Sachiko to Etsuko is enhanced by the fact that on this occasion there is no explicit mention of a rope, so that it is left to the reader to imagine the precise nature of the danger connected with Etsuko.

The drowning of the kittens hearkens back to a slightly earlier occurrence of the water-death motif. Here Etsuko meets the absent Sachiko's cousin. When the old woman repeatedly asks after Mariko's mother, the child looks at Etsuko "intently" (*PV*, 158), which again points to an unspoken connection between the absent mother and the narrator. The cousin has come to invite Sachiko to live with her and her father and does not omit to say that there is also enough room for Mariko's kittens (*PV*, 162). In effect, then, the relative offers an alternative to leaving Japan, to drowning the kittens, and to uprooting Mariko which remains unrealised and hence enforces the culpability of the person rejecting this offer.

A further slip underscores the equation of the two mother-daughter pairs Sachiko/Mariko and Etsuko/Keiko: in the English narrative, Etsuko gives Niki a picture of Nagasaki, which she had once visited. She justifies her choice with the remark "Keiko was happy that day" (*PV*, 182). But she had made that trip with Sachiko and Mariko, not with her own child, who was not even born at the time. At this point in the novel Keiko, rather than being "already dead or not yet born" (*SM*, xix), is both: already dead for

the narrator and not yet born for the experiencing Etsuko in the Nagasaki episode.

At the end of the novel, Niki departs “with an oddly self-conscious air, as if she were leaving without [Etsuko’s] approval” (PV, 183). The impression is that her mother cannot connect to her any more than she could to Keiko, the difference between the daughters being that Niki feels at home in England. Etsuko, like her first child, has remained a stranger. This is evidenced by the fact that the mother thinks of the place where she lives as “so truly like England” (PV, 182), whereas English-born Niki calls it “not the real countryside, just a residential version to cater for the wealthy people” (PV, 47). There is a hint of retaliation in the fact that Etsuko experiences the same estrangement that Keiko suffered on account of her mother’s choice.

The narrator’s examination of her past starts as an apologia for her life and ends as a confession of her neglect of her first daughter. The different stages of her growing insight into Keiko’s suicide are mirrored in her comparisons of her two spouses. We witness that her first husband Jiro treats her rudely, and she mentions an unspecified crisis in their relationship which resulted in their separation (PV, 126). Half-way through the novel, Etsuko still defends her decision to leave Japan, but begins to mention drawbacks and, compared to her earlier grudging acknowledgement of Jiro’s good sides – “in his own terms, he was a dutiful husband” (PV, 90) – is now more generous in her assessment of his character:

I do not claim to recall Jiro with affection, but then he was never the oafish man my [second] husband considered him to be ... And indeed, for the seven years he knew his daughter, he was a good father to her. Whatever else I convinced myself of during those final days, I never pretended Keiko would not miss him. (PV, 90)

At this stage Etsuko, after this partial reconsideration of her past, still proceeds to reiterate that her leaving Japan was “justifiable” and that she “always kept Keiko’s interests very much at heart” (PV, 91), which echoes Sachiko’s assurance, “I’m a mother, and my daughter comes first” (PV, 87). Only at the end of the novel does Etsuko give up all qualifications when she evaluates her departure from Japan: “I knew all along she [Keiko] wouldn’t be happy over here. But I decided to bring her just the same” (PV, 176). The telling of her own story in disguise has helped her to re-evaluate her past. As mentioned above, Etsuko turns to her own shadow just before talking with Mariko about leaving Japan (PV, 172). This is an indication that it is she who brings this fate upon the child. The passage recalls the point in Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit* where Jonas, after murdering a blackmailer, “became in a manner his own ghost and phantom, and was at once the haunting spirit and the haunted man”.¹⁰ This sheds

¹⁰ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890), ch. 47.

some light on Etsuko's case: being divided like Jonas, in retrospect she is only aware of herself as a haunter because she splits off her haunted self in the form of Sachiko. In this way Etsuko's conscious better self can try to contravene her dissociated alter ego Sachiko's mistreatment of her daughter.

