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Memorable Houses and Distorted Realities: Reading of the House in Historiographic Context in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* & John Banville's *The Sea**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to present an analysis of the house theme in the historiographic context of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and John Banville's *The Sea*. From the eighteenth century to the present, the concept of the house has appeared as a prominent image in the British novel by referring to different aspects of the British lifestyle and social conditions, both in public and private terms. As critics argue, English estates and country houses represent a wider meaning than simply being vast and remarkable residences of the aristocracy. Considering the contemporary depictions of the house, one can see how it reflects the problematic link between the past and the present, as can be examined in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and John Banville's *The Sea*. Both novels present middle-aged, nostalgic protagonists who seek meaning in the contrast of their memories and present conditions. In problematic personal quests between past and present, the image of the house plays an important role, materialising the link between the old and the new. Thus, the country house, as in former examples, is re-interpreted in contemporary novels in a historiographic context. Considering the historiographic structure and the symbolism reflected by the concept of the house in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Sea*, this paper aims to present how history, both on official and personal levels, is re-interpreted in a historiographic context by centering on the personal quest of the protagonists and their relationship to the house.

Keywords: Ishiguro, Banville, House, Memory, History

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Introduction

From the eighteenth-century to the present, the house has appeared as a prominent image in the English novel by referring to various qualities of the English lifestyle and social conditions in terms of symbolising national memory, and social and economic structures. Being vast and impressive residences, English country houses combine natural beauty and culture, explicitly bringing together public and private life, the local community and the whole nation, imperial structures along with many different dimensions of English society (Fotyga, 2015, p. 9). In other words, the image of the English country house stands for private property, but it reflects the different dimensions of society, which gives a wider meaning than just being a residence for living. Looking at earlier examples, for instance, Jane Austen's novels present acclaimed estates, such as the Pemberley Estate in *Pride and Prejudice*, a reference to the aristocratic and patriarchal background of Mr Darcy. The Bronte sisters' novels of the Victorian period, on the other hand, reflect the harsh conditions of social structures and power relations in isolated parsonage settings, as in the examples of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Mostly acclaimed twentieth-century examples, such as E.M. Forster's *Howards End* and *Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited*, are explicit depictions of the condition of England through the perspective of estates that give their names to the novels' titles. At a quick glance at these canonical works, thus, one can observe how the country house image is depicted in various forms, creating multiple settings for authors of different periods.

Yet, it should be noted that the house, as an image or a setting, is not limited to canonical literature, and it preserves its noticeable influence on contemporary British metafiction. Undoubtedly, postmodern developments have broadened the structural and fictional ways of writing by challenging traditional artistic and literary forms. However, such challenging innovations have not destroyed the link between the old and the new. In other words, while postmodernism has challenged classical traditions in various terms, such as structure, authorial position, and narration, it has not excluded the past. Rather, it has sought ways to reconcile past and present by offering critical thinking and re-interpretation of both periods. Subsequently, such an approach presents a redefinition of history in postmodern fiction, regarding history as a written text and retelling it in a metafictional context. As such, history gained a new approach in postmodernism and widened its scope in contemporary metafiction by centring on both public and personal histories, as can be traced in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and John Banville's *The Sea,* which will be examined in this paper. Being highly

acclaimed novels of contemporary literature, both works present protagonists seeking meaning between past and present by focusing on different stages of their lives. In their quest between past and present, the image of the house plays a particularly important role, materialising the complex link between the old and the new. Thus, the conception of the house in former examples is re-interpreted in contemporary novels in a historiographic context, symbolising various complexities within personal and public spheres of life. Considering the historiographic structure and the symbolism reflected by the concept of the house in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Sea*, this paper aims to present how history, both on official and personal levels, is re-interpreted and in what ways the house materialises the intricate link for the quest of the protagonists in the historiographic context.

