

# Chronotopic Heroes as Non-Performative Subjects in Kazuo Ishiguro's Double-Timed Novels: *The Buried Giant*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *When We Were Orphans*❖

Yağmur Sönmez-Demir❖

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal non-performative chronotopic heroes in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* (2015), *The Remains of the Day* (1989), and *When We Were Orphans* (2000). In these novels, the chronotopes of the Arthurian romance, the country house novel, and interwar detective fiction are juxtaposed with the actual historical chronotopes of these genres to undermine the genres' ideological function of consolidating British national identity. *The Buried Giant* features a quintessentially English hero, a knight who fails to be a performative subject in the process of national identity consolidation. The narrative thereby foregrounds the constructedness of English national identity and the great gap between how Englishness was imagined in the chronotope of the Arthurian romance and how it is imagined in contemporary times. Other Ishiguro novels, *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*, follow a similar trajectory by juxtaposing the chronotopes of the country house novel and interwar detective fiction with the actual historical chronotopes and representations of non-performative English heroes: a butler and a detective, who, with their disillusionment, serve to display the constructed nature of Englishness. In addition to non-performative heroes, who fail to be performative when considered within the framework of Homi Bhabha's performative mode in consolidating the idea of nation, the dysfunctionality of the genres in Ishiguro's novels leads to a

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Yağmur Sönmez-Demir, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Çankaya University, Turkey ([yagmursonmez@yahoo.com](mailto:yagmursonmez@yahoo.com)).

reconsideration of the way English national identity is imagined now.

**KEYWORDS:** Ishiguro, chronotope, non-performative heroes, literary genres, Englishness

# 石黑一雄雙重時間敘事小說中的 時空體英雄作為非展演性主體： 以《被埋葬的記憶》、《長日將盡》 與《我輩孤雛》為例<sup>◇</sup>

Yağmur Sönmez-Demir<sup>◇</sup>

## 摘 要

本研究旨在揭示石黑一雄 (Kazuo Ishiguro) 著作《被埋葬的記憶》( *The Buried Giant*, 2015 )、《長日將盡》( *The Remains of the Day*, 1989 )，及《我輩孤雛》( *When We Were Orphans*, 2000 ) 中，具備非展演性 (non-performative) 特質的時空體 (chronotopic) 英雄。在這些小說中，亞瑟王傳奇、鄉間莊園小說，以及戰間期偵探小說的時空體，與這些文類所處的實際歷史時空體並置，藉此削弱這些文類在意識形態上鞏固英國國家認同的功能。《被埋葬的記憶》主要刻劃一位典型的英格蘭英雄——一名在國家認同鞏固的過程中，未能成為展演性主體 (performative subject) 的騎士。敘事進而向前凸顯了英格蘭國家認同的建構性 (constructedness)，和亞瑟王傳奇時空體中所想像的英格蘭性 (Englishness)，及其在當代想像之間的巨大鴻溝。石黑一雄的其它小說《長日將盡》與《我輩孤雛》亦遵循相似的路徑：將鄉間莊園小說與戰間期偵探小說的時空體，和實際的歷史時空體、非展演性之英格蘭英雄的再現 (分別為管家與偵探) 並置，而從這兩位英雄的幻滅，展現出英格蘭性的建構本質。除了參照巴巴 (Homi Bhabha) 關於鞏固國家概念的展演模式 (performative mode) 框架後，而得出之非展演性英雄外，石黑一雄小說中傳統文

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Yağmur Sönmez-Demir, 土耳其詹卡亞大學英語與文學系助理教授  
([yagmursonmez@yahoo.com](mailto:yagmursonmez@yahoo.com))。

類的失能，也引導讀者重新審視當代英格蘭國家認同被想像的方式。

**關鍵詞：**石黑一雄、時空體、非展演性英雄、文學文類、英格蘭性

## I. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro, from the beginning of his career, has concentrated on similar themes in his novels, such as memory and nostalgia, national identity, and authoritarianism. While similar themes run through his novels, the setting constantly changes because he explores the themes in diverse time-spaces. In an interview with Hope Whitmore, Ishiguro acknowledges this saying, “I find that my themes remain very similar, but I like to change the periods in which they are set, and the genre” (“Nobel Laureate”). Another common aspect of his novels is their “focus on episodes in modern history that confront us with the limits of our humanity” (Groes and Lewis, “‘It’s’” 7), such as the bombing of Nagasaki in WWII in *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), Japan’s imperial propaganda in the aftermath of WWII in *An Artist of the Floating World* (1984), the rise of Nazism and authoritarianism in the years leading to WWII in *The Remains of the Day* (1989), the opium trade around Shanghai between the world wars in *When We Were Orphans* (2000), and the rise of racism across England fuelled by the Brexit process in *The Buried Giant* (2015).

Although Ishiguro sets his novels at critical historical junctures, the historical events of global and national significance are barely mentioned; what is brought to the fore is the private life history of a character and his self-deception as a condition of being human. When read comparatively, Ishiguro’s novels *The Buried Giant*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *When We Were Orphans* reveal the author’s interest in the constructed nature of English national identity. This paper argues that along with non-performative heroes, who fail to be performative when considered through Homi Bhabha’s performative mode in the process of nation building and consolidating the idea of nation, the dysfunctionality of the genres in Ishiguro’s novels leads to a reconsideration of the way English national identity is imagined now.

Ishiguro’s reworking of stereotypes and genres has been touched upon by a few critics. The only critic who has a comparative approach to Ishiguro’s novels is Stephanie Fricke, who examines five novels by Ishiguro, including *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*, with an emphasis on stereotypical characters and their “clichéd personas” which are used “to create and often subvert reader expectations” (23). Yet, Fricke does not touch upon the double-timed nature of Ishiguro’s narratives; that is, although she refers to Ishiguro’s subversion of generic conventions, she does not focus on how

Ishiguro uses these genres to make a critical appraisal of his time. Meanwhile, Joanna Bukowska implies that *The Buried Giant* “can be interpreted as the manifestation of Ishiguro’s concern with contemporary multiculturalist policies and their challenges” (29), but her analysis does not draw parallels between the story world and the contemporary world. Similarly, considering *The Buried Giant* a historical fantasy, Günter Leypoldt believes that Ishiguro “purges his text of genre-typical modes of delivery” and challenges “allegories of the political present,” but he does not specify and expound on which contemporary political events are addressed or represented in Ishiguro’s writing.