Etsuko herself is ghostly in that she tries to do in narrative what the phantoms of the deceased are unable to in Dickens's *Christmas Carol*: "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever".¹¹ For Scrooge, who comes to regret missed opportunities of doing good, and for Dickens's reader it is not too late to heed the warning against becoming like these phantoms; but for Etsuko it is, and therefore she can only interfere imaginatively by casting herself in the role of benefactor when recapitulating the events. However, the aspect the narrating Etsuko edits out of her self and ascribes to someone else still manages to convey its association with the real Etsuko, which is why Sachiko and Mariko react to her hidden self with suspicion and amusement, respectively.

A look at a Japanese representation of psychological duality – which I suspect was an inspiration for *PV* – may be helpful in summing up a few points about the Etsuko/Sachiko pair. The following text accompanying the image of a woman and a demon on a mid-nineteenth century votive plate exhibited at a Japanese temple condemns the practice of infanticide, which once was widespread in Japan as a means of family planning:

This woman's face is kind, but she thinks nothing of killing her own child or, even more so, someone else's. She is a cruel woman whose face doesn't fit her demon-like heart People who 'give back [i.e. kill] their children' should look at this picture if they want to see their own face. What is reflected in a mirror is their surface face, not the real one. This picture shows their real form.¹²

Indeed, as Jonathan Swift famously remarked for the context of satire, we tend to perceive in unfavourable images returned by literary mirrors everybody's face but our own.¹³ Mindful of this, Ishiguro starts out in *PV* with separate representations of his character's real face and her perceived, more flattering, face; only later does he blend them together in a gradual process. Etsuko's story is a mirror in which she initially sees herself with her 'surface face', whereas for the reader her narrative soon becomes like a dual picture in which he/she recognises Sachiko to be Etsuko's real form.

Before dealing with the question in what way the reader too sees him/herself reflected in *PV*, I shall draw attention to further ghostly elements in the novel that are of specifically Japanese origin. Etsuko's association with a rope and the death by asphyxiation motif could be inspired by details of the Japanese history of infanticide: strangling and drowning were among the methods employed. The other side of the novel's good mother/bad

¹¹ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (London: Penguin, 1984), 38. The text is mentioned explicitly in *PV*, 110.

¹² Cit. in Elizabeth G. Harrison, "Strands of Complexity: The Emergence of 'Mizuko Kuyō' in Postwar Japan", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.4 (1999), 782-783. The image can be viewed in Muriel Jolivet, "Derrière les représentations de l'infanticide ou mabiki ema", *Bulletin of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University* 37 (2002), 87, Fig. 5, <<http://www.info.sophia.ac.jp/fs/staff/kiyo/kiyo37/kiyo37.pdf>>, 1 March 2008.

¹³ Jonathan Swift, "The Battle of the Books", in Kathleen Williams, ed., *A Tale of a Tub and Other Satires* (London, Melbourne, Toronto: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton), 140.

mother duality appears to be represented in the rope's connection with one of the manifestations of the bodhisattva Kannon, a popular protector of children. The Fukūkenjaku ('never-empty lasso') Kannon has a noose to catch souls and lead them to salvation (see Fig. 1).¹⁴

There exist religious memorial rites for *mizuko* ("water children"), i.e. victims of miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, and infanticide. *Mizuko* services are advertised by clergy and spiritualists; often they appeal to women's feelings of guilt by threatening that non-performance will be punished with a curse from the *mizuko*.¹⁵ The above-mentioned fear of the appearance of the dead Keiko as a revenant has a clear affinity with this notion.

Mizuko are believed to reside in the limbo of *Sai-no-kawara*; it has been proposed that the riverside in *PV*(11) alludes to this "Riverbank in the land of Sai".¹⁶ Sachiko's slapping of a kitten which tries to hold on to her sleeve (*PV*, 47) and the references to her wet sleeves in the drowning scene (*PV*, 167-168) might be intended as ironic inversions of the protecting nature of a being which frequently plays a part in *mizuko* rites: the bodhisattva Jizō hiding the children in his long sleeves to protect them from demons. Those who cannot walk he (originally female) supports with his staff (see Fig. 2), which may be alluded to in *PV* when Niki

¹⁴ Kenneth Dauber, "Object, Genre, and Buddhist Sculpture", *Theory and Society* 21.4 (August 1992), 580.