Historical Fiction and Postmodernism

Historical periods, as previously stated, have always been a subject of literature, forming background settings or plots in different genres such as plays, poems, or prose works. Considering the novel, Elizabeth Wesseling (1991) asserts that the development of historicism in the novel was related to authorial interest in historical customs, manners, and lifestyles of past generations, which helped the authors to create a realist framework for their narratives. Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels, in this context, represent the earliest and most famous example of the historical novel in English literature. Following Sir Walter Scott, the developments in the English novel were shaped according to the thematic concerns of the following periods. As Bran Nicol (2005) underlines, the nineteenth-century English novel was significant in terms of realism. History in this context only formed a background and a realist depiction of the historical period that the story was set in, which gave the reader access to the historical period through fiction. In other words, from Sir Walter Scott to the nineteenth-century novel, history served as a background for the novels, depicting a realistic historical setting and plot to the reader without any critical perception of the historical narratives, which is relatively different from the contemporary understanding of historical fiction. The postmodern innovations shape today's historical fiction in literature. In this case, history finds a new way of definition in a fictional context.

Ever since postmodernism emerged in literature, it has provided a critical space for both the author and the reader by presenting various features and subverting the traditional approaches to the text. At an early glance, postmodernism can be

considered an extension of modernism, but it can also be defined as the way postmodernism differs from the former (Bentley, 2008, p. 33). Regarding both, it is possible to say that postmodernism cannot be merely considered a continuation of modernism since it does not only extend what modernism brought, but also destroys and redefines many features of the previous periods. Authorial position and the manifestation of the fictional artefact are the two major concepts that are challenged in the postmodern context and took it beyond modernism. As Brian McHale (1987) states, modernists were also seeking ways of reducing the author's dominating power in the text and leaving space for fictional development. Yet, unlike postmodernists, their practices of removing the author from the text directed further attention to the author's position, since modernists focused on the structural concerns of the text. Postmodernists, however, renovated many aspects of literary texts and celebrated plurality by demonstrating that nothing original could be found and produced anymore. Among many innovations, historical fiction has also gained a new dimension which extends to contemporary metafiction, that can be traced in two contemporary works examined in this paper. One of the leading postmodern literary theorists, Linda Hutcheon, coined the term "Historiographic Metafiction" by drawing attention to the complex nature of postmodernism, which includes and exploits many aspects of literature. She states that history, as one of the primary subjects of literature, also requires critical examination on postmodern grounds by posing this quandary: "The past really did exist. The question is: how can we know that past today – and what can we know about it?" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 92). In this respect, Hutcheon (1988) argues that, in order to know about the past, a critical approach to the present is needed, since official history itself is a written text and it should be re-interpreted in accordance to different disciplines of the present and a postmodernist approach to history differs very much from modernist understanding of nostalgia:

> …But if nostalgia connotes evasion of the present, idealization of a (fantasy) past, or a recovery of that past as Edenic, then the postmodernist ironic rethinking of history is definitely not nostalgic. It critically confronts the past with the present, and vice versa. In a direct reaction against the tendency of our times to value only the new and novel, it returns us to a re-thought past to see what, if anything, is of value in that past experience. But the critique of its irony is doubleedged: the past and the present are judged in each other's light. (p. 39)

In other words, historiography in a postmodern context is the problematization of history, and it seeks ways to define meaning through critical thinking about the past and the present without clinging to the nostalgic visions or realistic depictions of literary texts of past generations. Hence, it can be said that, along with many notions, the postmodern author also plays with the notion of history on fictional grounds by demonstrating the fictionality of his work and the fictive re-interpretation of history. Accordingly, it should also be noted that modes of history also vary in postmodern fiction. As Jean–Francois Lyotard (1984) argues, while postmodernists deconstruct the grand narratives that control and shape the culture and ideology of a nation, they also promote minor narratives that have been ignored since postmodernists are aware of the controlling power of the historical narrative. It is reflected in accordance with the narrator, which makes it artificial. Regarding the Lyotardian approach and observing the historical fictions that have been produced throughout time, one can see how Hutcheon's and Lyotard's points have become concrete and have continued to develop in postmodern writing since postmodern authors have played with many aspects of historical concepts both in official and individual grounds. The following novels by Kazuo Ishiguro and John Banville, in this respect, express plurality in many ways of history and reality through fiction. Moreover, they reflect personal quests through fictive histories and situate the house image as a symbol, surrounding the past and the present of both protagonists' livings on historicized grounds.