In this study, the heroes in Ishiguro’s narratives are analysed as non-performative subjects in the process of national identity consolidation. As acknowledged by Chris Holmes and Kelly Rich, Ishiguro’s “play with genre, form, and narrative, however subtly performed, always suggests a doubling, another vantage point from which we might look differently at his world and our own” (1). This study intends to contribute to the scholarship on Ishiguro by analysing his novels and drawing attention to the indivisibility of Ishiguro’s interest in generic conventions and socio-political matters—specifically, the imperial English national identity. To demonstrate this point, I will discuss three of Ishiguro’s novels, with *The Buried Giant* as my main focus, and will comment on how the non-performativity of the heroes in these texts contributes to dismantling the constructed nature of Englishness. Against the backdrop of postmodern literary criticism, Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the “chronotope” and Benedict Anderson’s and Homi Bhabha’s theories of the nation as a narrative will form the theoretical framework of this study.

## II. Literary Chronotopes and Theories of the Nation as a Narrative

Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope (literally, “time space”) discussed in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* proves useful for studying Ishiguro’s approach to and treatment of genres in his fiction. Bakhtin explains chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (*Dialogic Imagination* 84). According to Bakhtin, a chronotope is “a formally constitutive category of literature” (84) because, as he argues, chronotopes are what differentiate one genre from another. In Bakhtin’s analysis, each genre has a corresponding chronotope which has an intrinsic and complicated relationship with the actual historical

chronotope (85), that is, the contemporary context in which the work is published. For Bakhtin, the real and the represented worlds are in constant mutual interaction. Suggesting an analogy between genres and biological organisms, he explains, “As long as the organism lives, it resists a fusion with the environment, but if it is torn out of its environment, it dies” (254). Although they refuse full amalgamation, the chronotope of a genre and its actual historical chronotope are interdependent; once they are separated, the genre ceases to exist or cannot function properly. Accordingly, in Ishiguro’s fiction, genres are displaced from their time-spaces, which leads to a disruption in the genre’s situatedness and interaction with its actual historical chronotope; however, this replacement of their habitat (chronotopicality) with a more contemporary time of publication does not cause the genres’ death, but enables them to prosper and engage critically with the old and new actual historical worlds.

Ishiguro’s employment of certain genres suggests that he sees a link between current sociopolitical conditions and the emergence and popularity of specific genres over others at particular historical moments. In *The Remains of the Day*, *When We Were Orphans*, and *The Buried Giant*, the chronotopes of past and present coexist to display the complex interactions between those chronotopes regarding the formation and transformation of English national identity. As Bakhtin emphasizes, “Out of the actual chronotopes of our world emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work” (*Dialogic Imagination* 253), and Ishiguro’s reflected chronotopes in his novels are intrinsically related to the actual chronotopes of his time. In this respect, the doubly chronotopic essence of his novels and the inherently coexistent nature of past and present in the concept of the nation may be juxtaposed to further appreciation of his works.

The notions of nation and literary genre are intricately related in Ishiguro’s novels; both are treated as constructs in line with theories of the nation as a narrative. In this context, Anderson puts forward the idea that a nation is an “imagined” or constructed community: “it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). Similarly, Bhabha sees the nation as a construct, and asserts that

nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye . . . [I]t is from

those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. (“Narrating” 1)

In addition to emphasising the concept of nation as an “idea” in people’s minds, Bhabha also draws attention to “the people” and suggests that people be considered

in a double-time; the people are the historical “objects” of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the “subjects” of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people. (“DissemiNation” 297)

People contribute to the making of the nation in two different time frames: they are the objects of nationalist teaching, thereby enforcing a cohesion with the past, and they are also subjects producing meaning actively at present. In Bhabha’s formulation, the pedagogical mode corresponds to the past, and the performative one to the present; these two modes together create a nation. The pedagogic mode requires a fixed origin and links people (as passive objects) to a common origin, whereas the performative mode requires the narration to be repeated by people as active subjects to perform their roles in the making of the nation. For the idea of nationhood to settle down, certain habitual actions should be repeated constantly until they become an ordinary part of culture. The individual identities of citizens are also a part of national identity, as people living in a certain community are raised in accordance with the ideology of that nation. Bhabha acknowledges the nation’s interaction with the past and present while uniting them: the nation forms an “alliance between an immanent, platitudinous present and the eternal visibility of a past” (“DissemiNation” 302). Both the pedagogical and the performative modes consolidate the idea of nationhood; however, the performative is related to the present of the people as subjects performing in the process of signification. They are functional in the process of nation-building, or consolidating the idea of nationality as performative subjects. When they fail to function properly in their performance as ideal nationals, they disrupt the process of consolidating the idea of

nationality; and they may be labelled as “non-performative subjects.” Rather than reinforcing a country’s national identity, non-performative subjects undermine it, thereby weakening the traditional understanding of national identity. In the actual historical chronotopes of these genres, the heroes act as performative subjects; the heroes of Ishiguro’s novels, however, either choose not to perform their roles or fail to be performative in the process of consolidating the nation.

Double time does not only pertain to the genres Ishiguro uses, but also to the concept of the nation. Bhabha proposes the chronotope of the “double time” for the nation: the usage of the glorious memories and myths of the past in the present through promising a glorious future; “[t]he language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past” (“DissemiNation” 294). Whereas Anderson believes that the nation is a “horizontal comradeship,” Bhabha believes that “the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a kind of ‘doubleness’ in writing” (293). Bhabha’s approach, however, is antithetical to Anderson’s insistence on simultaneity and homogeneity, for he argues that “[t]he nation cannot be conceived in a state of *equilibrium* between several elements co-ordinated” (301). The opposing and multiple components that form a nation are impossible to keep in balance; thus, the nation is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. While narrating the nation, “the position of narrative control is neither monocular [n]or monologic” (Bhabha, “DissemiNation” 301) but has to do with double-time, with the past and the present simultaneously. Ishiguro’s double-timed novels are in harmony with the idea of the nation as narrative.