¹⁵ See the contributions by Ronald M. Green, Elizabeth G. Harrison, William R. LaFleur, and Meredith Underwood in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.4 (1999).

¹⁶ Esther Santel, "Cross-cultural Fiction? Die Bedeutung der 'Japaneseness' in Kazuo Ishiguro's frühen Roman und Erzählungen", MA thesis (Berlin, Free University, 2003), 38-39.



Fig. 1: Fukūkenjaku Kannon with noose, Kanzeon-ji, Kyushu, Japan, *Monuments of Art History*, <<http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/japan/kanzeonji5.html>>, 1 July 2009, photo. Courtesy of Michael D. Gunther.



Fig. 2: Jizō with staff and child at Hase Dera in Kamakura, Japan, *Onmark Productions*, <<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/jizo-and-child-hase-dera-kamakura.jpg>>, 1 July 2009, photo. Courtesy of Mark Schumacher.

¹⁷ William R. LaFleur, "Memorializing One's Mizuko", in Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine, eds., *Life of Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 200-201.

¹⁸ Bardwell Smith, "Buddhism and Abortion in Contemporary Japan: *Mizuko Kuyō* and the Confrontation with Death", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 15.1 (1988), 10-11.

¹⁹ A version of this subplot forms the main action of Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986).



Fig. 3: Jizō with childlike features in graveyard at Raikoji Temple in Kamakura, Japan, *Onmark Productions*, <<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/jizo-mizuko-raikoji1.jpg>>, 1 July 2009, photo. Courtesy of Mark Schumacher.

straightens the canes supporting the neglected "young tomato plants" in Etsuko's garden (*PV*, 91).

Like the kittens, these plants obviously stand for Keiko/Mariko. Moreover, Etsuko in this scene notices "something unmistakably childlike" about Niki (*PV*, 92): Jizū is often depicted as a child himself (see Fig. 3).¹⁷

It is on her way back from feeding the goldfish that Niki looks after the tomatoes, which might allude to the food offerings made during *mizuko* rites.¹⁸

2.

In this section, a discussion of reader identification will lead into a consideration of the implied author as a ghostly presence in the reading process which on occasion forces itself into the reader's awareness and in this way can trigger a re-orientation in the latter's attitude towards the fictional characters.

What is important about the subplot of the novel for the issue at the centre of this article is that it mirrors the main action's reversal in the control of sympathy. This line of the action comprises a visit from Etsuko's father-in-law Ogata to Nagasaki at the time of the Sachiko episode and adds a political strain to the main plot's theme of guilt. Ogata tries to get his son's support for a complaint against an article criticising the old man.¹⁹ That Ogata is kind and Jiro harsh to Etsuko (*PV*, 131) leads the reader to transfer his/her sympathy for the narrator to the father and to dislike the son. In the course of the narrative, however, another facet to the character of Etsuko's sympathetic benefactor emerges. It is heralded in a passage where Ogata and Etsuko visit a peace memorial. Significantly, when Ogata is about to write on a postcard, he "glance(s) up towards the statue as if for inspiration", and Etsuko jokingly remarks to him, "Father's looking very guilty" (*PV*, 138). In the following passage it is revealed that before the war Ogata denounced a number of teachers who were then imprisoned. This sheds a new light on Jiro's non-compliance with his father's request to support him in his issue with the critical article. Jiro's delaying tactics, which Etsuko condemns, now seem understandable, and it is he who defends Japan's new course against Ogata's nationalist criticism. With Etsuko and Ogata, then, *PV* gives the reader characters to identify with; their unpleasant sides are only revealed later, with the result that the readers find themselves on the side of a child neglector and a nationalistic war supporter.