The Problematic Nostalgia for Darlington Hall in *The Remains of the Day*

Dating back to mid-1950s England, Ishiguro's Booker Prize awarded novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) presents the changing political and social climate of the period. The political events that shaped world history are presented from the lens of a middle-aged English butler named Stevens, the protagonist and the first-person narrator of the text. Conveying all the traditional features of an English butler, Stevens represents strong dedication to the tradition, represented by his workplace Darlington Hall, left by Lord Darlington and now occupied by an American owner, Mr. Farraday. As Adam Parkes claims, Ishiguro's major themes are based on the ordinary experiences of loss and time's passing, the changing moral and political perspectives that are reflected through time's passing, by presenting difficulty and conflict between generations, seeking reconciliation in a historical framework (Parkes, 2001, p. 26). Considering Parkes's point, one can see that *The Remains of the Day* carries a similar conception by presenting to the reader both

a butler's perception of the political events and his own personal experiences that also are a part of individual history. Throughout the story, Darlington Hall remains the central setting, which indeed exceeds being merely the setting and becomes the representation of the backstage political events that Stevens witnessed. In a private sense, it also represents Stevens's life, which was surrounded by this once victorious house, a place in which "history could well be made under this roof" (Ishiguro,1989, p. 81). In a historical context, thus, Darlington Hall symbolises the imperial power of the English nation, and in the fictional context, it becomes the meeting place of the unofficial conferences of the world powers that shaped the political climate of the era. In this respect, Darlington Hall's prominence for Stevens's personal history and the fictive symbolism for English society in a historiographic context should be examined. It is important to note that Darlington Hall not only represents glory but also represents shift and decay in the power of the English nation, which appears hardly tolerable for Stevens, who is devoted to once respectable Lord Darlington:

> Lord Darlington, you will understand, was the sort of gentleman who cared to occupy himself only with what was at the true centre of things, and the figures he gathered together in his efforts over those years were as far away from such unpleasant fringe groups as one could imagine. Not only were they eminently respectable, these were figures who held real influence in British life: politicians, diplomats, military men, clergy. Indeed, some of the personages were Jewish, and this fact alone should demonstrate how nonsensical is much of what was said about his lordship. (Ishiguro, 1989, p. 146)

John J. Su highlights Lord Darlington's isolated self and blindness to German propaganda by referring to the estate, "He believes that occupying the representative space of ethos, the estate grants him not only the right to represent the entire nation but also an inherent knowledge about the concerns of its people" (Su, 2002, p. 567). With an American owner at present, Darlington Hall as an old English house undergoes various changes. Those shifts in structure, management, and lifestyle reflect the rising American power over Englishness, but in Stevens's case Darlington Hall still represents the glorious old days:

> And of course, in Lord Darlington's days, when ladies and gentlemen would often visit for many days on end, it was possible to develop a good

> understanding with visiting colleagues. Indeed, in those busy days, our servants' hall would often witness a gathering of some of the finest professionals in England talking late into the night by the warmth of fire. And let me tell you, if you were to have come into our servants' hall on any of those evenings, you would not have heard mere gossip; more likely, you would have witnessed debates over the great affairs preoccupying our employers upstairs, or else over matters of import reported in the newspapers; and of course, as fellow professionals from all walks of life are wont to do when gathered together, we could be found discussing every aspect of our vocation. (Ishiguro,1989, p. 18)

As can be observed from the passage, Stevens recalls the old days in Darlington Hall with great respect, and throughout his narration, there are implications that serve to justify Lord Darlington as an honourable man despite his disgraceful recognition at present, which implies the unreliability of history as a way of narration, as postmodernists claim. Considering it in accordance with Darlington Hall's situation, it can be observed that what Stevens accepts as his past and present are shaped behind the walls of the old estate. Since Stevens lacks understanding of the outside world, in this respect, he cannot situate himself in the Americanised Darlington Hall. Instead of trying to adapt to those changes, Stevens prefers to carry his old ways with an ideal butler's dignity, which he questions most of the time and tries to vindicate Lord Darlington's honour and memory even if he is given spare time for a road journey. Stevens's attachment to his old days reflects many references in personal, social and national terms. Elif Öztabak-Avcı emphasises the atmosphere of the period, stating that: "England of the 1980s was characterized by nostalgia for and attempts to revive the 'great' values of the Victorian period" (Avcı, 2015, p. 52). The historiographic implications along with Stevens's reinterpretation of the past, reflect such struggle. As Fotyga argues, in a broader perspective, the decline of the British Empire as a world power over America and ongoing political events are reflected in the micro-level of fictional Darlington Hall, which also reflects the power of the order and hierarchical social reality and national identity through the estate (Fotyga, 2015, p. 84). However, Darlington Hall also reflects the isolated and trapped life of Stevens since he cannot detach himself from the old estate, and his narration cannot be freed of the problematic nostalgia of the days for Lord Darlington, as Fotyga further argues:

> Characteristics of pastoral evocations of the golden age and actualized in the dwindling fate of Darlington Hall, is further complicated by the narrative situation, in which, the temporal dialectic of the grander past and the disappointing present overlaps the spatial dynamics of the inner and the outer, which structures the construction of space and characterisation. (p. 85)

In other words, the traditional English butler Stevens' narration is shaped by his own experience in Darlington Hall, and throughout the novel, it can be observed that his life does not have any space beyond the walls of the old Darlington Hall. As Aylin Atilla (2008) notes, postmodernism does not believe in a single reality. In Stevens's terms, we are given his perception of reality. Outside the walls is a different life for Stevens; inside the walls, he tries to resist the Americanisation of the Darlington Hall by nostalgically attaching himself to the old days he had witnessed. As Yugin Teo states: "His cloistered world view has only allowed him to see things from within the sheltered world of Darlington Hall and Lord Darlington" (Teo, 2014, p. 29). The journey offered by Mr. Farraday provides a good opportunity to Stevens to meet the outside world. Nevertheless, whether Stevens is able to use this opportunity to reconcile with his past and free himself from the problematic nostalgia is arguable. Darlington Hall's dominancy can be observed when Stevens meets Miss Kenton, now Mrs Benn; "Oh yes, Mrs. Benn. But enough of this. I know you remember Darlington Hall in the days when there were great gatherings, when it was filled with distinguished visitors. Now that's the way his lordship deserves to be remembered" (p. 247). However, recalling Darlington Hall, does not change anything between Stevens's and Miss Kenton's unfinished story. After all those years, Miss Kenton's declaration about the innocent affection they carried for each other are only remains of their past in the old estate since, "after all, there's no turning back the clock now. One can't be forever dwelling on what might have been" (p. 251). As Molly Westerman notes, Stevens objectifies himself by identifying with his workplace and home Darlington Hall. (Westerman, 2004, p. 158). Interestingly, the old estate as a concretely existing construction has become modernised in American fashion. Nevertheless, the memories shaped by this estate cannot be renowned and left by the protagonist. Thus, one can observe that how an estate personifies the past and the present both on historical and individual levels matters in reading *The Remains of the Day*, and the narration even falsifies the events on the fictional level in order to carry the illusion of the past, which at the end, indicates that past needs a critical examination.

Search for Home and Hope in John Banville's *The Sea*

While Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day* centres on the house image both on official and personal historical levels, another Booker Prize awarded novel by Irish author John Banville, *The Sea,* presents a problematisation of personal history and memory that is shaped in a seaside house. John Banville's prose fiction is considered to have poetic qualities, and most of his protagonists are male professionals, such as art historians and scientists, with personal inner quests and the protagonist Max Morden of *The Sea* is no exception. The novel is based on the story of a middle-aged Irishman, Max, who has recently lost his wife and goes back to the seaside of his childhood, to an old summer mansion named Cedars in Ballyless, which once hosted the sophisticated and mysterious Grace Family that left a great many traces in Max's life. Therefore, Max is a sophisticated character struggling to survive between the past and the present. According to Kucala (2016), *The Sea* is an attempt to ask the old questions, and while Max revisits his memories, he faces the problem of his lack of integrity. Similarly, written in first-person narration, the story seeks a reconciliation of Max's personal history that has a particular relationship with the mansion named Cedars, for he goes back to his childhood place which is full of fragmented memories. Thus, the summer house Cedars occupies a prominent influence on Max Morden's complex characterisation, and what makes Cedars such a vital symbol for his personal history should be examined. Since Banville's narration is non-linear, the reader is presented with different periods of Max Morden's life. The non-linear order of Max's story reflects times with his dying wife, his childhood memories, and his relationship with his daughter. However, as he goes to Cedars, his past and present gain importance in this mansion under close examination. Unlike Darlington Hall of *The Remains of the Day*, Cedars, an old summer mansion, does not witness any historical and political events. However, at first glance, it is essential in terms of being a summer house for a wealthy and culturally established family, the Graces, compared to the Morden family; "My parents had not met Mr and Mrs Grace, nor would they. People in a proper house did not mix with people from chalets, and we would not expect to mix with them." (p.108). The social and cultural differences between the two families can be observed with a particular reference to Max and his mother's different perceptions of the Grace family. A close reading shows that as Max enjoyed hanging around with Grace's kids, stating how he was proud to be seen with them, whom he called *Gods* and *divinities* (p.108), he also reflects how his mother resented them. The occupation of the Cedar summer house by such a family, in this case, was both something celebrated and angered by the Mordens because they lived in different social and economic terms. Besides, the meaning of a