As both Anderson and Bhabha suggest, the novel has played a crucial role as a narrative medium in constructing national identities. In fact, the formation of nation-states coincides with the rise of the novel towards the end of the eighteenth century. Not only ideologically, but also in terms of geography, novels consolidate the idea of an imagined community that is limited within physical boundaries, an idea which has continued from the eighteenth century to the present day. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the chronotope of the novel genre changes in each period and that the changes in the socio-historical context of the work are reflected in the national consciousness of each era. The change in the chronotope of the novel causes and is caused by a change

in the chronotope of the nation, and this can be observed in the novels of Ishiguro.

In this context, Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodernism may give a clue about the chronotope of the postmodern novel and how it might affect a change in the ways in which nation is imagined today. She maintains that postmodernism is "politically ambivalent, doubly encoded as both complicity and critique" (*Politics* 168); it is "almost always double-voiced" (*Poetics* 44), and it has a distinctive characteristic of "wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity" (*Politics* 1). In Hutcheon's conceptualisation, postmodernism embraces two opposing views simultaneously as well as being open to multiple interpretations; for her "double-coding" characterises postmodern fiction, and contradictions of postmodernism "are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of 'the presence of the past'" (*Poetics* 4). As a corollary of postmodernist ironic self-referentiality and the presence of the past in the present, the chronotope of the nation is also transformed, leading to a reconsideration or revision of the ways in which the nation has been narrated.

The heroes of Ishiguro's selected postmodern novels,<sup>1</sup> butler Stevens, detective Banks, and a former knight Axl, are portrayed as non-performative subjects in the process of nation formation, yet they also carry the stamp of the genres they feature in: the country house novel, interwar detective fiction, and Arthurian romance. While discussing subcategories of the genre, Bakhtin calls for a "classification according to how the image of the main hero is constructed" (*Speech Genres* 10). The protagonist is also constructed according to generic conventions: "Since all elements are mutually determined, the principle for formulating the hero figure is related to the particular type of plot, to the particular conception of the world, and to a particular composition of a given novel" (10). Additionally, Bakhtin dwells on the connection between the hero and time; the hero's development has a "profoundly chronotopic nature" (23), for "he emerges along with the world, and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between

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<sup>1</sup> There is ongoing critical debate regarding the proper classification of Ishiguro's oeuvre. While some scholars position him as a late modernist rather than a postmodernist (see Waugh), *The Buried Giant* in particular engages with aesthetic and thematic tendencies associated with post-postmodernism or metamodernism—paradigms that several critics argue have superseded postmodernism in contemporary literary production. In line with the argument of this study, I consider the aforementioned three novels postmodern due to their historical, political, parodic, playful, and critical aspects.

two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other” (23). In line with Bakhtin’s ideas about the hero, Ishiguro’s heroes occupy a double place and are represented on the threshold of two chronotopes simultaneously. Since these characters are peculiar to the genres they feature in, representing them in postmodern novels is a means of engaging them in two time-spaces concurrently, while commenting on two different historical periods in terms of their approach to national identity. Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of the main hero as representing two epochs simultaneously is also in line with Bhabha’s statement that the people constituting a nation should be considered in double-time, and “their metaphoric movement requires a kind of ‘doubleness’ in writing” (“DissemiNation” 293). Hence, reading Ishiguro’s postmodern texts in the light of Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope and Bhabha’s theory of the nation as a narrative discloses how the heroes’ non-performativity touches on contemporary discussions about English national identity.

## II. Arthurian Romance and British National Identity

The earliest progenitor of romance as a genre is believed to be Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose Latin prose *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*), “written between 1130 and 1136 . . . masquerades as a meticulously exact account of British history, . . . [and] it was the pseudo-historical basis on which the whole story of Arthur was erected” (Pearsall 7). Monmouth’s narrative was viewed as the real history of the British, though it was only a fictional account of history. In fact, by presenting his work as a piece of history, Monmouth creates the roots of an imagined community for the British, since his “purpose was to claim descent for Britain from Troy, and also to create a great national hero, in whom the nation would be symbolized, in the person of Arthur” (Pearsall 8). What is now called England was once a part of the Roman Empire until the arrival of Germanic tribes, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, in England around the fifth century. Coming from across the North Sea, these tribes fought with each other as well as with Britons, the earliest inhabitants of the island. History books or chronicles of early Britain rarely mention a warrior called “Arthur”;<sup>2</sup> however, they refer to “a British hero called Ambrosius

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<sup>2</sup> One of the first mentions of King Arthur in a historical text is in *Historia Brittonum*, which is considered to have been written about the ninth century by a priest named Nennius from South Wales.

Aurelianus . . . . Everything is shrouded in mystery, so much so that several centuries later a British hero was invented. He was King Arthur” (Strong 47-48). The insufficiency of proof about the existence of such a hero suggests that King Arthur is a personage “invented” to imply “continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1).<sup>3</sup> Along with his knights and the Round Table, King Arthur is considered the representative of “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature” (Hobsbawm 1). Over time, the code of chivalry, with which Arthur’s knights have been associated, has become one of the defining characteristics of Britishness. Although created around the twelfth century, the myth of King Arthur still retains its symbolic value in terms of Britishness in the contemporary era.

Traditionally, the romance has been a genre romanticising and promoting the interests of a nation. In “the matter of Britain” romance (Fuchs 39), namely the Arthurian romance which “has Arthur’s court as its background or point of reference, but it is not about Arthur” (Pearsall 20), King Arthur is there as a former national hero and generically the Arthurian romance tells “tales evoking a golden [past] world” (Whetter 63). The Arthurian romance was an invaluable asset in the process of nation-building, since it “offered a combination of history and myth which was particularly acceptable to society intent upon mythologizing itself” (Beer 22). As romance is “a genre of the nation: a genre about the nation and for the nation’s important fictions” (Heng 113), in an Arthurian romance any threat to the unity of King Arthur’s court (and thereby the nation) should be eliminated. Thus the hero pursues a quest and several adventures during which he encounters supernatural beings and is sometimes aided by wizards and enchanted objects. The hero should return to the court safe and sound, and the story should end happily, either with a union of the hero and the lady, or the hero being rewarded by his king. Furthermore, “the hero’s personal decisions and fortunes are likely to be actively associated with the fate of the nation: his safety implies its protection, his fruitfulness, its prosperity” (Speed 147). Hence, the hero is the most salient figure in a romance and the parallelism between the hero’s and the nation’s fate requires the romance to have a happy ending.