I shall now dwell further on the reader's response to such reversals, analysing with the help of Wayne C. Booth's concept of the implied author a passage in *PV* which condenses the re-orienting effect that changes in identification can have on the reader's self-awareness. What I have in mind when I speak of a presence which at times intrudes into the reader's consciousness, is the same as the entity referred to in a passage by Bruce Robbins on Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day*, though the term 'implied author' is not used here.²⁰ Having proposed evidence for the butler protagonist Stevens's obsessive professionalism and neglect of his private life, Robbins continues: "In case we miss the point, the 1923 conference is also the moment when the butler's father ... has a stroke and dies while Stevens himself ... refuses to interrupt his professional attentions to the diplomats downstairs".²¹ Robbins's wry remark, "In case we miss the point", clearly points to a designing force behind the novel which sees to it that this design is noticed by the reader.

Etsuko's account of how Sachiko neglects her daughter implies unvoiced accusations. Before the identity between the two women is fully revealed, we gain a singular insight into the overstrained Sachiko's reaction to these oblique reproaches through a rhetorical question she asks when once again Etsuko warns that things in the USA may not turn out well for Mariko and her friend: "Do you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother...?" (*PV*, 171). In a long succession of indirections, this outburst of straightforwardness brings it home that Etsuko's cautious but insistent criticism of Sachiko's child-rearing falls rather short of the accused person's self-awareness. Thus, it is not the case that Etsuko is blessed with an insight into the moral nature of Sachiko's treatment of the girl that the criticised mother herself lacks; rather, both women share the same negative view of this treatment.

Along with earlier occasions on which Sachiko embarrasses her friend by letting it on that she knows what is going on in Etsuko's mind, this scene paves the way for the 'we'-for-'you' and the 'Keiko'-for-'Mariko' substitutions, which unambiguously establish that Sachiko is the narrator's unacknowledged second self. However, these misnomers are only a crystallisation of the general drift of the novel, which gestures towards the sameness of the two. The outburst, by contrast, introduces something new. For this reason, Sheng-mei Ma's view, representative of many others, of the last slip as "the final 'punch line'" seems to shift too much emphasis away from the revelatory outburst scene.²² The slips also appear as less significant in view of the fact that in a recent interview Ishiguro expressed regret over his "gimmicky" handling of the blurring of different time levels in the novel as indicated by the misnomers.²³

Sachiko, who has so far been under scrutiny, reciprocates this look openly in her outburst, which causes Etsuko to realise that somebody's

²⁰ Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989).

²¹ Bruce Robbins, "Very busy just now: Globalization and Harriedness in Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*", *Comparative Literature* 53.4 (Fall 2001), 426.

²² Sheng-Mei Ma, "Immigrant Schizophrenic in Asian Diaspora Literature", *Immigrant Subjectivities in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Literature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 18.

²³ "Kazuo Ishiguro: The Art of Fiction No. 196" (interview), *Paris Review* 184 (Spring 2008), 39.

²⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 133.

²⁵ June Price Tangney and Peter Salovey, "Problematic Social Emotions: Shame, Guilt, Jealousy, and Envy", ed. by Robin M. Kowalski et al., *The Social Psychology of Emotional and Behavioral Problems. Interfaces of Social and Clinical Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 179.

²⁶ Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 92.

²⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 261.

²⁸ Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep. An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988).

gaze rests on her too. Because of his/her identification with the narrator, the reader is likely to feel the same. Wolfgang Iser describes such processes as "an essential quality of aesthetic experience": through "discrepancies" such as the suddenly enabled new view on Sachiko, the reader "may detach himself from his own participation in the text and see himself being guided from without".²⁴ Such awareness, doubling Etsuko's experience of being watched and caught by Sachiko, requires someone who acts as observer and guide. This suddenly obtrusive presence can be captured, I propose, with the notion of the implied author.