house and home on a particularly personal level is a problematic notion for the protagonist Max Morden. As Facchinello (2010) notes, Max is shaped as a homeless character once his childhood is observed, especially after his father abandons them:

> We are told that sometime after the memorial summer, his father abandoned the family and went to England; at that point, Max and his mother began to move from one rented room to the next. (It is significant that no mention is made of the place Morden lived in with his parents prior to separation.) Morden's memory goes back to those rented rooms. "They were all alike", he writes, "there was the armchair with the broken arm, the pock-marked lino on the floor, the squat black gas stove sullen in its corner and smelling of the previous lodger's fried dinners"(196-97) The homecoming dream that draws him back to Ballyless – "I was determinedly on my way somewhere, going home, it seemed, although I did not know what or where exactly home might be" is clearly the dream of a homeless man. (p. 36)

However, Moreno puts forward her disagreement with Fachinello and offers a different view on Max's interpretation of the rented rooms; "I, however, consider that he now daydreams about them as a place to hide from suffering, the maternal shelter he never really had and that he always wished for" (Moreno, 2015, p. 56). In both reinterpretations, Max Morden's search for home is closely linked with his childhood, which reflects his personal history. Regarding the lack of a stable home and family in Max's life, then, it can be said that, despite the traumatic death of Grace's kids that haunts his childhood memories, the seaside house where they spent their summer together is the only place which he can still regard as home. Moreover, he also does not have a stable family, since his wife is already dead. Watkiss (2007) underlines the fact that the recent loss Max experiences also destroys the house he lives in at present by creating a feeling of anger for his survival. Besides, Max's relationship with his daughter has its complex dynamics. O'Connell (2013) notes that Max primarily mourns the recent death of his wife Anna and also the more distant deaths of Chloe and Myles, but he also mourns the way of seeing himself that these characters offered him. At present, Max lacks stability. The closest person he has right now is his daughter Claire. However, Max reveals that he does not know much about his daughter, and "of the year that it took her mother to die, she had been conveniently abroad, pursuing her studies, while I was left to cope as best I could" (p. 66). Claire reveals her anger to Max when she finds him drunk and drives him home. When they arrive, Max recalls the old days when Claire would sleep in her room and enjoy the sound of Max's typewriter, which she found comforting. However,

the frustration of grown-up Claire with Max seems to bother him: "All the same, she should not have shouted at me like that in the car. I do not merit being shouted at me like that" (p. 69). When Claire's anger fades away, Max does not answer her, because he is already thinking of the past. Considering the complex relationship he has with his daughter, it can be said that his present condition does not situate him in a proper house or a family since similar to his childhood, his marriage now belongs to the past. Eventually, thus, he goes back to his childhood place, where he experienced many stages of development, and now he seeks reconciliation with his past. Nevertheless, most importantly, it is the only place he can call home throughout his life. So, in this respect, searching for a home is also as prominent as owning a home. In Max Morden's terms:

> Yet how easily, in the end, I let it go. The past, I mean the real past, matters less than we pretend. When Miss Vavasour left me in what from now on was to be *my room* I threw my coat over a chair and sat down on the side of the bed and breathed deep the stale unlived-in air, and felt that I had been travelling for a long time, for years, and had at last arrived at the destination to where, all along, without knowing it, I had been bound, and where I must stay, it being, for now, the only possible place, the only possible refuge, for me. (Banville, 2005, p. 157)