The Arthurian romance, a popular historical genre, plays a significant role in constructing British mythical national identity. For Geraldine Heng, romance

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<sup>3</sup> According to Eric Hobsbawm, “traditions which appear to or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (1) and this process helps the development of a national identity.

is “a literary medium that solicits or *invents* the cultural means by which the medieval nation might be most productively conceptualized and projected” (6; emphasis added). Heng’s stress on the invented nature of the nation echoes Anderson’s conceptualisation of the nation as an “imagined community” foregrounding invented traditions and symbols by means of which the people make connections between the past and the present. Heng’s idea of romance as a medium for conceptualising the medieval nation is very similar to that of Anderson’s consideration of the novel and newspaper as “technical means of imagining the nation” (25). Like the eighteenth century novel promoting the idea of nation states, the romance contributed to the construction of the British nation in the Middle Ages by inculcating the idea of mythical Britishness in peoples’ minds. With the glorious King Arthur and the brave and honourable knights of the Round Table in the Arthurian romances, an all-powerful British identity was constructed. As Ernest Renan argues, “To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people” (19). Nation-building, therefore, requires the simultaneous interaction of past and present, which is well provided by the romance genre with its evocation of the heroic deeds of King Arthur. Indeed, “by intervening, persuading, influencing, judging, innovating, and deciding, [romance] has a hand in the shaping of the past and the making of the future” (Heng 8). According to Bhabha, the nation is an alliance between past and present; therefore, narrating the nation requires “doubleness” in writing, which is in line with Heng’s argument about romance’s effect on the construction of the nation. The Arthurian romance successfully undertakes the mission of creating a bridge between the past and the future of the British nation.

In terms of generic diversity, *The Buried Giant* is considered by several critics, who acknowledge the elements of Arthurian romance, to have the features of various literary forms. Daniel Bedggood maintains that Ishiguro uses the features of Arthurian legends together with fantasy genre elements, allowing him to “ironise and challenge the nostalgia and conservative mythopoeia” (115). According to Matthew Eatough, the novel “casts itself as a pseudo-Arthurian romance” (51). Concerning *The Remains of the Day* and *The Buried Giant*, Richard Russell also maintains that both novels “subvert one subgenre—pastoral—and expand the category of fantasy fiction, thus forming a kind of anti-pastoral dyad, an extended fantasy examination of the English

countryside in the 1920s–1950s and in the near-mythic Arthurian past” (300). Drawing on the views of these critics, this paper treats *The Buried Giant* as a reworking of Arthurian romance with a specific emphasis on the figure of the knight.

### III. The Knight as a Non-Performative Subject in *The Buried Giant*

*The Buried Giant* (henceforth, *Giant*) hosts the chronotope of the Arthurian romance and the chronotope of the postmodern novel simultaneously to lay bare the discrepancy between how Britishness was imagined in the past, and how it is imagined now. The chronotope of the postmodern novel is marked by parody, playfulness, and double-codedness, for it deals with past and present simultaneously. From the very beginning of the narration, the double-codedness of the text is hinted at: it is informed both by the time-space of the early days of post-Arthurian Britain and England’s present time. The story starts with the narrator’s description of the landscape, which is presented through a comparison of the version for which Britain has been famous (historical Britain) and the created chronotope of the novel, namely the sixth century. The narrator defines it as characterised by “miles of desolate, uncultivated land; here and there rough-hewn paths over craggy hills or bleak moorland” (Ishiguro, *Giant* 3). In contrast to the manufactured belief that Britain has always been a green country, a more desolate one is described. The narratee is apparently the narrator’s fellow British national, for the narrator states, “I am sorry to paint such a picture of our country at that time, but there you are” (5). With this juxtaposition of the past and the present of the English landscape, a double-timed text is created, which is a characteristic of postmodern fiction. Interestingly, it is also a quality of the romance: “‘Double time’ is the norm in English romance . . . as it locates the story at a particular moment of the past and sets out a sequence of events for the information or wonder of the audience” (Speed 149).

This text is also informed by Ishiguro’s present-day concerns and evokes a distant past in order to critique the decision taken by British politicians at the time of the novel’s production to offer a referendum over leaving the European Union, namely Brexit. While the national longing for the imperial and powerful days of Britain was one of the main reasons leading to Brexit, “Leave” voters also desired national sovereignty, immigration control, and economic

independence, and it could be argued that “Englishness has been reasserted through a racializing, insular nationalism, and it found its voice in the course of Brexit” (Virdee and McGeever 1804). By depicting the so-called golden past from a different perspective, Ishiguro obliquely displays the constructed and idealised image of Britishness.

In the text, Ishiguro establishes a link between mythology, memory, and forgetfulness. The hero, Axl, is a former knight of King Arthur, yet this is disclosed towards the end of the novel because neither he nor any other characters can remember his true identity because of a mysterious mist. Together with his wife, Beatrice, Axl sets out to find their son’s village. In Arthur’s time, Axl is called “the Knight of Peace” (Ishiguro, *Giant* 242) for having brokered a peace treaty between Britons and Saxons. The legendary Sir Gawain features as a character and is now the embodiment of a bygone tradition. He is described as “no threatening figure. He appeared to be very tall, but . . . thin, if wiry. His armour was frayed and rusted . . . His tunic, once white, showed repeated mending” (119). His appearance, which provides a contrast with conventional Arthurian knights, displays the weakness of old age and the obsolescence of holding onto the myth of King Arthur in contemporary England. Although for years he has claimed to be given the duty to kill the she-dragon Querig, he discloses that he is actually “her protector, and lately her only friend” (319). Despite Arthur’s faulty order to kill all Saxons regardless of their innocence in war, Sir Gawain remains his ardent supporter. Thanks to the enchanted dragon’s breath, which blurs the past in the minds of the people, Arthur ensures peace while it is alive because the people cannot remember the slaughter of innocent Saxons by Britons. Similar to a historian who manipulates his readers by choosing what to include in his books, King Arthur plays a salient role in people’s forgetting their past; he assumes godly authority by manipulating their memories.