Iser points to the self-awareness involved in the act of reading: "the observer finds himself in a strange, halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved" (134). We can relate this to the psychological study of self-conscious emotions, especially shame and guilt. The potential of shame to "motivate productive soul-searching" which may result in "self-repair" has frequently been pointed out by psychologists.²⁵ Philosopher Bernard Williams's view that "shame ... embodies conceptions of what one is and of how one is related to others" entails the same idea.²⁶ Related to this is Sartre's famous account of the emergence of shame, which involves a peeping Tom who suddenly feels caught. This phenomenological scenario can usefully be examined with a view to the outburst scene in *PV*, not only because Sachiko's gaze is repeatedly described as resting on Etsuko. Sartre's peeping Tom is torn out of his absorption with what he sees through a keyhole by the creaking of a floorboard, which causes him to experience shame before the potential gaze of another: "Shame is ... the acknowledgment that I am that object which another self looks at and judges."²⁷ Not dissimilarly, Williams presents a model of the mechanism of shame which is based on an internalised watcher (219-223).

My contention is that the implied author, if taken as a construction by the reader, can derive emotional investment from such an internalised watcher and thus cause the reader's sense of being caught. Just as according to Williams one is aware in the experience of shame of the censure of an internalised authority, the implied author's suddenly felt presence in the outburst scene is that of a judging Other. Characteristically, Booth named his study of ethical criticism, in which his notion of implied author is reiterated, *The Company We Keep*.²⁸ The title expresses the idea that we are not alone when we are reading but accompanied by another who at times may look at us as Sachiko looks back at Etsuko.

The relation between shame and self-awareness is also apparent in the foreshadowings of the outburst scene, but there the self-consciousness is limited to Etsuko; only in the later scene is it extended to the reader: Sachiko knows more about her than Etsuko cares to admit, and this knowledge has the power to cause embarrassment or shame in the person thus seen through.

When Sachiko appears in a scenic presentation for the first time, she is, unaccountably, “gazing” at her friend “with a slightly amused expression”, which makes Etsuko “laugh self-consciously” (*PV*, 15). This self-consciousness forebodes that the self-awareness Etsuko is to gain in the course of the narrative will comprise something unpleasant. Another instance occurs, when Sachiko makes her friend blush by referring to the questions about her lover that she knows Etsuko is burning to ask (*PV*, 71-72).

Because of its merits in the description of readers’ responses, I share Booth’s unwillingness to dispense with the notion of the implied author. He responded to Gérard Genette’s rejection of the concept by questioning the appropriateness of such dismissal for the context of ethical issues, pointing out that we need to go beyond formalism to explore “our reading experience when we *listen* to stories and think not simply about how they are put together but rather about what they *do* to us”.²⁹ The implied author, a ‘mental construct’, “the image of the real author as it could be constructed – by the reader, of course – on the basis of the text”,³⁰ is one cause of the emotions which accompany the reading and enable the reader’s entanglement in what he/she reads. Of the admittedly multi-faceted term, which now is applied to the author’s image of him/herself and now to the reader’s image of the author, at least the latter use is helpful when ethical concerns are investigated. Thus, if we take Genette’s mockingly scientific abbreviation, IA, to stand only for the implied author of formalism, we need not object to his verdict, “Exit IA” (143-144), provided we add that the implied author of reader-oriented criticism remains on stage.

When adopting the concept, we should, however, take into account modifications suggested by more recent research. In his original definition of unreliable narration Booth postulated “a secret communion of the author and reader behind the narrator’s back”,³¹ with the former two seeing through the weaknesses in the latter’s account and behaviour. But for most of Ishiguro’s narrators with their self-admitted unreliability Kathleen Wall’s observation that the implied author and reader do *not* “silently nudge(e) one another in the ribs at the folly and delusion of the narrator” is more accurate.³² Thus, in the outburst scene in *PV* the reader should become aware that something has been going on behind his/her back as well. Whereas the misnomers are betrayals, to take up Jameson’s term again, which upset ontology in that they hint at a fusion of different narrative levels, the outburst adds to this a betrayal of allegiance: it seemingly disappoints the reader’s expectation of loyalty from the implied author. The latter, by granting Sachiko a point over Etsuko, takes on a quality that is not accounted for by Booth’s definition. The reader is dispelled from a high moral ground he/she has shared with Etsuko in what the following misnomers will confirm to be a downward movement ending at a level as low as Sachiko’s.