As Neil Murphy (2018) asserts, the house as a metaphor, which is indeed a significant concept of Irish literature in terms of the "Big House" reflecting the historiographic and social aspects of the Irish nation, is a present theme in various novels of Banville. However, in *The Sea,* it is present on a wider personal level, as a materialising metaphor for Max Morden's fragmented childhood and present realities. Hence, while Banville's story presents the reader an example of personal history that is problematised between past and present, reflecting an inner quest, it also shapes the history around a childhood house, the Cedars representing many joys and traumas and those obscure rooms where he lived without having a proper home. In this context, the house on historical grounds serves as a link between childhood and adulthood as it becomes a link in Ishiguro's narration. Nevertheless, Max Morden has few memories to glorify and he reflects his awareness of the traumas he needs to challenge in many different stages of the novel, while Butler Stevens does not tend to acknowledge the failures of the past. Yet, it is clear that in both cases, the old houses become the representation of their problematic attachment to the past and carry the reflections to the present. Thus, Max Morden's going back to Cedars for seeking reconciliation connotes how the house shapes his past and present.

Conclusion

Regarding both the official and personal histories fictionally written in both Kazuo Ishiguro's and John Banville's novels, it can be concluded that the image of the house gains a prominent role in two different contexts. As stated earlier in this study, the house has always been more than an ordinary setting in the novel genre and observing two contemporary novels; it can very well be observed that it continues to occupy a significant position. Reading the significance of the house image at a historiographic level, how the house embodies the problematisation of history and nostalgia becomes evident. Aiming to examine those two contemporary works in particular, how the house image is situated at the centre and how it establishes a blurring link between memory and reality becomes significant elements to inspect. In this respect, regarding Kazuo Ishiguro's protagonist Butler Stevens and his attachment to Darlington Hall in *The Remains of the Day*, Darlington Hall represents everything that Stevens could have throughout his life. While Stevens cannot detach himself from the glorious old days of Darlington Hall, it becomes evident that history should be re-defined, for it can be distorted. In Stevens's case particularly, Darlington Hall becomes the fundamental place for history to be reconsidered. How Stevens attaches himself to Darlington Hall nostalgically and how he resists the decline of ignorance leads the reader to a more critical understanding of history by also emphasising the unreliability of memory. Considering Banville's protagonist Max Morden in *The Sea,* on the other hand, it is important to note that even though the novel does not have a historical background as in *The Remains of the Day,* it expresses the history on an individual level. By individual history, however, the concrete and obscure houses and rooms in the novel still reflect the social and economic aspects of the Irish society, while they also reflect how past and present need to be reconciled for Max in what he prefers to call home. It is partly obscure whether Max Morden finally reaches the ideal home in his mind, which represents the reconciliation of his past and present. Max's problem with his own individual history, in this respect, opens different interpretations about his goals and relationship with the idea of home. Nevertheless, regarding the significant image of the old summer mansion, Cedars, it can be concluded that Max Morden, like Stevens, manifests his special bond to where he calls home, among all the various places he had lived so far. Besides, Max Morden is able to interpret his traumatic experiences at Cedars, which separates him from Stevens's resistance to any negative connotations about Darlington Hall's past and present. Yet, while concluding, it is also important to draw attention to the fact that Ishiguro does not offer any evidence about Stevens' life

prior to Darlington Hall, and throughout the novel, Stevens's isolation from outside the old estate is referred to in various ways. In this case, the meaning of Darlington Hall becomes irreplaceable in Stevens's terms, since he has no other past and seems to fancy no other present than this old estate. Max Morden, however, is represented as a character without a stable home and family, and unlike Stevens, he has travelled to different rooms and places to live. Therefore, Banville attributes more complex bound to the link between his protagonist Max and the mansion Cedars, for despite all the problematics, it becomes not just a simple house, but the real home Max has been searching for a long time. Both protagonists with different backgrounds and experiences seem to attach their memories and meaning of life to the houses they are already living in or had once lived in. Another significant detail is related to the social positions of both protagonists. Prior to the examination of the novels in this study, how the house has been a prominent image in the English novel is shown through different examples. It should be noted that from Austen to Forster, characters symbolically related with the estates are generally aristocrats. Coming back to Ishiguro and Banville, however, it is observed that both novelists attribute the meaning of the house to ordinary characters. In other words, the reader is shown what the house represents from ordinary people's perspectives, which still reflects the social conditions on a personal level that shape their past and present. Regarding both contexts then, it can be concluded that house and history, whether on individual levels or official levels, still play a significant part in contemporary fiction and as it can be seen in both novels that are examined in this study, the conception of the house helps to redefine and rethink the past and present through different lenses.

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