Towards the end of their quests, the road of the Saxon warrior Wistan and the knights converge close to the dragon’s lair, and the buried secrets are disclosed. Sir Gawain accepts the Britons’ attempts at ethnic cleansing of the Saxons for the purpose of peace, saying, “Yes, we slaughtered plenty, I admit it, caring not who was strong and who weak” (Ishiguro, *Giant* 326). Wistan is there to slay the dragon to put an end to collective amnesia, but Sir Gawain begs him not to do that. Yet Wistan is determined to fulfil his aim of killing the dragon, for he believes that sooner or later the pseudo-peace will be disturbed

and that “wrongs [should not] go forgotten and unpunished” (327). He fights Sir Gawain, kills him, and then slays the dragon. None of the characters, except Wistan, are successful in their quests. Sir Gawain could not protect the she-dragon, nor could Axl and Beatrice reach their son’s village. Once Querig, the reason for the collective forgetting, is destroyed, flames of hatred will cover the country, and as envisaged by Wistan: “The giant, once well buried, now stirs. When soon he rises, as surely he will, . . . [m]en will burn their neighbours’ houses by night. Hang children from trees at dawn” (340). Hence, the giant can be read as an indirect metaphor for racism; it represents Britons’ slaughter of Saxons after breaching the treaty of peace. Just like the giant, this past act of racism has remained buried. If Saxons remember what the dragon hides—Arthur’s massacre of their ancestors—they may conduct a war against Britons to avenge their forefathers. This tension between Saxons and Britons is, indeed, a symbolic representation of the attitude of the people of contemporary England towards immigrants and their choice of Brexit, fuelled by their feelings of xenophobia. Concerning this issue, Matthew Vernon and Margaret Miller suggest that the novel “deconstructs the nature of cosmopolitanism” and, in the midst of Brexit negotiations, “asks for a pause to reconsider the myriad thresholds already within the country’s own borders” (86).

The knight, Sir Gawain, is rendered in doubt in his loyalty to his king, thereby his loyalty to his country, and as a corollary to this, his nationality, namely Britishness, needs to be scrutinised. Axl’s defiance of King Arthur’s authority by cursing him because of his decisions to break the peace pact and leave the knighthood, which is a highly elevated rank in Britain, is a way of discrediting what King Arthur stands for. Axl refuses the honour endowed by the great King Arthur, for he disapproves of Arthur’s misguided and unmerited political move. Expressed in Bhabha’s terminology, Axl decides to stop performing the role of knight, thereby disturbing his role in the process of signification for national identity construction. The other knight, Sir Gawain, has been loyal to his duty to protect Querig; however, he also seems to regret killing innocent people: he says, “killing the enemy . . . in their hundreds . . . I acted as I thought would please God” (Ishiguro, *Giant* 198). Though he perceives King Arthur’s decision as faulty, he does not have the power to object to it, for he says, “what good for me to argue with a great king, and he my uncle too?” (244). Sir Gawain also realises that he has missed the opportunity of a happier life for the sake of being a good knight, and laments saying, “I had no

wife, though at times I longed for one. Yet I was a good knight who performed his duty to the end” (244). By using the pronoun “his” instead of “my” while mentioning duty, he makes it explicit that knighthood is a performance for him, and it is like a mask separate from his authentic identity. This disillusionment of the knight adds to the idea that Sir Gawain serves King Arthur’s legacy of Britishness in vain.

The Arthurian romance is destabilised in *Giant* in both formal and ideological aspects. Unlike traditional Arthurian romances, the story of a couple rather than a brave knight is foregrounded. It is not the hero’s loyalty to his king, but the couple’s ability to remember their happy memories of love for one another that is put to the test. The narrative does not start at Arthur’s court, nor does it end where it starts. Hence, the cycle is not completed. As a result, harmony is not restored; instead, the peace between Saxons and Britons is broken with the dragon’s being killed, thus making her dysfunctional in people’s forgetting their memories. The ending of the novel is not a happy one; Axl and Beatrice are separated by death. The final defeat of Sir Gawain and the death of the dragon imply the end of Arthur’s influence on the people.

In several respects, the Arthurian romance’s consolidation of an imperial British identity is undermined by the characterisation and presentation of a different facet of established history. The forefather of Britons, Arthur, who is an idealised British hero and thus the representative of a perfect Briton depicted as being gratefully respected, is long dead and vaguely remembered as an undignified king because of breaking the pact with the Saxons. One of the two knights of the Round Table, Axl has realised the fault of his king and decides to leave his service, while the other, Sir Gawain, is killed by a Saxon warrior. Axl is on the border between two epochs; he is a chronotopic hero who intentionally fails to perform his role in the process of signification. Much as Sir Gawain remains loyal to Arthur until his last breath, he has reservations about having spent his life as a disciple of him in vain, and he regrets the road not taken: a happy life with a wife. The most salient figures of Britishness are rendered dysfunctional (and disillusioned to some extent), as is the image of a perfect and “great” Britain itself.

Ishiguro’s reconfiguration of the Arthurian romance is informed by his concerns about political issues and national identity in contemporary England. He expressed his ideas on Brexit in a 2016 newspaper article. For Ishiguro, the reason people voted “Leave” was to stop uncontrolled immigration: “I realise

that ‘taking the country back’ and ‘sovereignty’ were for many people just euphemisms for ‘kick out the migrants’” (“Kazuo Ishiguro”). He also expressed his “anger” that Europe—“a much-envied region of liberal democracies living in near-borderless friendship—should now be so profoundly undermined by such a myopic process as took place in Britain.” He believes that leaving the EU is a retrogressive act for the country, and it is caused by people who are nostalgic about being as powerful as the British were once. He considers voting to leave the EU an act of racism and severely criticises “Leave” voters because of the harm they inflicted on both their country and several other countries. The nativist tendencies leading to Brexit and racism in contemporary England seem to have made Ishiguro question the origins of the nation and debunk the myth of great Britishness, which dates back to the Arthurian myth. He has critiqued several aspects of nationalism from his first novels onwards and delved into the roots of Englishness across several of his works.