²⁹ Ibid., 125-126; emphasis in the original. Booth is responding to Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), ch. 19.

³⁰ Genette, *Narrative*, 139. For the implied author as a “mental construct”, see Shlomith Rimmon, “A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: Genette’s *Figures III* and the Structuralist’s Study of Fiction”, *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976), 58.

³¹ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 300.

³² Kathleen Wall, “*The Remains of the Day* and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration”, *Journal of Narrative Technique* 24.11 (1994), 21.

The outburst's revelation that Sachiko shares Etsuko's view of her treatment of Mariko, taken together with the fact that this does not stop her from mistreating the girl, suggests that Etsuko too, were she in her friend's place, could not help neglecting the child. Accordingly, the reader concludes in a first step that in Etsuko he/she has identified with a potential child neglecter. The misnomers then add the information that Etsuko did in fact abuse her daughter, and the reader now becomes aware that he/she has identified with someone who actually abused a child.

The outburst scene is immediately followed by the 'we'-for-'you' substitution, which we now should cease to refer to as a misnomer or slip and read as Etsuko showing that she now acknowledges her guilt towards her first child. The outburst has caused her to realise that she is narrating her own story, not someone else's. Etsuko now threatens to part company with the reader in that she identifies with her alter ego Sachiko, i.e. reintegrates her split-off guilty self. The reader's world is shaken, ultimately through a process initiated by the apparition of the implied author in the outburst scene. To catch up with Etsuko's new level of self-awareness, the reader has to emulate her identification with Sachiko. With transitional states such as this in mind, psychologists Don Kuiken and Shelley Sikora and literary scholar David S. Miall suggest, with reference to Iser, that the fluctuating identification with an author, narrator, or character during the reading process offers within "that 'blank' moment between one identification and another the possibility of changing the reader's sense of self".³³

³³ Don Kuiken, David S. Miall, Shelley Sikora, "Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading", *Poetics Today* 25.2 (Summer 2004), 179. The article is based on an experimental study.

The relationship between Etsuko and Sachiko is mimetic of the relationship between the reader and Etsuko. The reader is to realise that ethically he/she is in the same position with respect to the narrator as she is with respect to Sachiko. What the guilty mother is to Etsuko, namely a means to recognise her own guilt, Etsuko is meant to be to the audience. Now it is up to them to learn from the narrator's mistake in which they have participated and to refrain from condemning her as she has condemned Sachiko. It is exactly self-righteousness of the kind displayed by Etsuko that the reader is intended to avoid directing against her in turn.

The insight effected by Sachiko's outburst on the part of Etsuko and of the reader is not one into moral principles. On the contrary, the scene shows that these are shared by all three. The difference up to this point is merely that Sachiko is in a situation which demands that her existing moral principles be put to practice, and Etsuko is not – their principles themselves do not differ. Likewise, it is demonstrated to the reader that up to the outburst he/she has only observed someone else's predicament. As, according to Iser, "meaning is not to be illustrated by the characters, but is to take place within the reader"³⁴ the identification with the judgmental Etsuko is intended to entangle him/her in the moral dilemma dealt with in the novel. As a result, the reader "is suddenly being subjected

³⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 43.

to the standards of his own criticism” and “realizes that he is similar to those who are supposed to be the objects of his criticism” (116-117).

In *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, which deals with more radical forms of otherness than that represented by Sachiko in *PV*, Richard Kearney asks: “is it not this sense of the other as, in part, a stranger in myself, keeping me a stranger to myself, which serves the crucial function of moral ‘conscience’ (*Gewissen*)?”³⁵ We have indeed seen that in the outburst scene Sachiko, whom we took for someone morally estranged from us, serves as a vehicle for Etsuko’s and our voice of conscience that makes us confront someone in ourselves whom we would prefer to regard as a stranger. If the implied author, to whom we attribute this voice, is a phantom, someone we ourselves construct in the reading process on the basis of a figure internalised during our socialisation, we at times feel this phantom’s gaze resting on us all the same, a gaze that can haunt us with the phantom pain of being caught in a shameful act of which we thought only strangers capable.

³⁵ Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 80.