*Giant* is, therefore, a “counter-narrative of the nation” in Bhabha’s terms (“DissemiNation” 300); this text contests the founding myth of Britishness and the earliest British genre (the Arthurian romance) that served to narrate the nation, with the implication that how Britishness was *imagined* in the Middle Ages greatly differs from what it is now. In the novel, neither collective remembering nor collective forgetting is deemed healthy in terms of building and sustaining a national identity and living peacefully. While suggesting a reconsideration of the way British nationality is consolidated, Ishiguro hints at keeping up with the contemporary age, which, in fact, requires not holding on to the conservative understanding of identity but embracing plurality and having an identity beyond all nations: a post-national identity.

#### **IV. The Disillusioned Butler in *The Remains of the Day***

In *The Remains of the Day* (henceforth, *Remains*), Ishiguro juxtaposes the chronotope of the nineteenth-century country house novel and the chronotope of the actual historical present (1980s). It can be held that Ishiguro employs what Bhabha calls a “double-timed” narrative of the nation with the help of a simultaneous engagement with past and present. What Ishiguro does is in line with the dual nature of the nation, and as Renan holds, “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things . . . constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present” (19). Ishiguro fuses the chronotope of the

postmodern novel and the chronotope of the country house novel to lay bare the constructedness of English national identity. The butler, Mr. Stevens, is represented as trying to perform Englishness as best as he can; however, as a result of his disillusionment, he emerges as a non-performative subject of English national identity. The private history of butler Stevens is recounted by himself rather than by a conventional third-person omniscient narrator who usually tells the history of rich families in country house novel genre. The narration begins at a great country house, Darlington Hall, which takes its name from its previous owner, the Darlington family, that possessed the house for over two centuries before it was sold to an American. Stevens thinks he “did actually ‘see’ more of England than most . . . in houses where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered” (Ishiguro, *Remains* 4). Indeed, for Stevens, Darlington Hall is the site of decision makers from the privileged classes of British society and thus a microcosm of England, which frequently hosted the members of the feudal aristocracy. The country house acts both as a symbol of the great bygone years of Britain and a place of memory preserving Britain’s public history with its international politics, thereby representing a “great” British national identity.

*Remains* undermines the generic postulation of the myths of England as the greatest country and Englishness as the greatest national identity. At the background of the narration, England’s loss of her imperial power is suggested by various events. One such indication is the beginning of the story time which is July 1956, and Darlington Hall’s having been sold to an American businessman. This takeover includes a veiled reference to the political history of England and the political rivalry between America and Britain in the 1950s when the US interfered in the Suez Crisis and caused Britain to lose control over the Suez Canal. This ended British domination over Egypt and was a signal of the end of British imperial power overseas. In the aftermath of World War II, with the decline in colonialism, power shifted to the United States and the Soviet Union. As Great Britain was replaced by the United States in the political stage of the world in the 1950s, Darlington Hall also passed into the hands of an American businessman, thereby becoming the property of a different nation rather than remaining in the hands of an English landlord. Indeed, though the novel is set around 1956 in the aftermath of WWII, it was penned and published in 1989, when Margaret Thatcher had been Prime Minister of the UK for ten years.

By trying to perform the role of a great butler throughout his life, Stevens believes that he has served his nation. In fact, as Bhabha holds that the people have an integral role in the nation formation process, as a butler holding onto age-old traditions of butlership, Stevens occupies a liminal place: he is both a pedagogical object (he is linked to a certain past) and a non-performative subject (he fails to perform the role of a great butler). Mr. Stevens's personal life has been shaped by the mores of butlership. He shuns displaying any emotion because he believes that "emotional restraint" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 44) is what enables the English race to have the best butlers around the world. When his father lies in his deathbed, Stevens does not think he has time to spare for his father because he believes that he has to be on duty. Although Stevens has some feelings towards Miss Kenton, the housekeeper, he prefers to keep them to himself, for he considers it to be inappropriate for the household servants to have intimate relationships amongst themselves. Miss Kenton, on the other hand, is very disturbed by Stevens's indifference to herself and to the events unfolding around him. Once she asks him, "Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?" (162). Miss Kenton realises the discrepancy between the essence of his identity and his performed/constructed identity, and she implies that he is not very successful at hiding his emotions. Mr. Stevens is proud of being a butler because he considers butlership in parallel with the greatness of England. For him, the English race is more suitable to be "great" butlers, and the prerequisite for being a great butler lies in Englishness as well as being "attached to a distinguished household" (32). Although Stevens says, "I am today nothing but proud and grateful to have been given such a privilege" (133), when Lord Darlington's support for the Nazis is revealed, and he dies in misery, he avoids disclosing that he has worked for the notorious Lord Darlington—probably because he is ashamed of his lord's deeds.

Stevens finally realises that he spent his life for nothing; his "honourable" lord, the great country house of his, dignity, and butlership all prove useless in the end. His professionalism that he held onto also collapses, for he says, "More and more errors are appearing in my work" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 255). After his realisation that he put tremendous faith in Lord Darlington's mores and shaped his performance of butlership accordingly, Stevens decides to change to align his approach more with his new employer by practising bantering. He says, "Perhaps it is indeed time I began to look at this whole matter of bantering more enthusiastically . . . [I]n bantering lies the key to human warmth" (258). While

at first, he disdains Mr. Farraday's sincerity and humorous jokes because his attitude is totally at odds with that of Lord Darlington, in his disillusioned state, he feels that is the right thing to do. Mr. Stevens's effort to embrace "human warmth" as opposed to "emotional restraint" (which he deems the underlying quality of butlership) is another sign of his non-performativity of Englishness. Actually, Stevens's words summarise the gist of the novel in terms of English nativism: "there is no virtue at all in clinging as some do to tradition merely for its own sake" (7). Stevens tries to perform the role of an English citizen by being a "first-class" butler, and he is involved in the process of nationalist myth-making. If considered in Bhabha's terms, the great house of Lord Darlington could be taken as a fixed origin connecting traditions and people together. Thus, the pedagogic mode has a historical presence (a pedagogical object is the country house novel), while the performance of narrative is constructed in the present by the old butler Stevens.

## V. The Self-Delusional Detective in *When We Were Orphans*

In *When We Were Orphans* (henceforth, *Orphans*), Ishiguro juxtaposes the chronotope of interwar detective fiction (1920s and 1930s) with that of the actual historical present (1990s and 2000s) and depicts the detective as a self-delusional and non-performative subject. *Orphans* features an unconventional detective figure, Christopher Banks, who tries to imitate the famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. However, in doing so, he experiences a split between his "real" self and constructed self, as a consequence of which being a detective remains an unsuccessful performance.

In fact, Banks starts assuming the role of a detective at a very early age. As an English citizen living in Shanghai, he is inculcated with various national narratives that shape his identity. For instance, he remembers the house he and his parents lived in as a family in Shanghai and its traditional English design with "the carefully tended 'English' lawn" (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 51). He strengthens his idea of England and "English nationality" with fictional narratives and guests coming from England; they are for him specimens to be copied. Like Stevens in *Remains*, he has, in his mind, an "imagined" England, consolidated through various kinds of narratives. Just as he devotes considerable effort to being more English, Banks also puts in great effort to perform the role of a detective. If expressed in Bhabha's terminology, Banks

tries to fulfil his role as a performing subject in the process of nation formation. By acting as “the detective,” he voluntarily occupies the performative mode as a present subject; he both repeats and contributes to the narrations about the great detective and a great Englishman, yet similar to Axl and Stevens, he is doomed to fail in his performance.

After Banks graduates from Cambridge around 1923, he takes up “a small flat at Number 14b Bedford Gardens in Kensington”; the furnishings of the place “evoked an unhurried Victorian past” (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 3). As suggested by Hélène Machinal, “Address, décor, and geography of Banks’s lodgings . . . closely recall 221b Baker Street and the nineteenth-century London of Sherlock Holmes” (80). Following his research on the careers of various detectives, Banks decides to act accordingly to become a well-known and great detective. He is referred to as “the most brilliant investigative mind in England” (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 33) and “the great detective” (45), which give the impression that he has successfully imitated the great detectives.

Much as he strives to be a great detective like Sherlock Holmes, Christopher Banks’s characterisation is a clear subversion of his literary predecessors. First and foremost, the frequent references to Holmes, and Banks’s efforts in performing the role of a great detective display that “Banks the detective is a representation of representation, a replica of no real origin” (Cheng 90). In this respect, Banks and Mr Stevens are alike: the former tries to perform the role of a detective, and the latter of a butler. Second, as a detective, he is not rational but delusional; after nearly thirty years, he naively believes that his parents are still alive and kept in the same house, and he mistakes a Japanese soldier for his childhood friend Akira. Third, he is emotionally involved in the case he investigates, and he is involved in a romantic liaison with Sarah Hemmings, which hinders him from focusing on the case and nearly causes him to leave the case altogether. Fourth, Banks shares all his feelings, emotions, and thoughts with the reader, which is again at odds with the stereotype of detectives in interwar detective fiction. Rather than having an acute mind and displaying analytical thinking skills in the case, he seems unable to follow useful leads.

In *Orphans*, although the “great” detective Banks does his best, he cannot unravel the mystery on his own. If it was not for Uncle Philip, he would never learn what happened to his parents. Before providing him with the information, Uncle Philip sarcastically says, “Tell me, Christopher. What do you believe

happened to your father? . . . After all, you've made quite a name for yourself for such things" (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 286). Though irritated, he replies, "My conjecture has been that my father made a stand, a courageous stand, against . . . the opium trade . . . [H]e set himself against enormous interests, and was thus removed" (286). His assumption is far removed from the fact that his father ran off with his mistress to Hong Kong and then died of typhoid in Singapore. Regarding his mother, Banks confesses that he has "been too busy following a false trail" (288), and in any case he could not find anything related to her. Uncle Philip uncovers the horrible truth about his mother: she was taken as a concubine and tortured by the very powerful warlord Wang Ku, who controlled opium trafficking and who financed Banks's education in England in return for the mother's compliance. For Banks, it is shocking to hear all those revelations, but Uncle Philip wants him to face up to the truth. He goes on, "You see what made possible your comfortable life in England? How you were able to become a celebrated detective? A detective! What good is that to anyone?" (294).

All the fantasy Banks has created in his mind from his childhood days onwards, that his parents are kept safe and sound in a house all those years, finally collapses, and as a "great" detective he fails to solve the mystery. Harsher than all these, he learns that he owes everything to his mother's sacrifice. Uncle Philip also discloses some facts about the British Empire's colonisation process in Shanghai; he says, "Many European companies, including your father's . . . liked them [the Chinese] to be in chaos, drug-addicted, unable to govern themselves properly. That way, the country could be run virtually like a colony" (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 288). Learning all this, Banks feels a certain guilt, for together with the other nations such as France and America in the international settlement, the British officials are to blame for turning the country into a port of the opium trade.

As opposed to interwar detective stories which valorise the empire and consolidate the English imperial identity, *Orphans* points out England's destructive effect on other nations for its own benefit. England's "greatness" is depicted to be internalised by the other nations; a Japanese colonel says, for instance, "England is a splendid country . . . Calm, dignified. Beautiful green fields . . . And your literature. Dickens, Thackeray. *Wuthering Heights*" (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 276). Apparently, the colonel has learned about England from novels and similar narratives of the nation. With the words of the colonel, Ishiguro hints at the discrepancy between the England imagined through

narratives and the real England. Referring to the violent bombings of the Shanghai War, Banks tells the colonel that he should regret “this carnage caused by your country’s invasion of China,” to which the colonel answers: “It is regrettable, I agree. But if Japan is to become a great nation, like yours, Mr Banks, it is necessary. Just as it once was for England” (278). With these words, Japan’s growth as an empire in the world is implied and England’s imperial history, which is full of massacres worldwide, is disclosed. To trace the British history of opium-related exploitation in China, Ishiguro intentionally chooses Shanghai and Hong Kong because “Shanghai was one of the treaty ports opened to Western merchants after the first Opium War in 1842, whereas Hong Kong . . . [was] in 1898 chartered to Britain on a 99-year lease, which expired in 1997” (Cheng 127). Hong Kong’s handover to China in 1997 tells the reader something about the actual historical chronotope of contemporary England; thus, *Orphans* deals with England’s losing the last piece of its colony in the Far East, thereby terminating its dominance in that part of the world.

From the vantage point of 1958, Banks realises that throughout his life he was on the wrong track; he says to his adopted daughter Jennifer, “My great vocation got in the way of quite a lot, all in all” (Ishiguro, *Orphans* 309). These words are reminiscent of Mr Stevens’s remarks about butlership. Similar to those of Stevens, Banks’s efforts to be “more English” through his vocational identity are in vain. The renowned detective Banks’s inability is in parallel with Great Britain’s loss of its imperial power in the overseas countries it dominated earlier. Likewise, in *Remains*, Lord Darlington’s loss of his great house, Darlington Hall, and Stevens’s inability to be a dignified butler echo the waning of the British Empire. Although Banks sets out to “root out evil” (16), the British Empire is the cause of evil in the Far East, and in the end, he is engulfed by it. The British imperial identity that has been consolidated over the course of many years has to shatter just like Banks’s fantasy world, as predicted by Uncle Philip’s words: “In the end it has to shatter. It’s a miracle it survived so long” (294). In his failure to be a performative subject, Banks, the detective, undermines the generic postulation of interwar detective fiction about the greatness of English national identity.

## VI. Conclusion

*The Buried Giant*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *When We Were Orphans* showcase the ramifications of nativism and an essentialist approach to nationalism (specifically English national identity) in different levels and degrees: in *Remains*, an individual's disillusionment about the greatness of England is narrated; in *Orphans*, both an individual's and other countries' suffering from the empire building project unfold; and in *Giant*, both individual and societal levels of ill pervade. From the past to the present, Ishiguro's burgeoning critical engagement with genres and their ideological implications has been accentuated in his novels. It seems that the more England loses her power and grip on the other countries, the more racist people of England become, about which Ishiguro obliquely warns his readers by making them ponder "what [the British mythical past] says about who we are in the present, and who we can be in the future" (Labrom 53).

Two fundamental commonalities can be observed in Ishiguro's above-mentioned novels. First, they are doubly chronotopic; they simultaneously occupy the chronotope of their genre and that of contemporary England at the time of publication. On the one hand, they lay bare the construction and consolidation of English imperial national identity as narratives; on the other hand, each is situated at a certain critical historical period in contemporary England to reveal the decline of the British Empire: *Remains* is set during the Suez Crisis, *Orphan's* setting covers the Battle of Shanghai, and *Giant* is set in post-Roman Britain. The actual historical chronotopes of contemporary England are Thatcherite England, England's loss of Hong Kong, and Brexit, respectively. Through this double chronotopicality, Ishiguro voices his concerns about the political decisions taken in Britain regarding national identity. Second, in each novel, a quintessentially English figure is at the centre of the narration, and his identity formation process in, faith in, and loyalty to English imperial identity have been put under scrutiny. In their failures of performance, they also disrupt the literary genres underlining the greatness of the English. Additionally, these characters act as pedagogical objects and fixed origins for the English nation; by reading their stories, people may make a connection with the past world and have a sense of nationhood. However, these characters are all self-delusional or disillusioned on the issue of national identity: Stevens's idea of Englishness crumbles together with the decaying

Darlington Hall, Banks cannot function properly as a detective for being engulfed by the evil he aims to root out (he realises he has benefited from it, and his belief in himself as well as the greatness of the English nation collapses), and Axl curses the great King Arthur in his court, and thus instead of the valorisation of empire and triumphs of a sovereign, a sordid history is presented in *Giant*.

It could be put forth that although the country house novel, interwar detective fiction, and the Arthurian romance functioned as tools to construct and consolidate English imperial national identity in their historical chronotopes, in Ishiguro's novels these genres are dysfunctional in consolidating imperial Englishness. This is mainly because of the fact that chronotopes of the postmodern novel and of the contemporary world require a different approach to the concept of national identity. Through non-performative heroes in his novels, Ishiguro suggests a reconsideration of the way English national identity is imagined now. As Arjun Appadurai announces, "We need to think ourselves beyond the nation" in our contemporary age (158). Referring to Anderson's theory of the "imagined nation," Appadurai states that "there is a similar link to be found between the work of the imagination and the emergence of a postnational political world" (22). Correspondingly, in his Nobel Lecture Ishiguro implies that literature frees individuals of any boundaries; thanks to literature, the worth of thinking beyond limitations such as national identity is realised.

Ishiguro also calls for unity in humanity rather than separation among nations or races by mentioning his desire "to write 'international' fiction that could easily cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, even while writing a story set in what seemed a peculiarly English world" ("My"). Globalised world order has brought about interdependence among countries, and as a corollary to this, the imagined community of nations in general and Britain specifically has changed, and this needs to be acknowledged. It is revealed through the novels of Ishiguro that subscribing to essentialist approaches to the nation is futile; rather than conventional approaches, postnational identity, free of all kinds of significations and physical as well as psychological limitations, should be adopted. Finally, as suggested by Bhabha, rather than being fixed and objective, nations are continually reshaped by little narratives, reimagined and recreated by the people participating in them through their performative acts. Such

plurality and heterogeneity can only be embraced through postnationalism, which aligns closely with the chronotope of the postmodern novel.

Reading Ishiguro's novels in the light of Bakhtin's chronotope and within the framework of theories of the nation as a narrative enables one to recognise Ishiguro's representation of quintessentially English figures such as knight, butler, and detective as non-performative subjects. This draws attention to the great gap between how Englishness was imagined in the historical chronotopes of the genres and how it is imagined today. Such a reading also traces the trajectory of Ishiguro's novels and displays how Ishiguro's emphasis on the constructedness of national identity and his cautionary representation gain strength depending on the circumstances of contemporary society. What his texts suggest about national identity in general is to avoid excessive dependence on the past to sustain it; rather than clinging to an essentialist approach to national identity, Ishiguro proposes a non-essentialist one. In a broader perspective, this study of his selected novels exhibits how Ishiguro critically exposes the salient role literature has played in inculcating certain ideologies within people's minds while also potentially serving a deconstructive mission.

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# CONTRIBUTOR

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**Yağmur Sönmez-Demir** is Assistant Professor of English Literature at the Department of English Language and Literature at Çankaya University, Turkey. She holds a PhD degree from Middle East Technical University, Turkey in English Literature. As a recipient of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey's scholarship for post-doctoral research, she worked on a project on narratology and contemporary fiction at the University of Heidelberg, Germany as a visiting scholar between 2022-2023. Her research interests include Romantic and Victorian poetry, literary genre studies, cognitive narratology, and contemporary fiction on which she has published several scholarly articles and book chapters.