



International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching
Volume 6, Issue 1, March 2018, p. 97-102

Received	Reviewed	Published	Doi Number
28.02.2018	10.03.2018	30.03.2018	10.18298/ijlet.2658

A Parallel Destruction Caused by Mankind: Suffers of Human and Nature through the Story of Etsuko

Bülent Cercis TANRITANIR¹ & Fatma KARAMAN²

ABSTRACT

Kazuo Ishiguro's first novel *A Pale View of Hills* written in 1982 can be accepted as the illustration of the psychology, trauma and sorrowful experiences of Japanese people underwent the bomb of Nagasaki. This explosion affects both men and nature in terms of their common fate, future and habitat beside human's psychology and mental health. This article will reveal a wide research about atom bomb of Nagasaki and its effects on the lives of two important characters of the earth; Human and Nature. The main idea of the paper is to inform the reader of the human's deeds which have affected not only nature but also human himself deeply. Especially, the parallel and miserable experiences which both man and nature have undergone will be dealt. In this sense, the main character of *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, and the source of life, Nature, will be the main concern of the article.

Key Words: The Bomb of Nagasaki, Human, Nature, Post-war Despair, Sorrowful Memories.

1. Introduction

Nagasaki is bombed on 9th August 1945 by American army using a bomb known as Fat Man. The bomb is so effective that most of the buildings in the city destroyed, a huge number of people are killed or badly wounded, and unfortunately, animals and nature are also damaged (A Photo-Essay on the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, n.d., para. 5). This damage is not only physically but also psychologically. It can be said that the atomic bomb destroyed more than a generation with its bad memories in minds (Sodei, 1995, p. .1123). Actually, Hiroshima and Nagasaki have fame not for their depressive effects on the victims of war but for their destructive effects in the war (Sodei, 1995, p. 1121). These psychological damages are the result of the fear of radiation which has affected and would affect more than 350.000 victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Sodei, 1995, p. 1120). It is clear that nuclear power is so effective that nations can be destroyed totally. In Smithsonian script by the Emperor Hirohito, it is stated that "The enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliterating of the Japanese nation, but it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization" (qtd. in Sodei, 1995, p. 1120). As it is understood this despair, fear, loss of hope and destruction creates traumatic effects on Japanese. Since the bombings, there has been written many texts on the results and terrible outcomes of the

¹ Assoc. Prof. Dr., Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, English Language and Literature Department, bcercis@gmail.com.

² M.A. Student, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, English Language and Literature Department, karaman.fatma@hotmail.com.

attacks. One of these writers is Kazuo Ishiguro who is a Japanese grown up in England. His writings which apply to and bound different cultures around common values are translated into twenty-eight languages, in another word, he globalizes the local narrations (Walkowitz, 2007, p. 218-219). As a Japan who has not seen his own country while growing, Ishiguro wants to recreate Japan depending it on memories and imagination (Ishiguro & Kenzaburo, 1991, p. 110). Furthermore, Ishiguro defines himself as a 'homeless writer' because he cannot feel either totally Japan or English (Ishiguro & Kenzaburo, 1991, p. 115). Therefore, his works can represent a Japanese style but cannot serve as a total Japanese text (Fowler, 1992, p. 10). Actually, he declares that he read from Western fiction more than Japan fiction and he has information on post-war Japan and Japanese people through the movies issuing these subjects (Mason & Ishiguro p. 336). In fact, the memory and the past are among the most applied subjects by Kazuo Ishiguro. One of his novels in which he applies to these post-war topics is *A Pale View of Hills* (Shang, 2017, p. 2), which is the first novel giving the opportunity to Ishiguro to move up quickly in literature after an experience of short writings. This novel brings Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holtby Prize and it is translated into eleven languages. *A Pale View of Hills* narrates a miserable and traumatic story of a Japanese woman who undergoes many hardships after World War II and especially the hardships occurring as a result of the bomb of Nagasaki (Mason & Ishiguro, 1989, p. 334). This article will give brief information on Kazuo Ishiguro's biography; will reveal a wide research about atom bomb of Nagasaki and its effects on the lives of two important characters of the earth; Human and Nature. The main idea of the paper is to inform the reader of the human's deeds which have affected not only nature but also human himself deeply. Especially, the parallel and miserable experiences which both man and nature have undergone will be dealt. In this sense, the main character of *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, and the source of life, Nature, will be the main concern of the article.

2. The Biography of the Writer and Its Effects on his Writings

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in 1954, in post-war period, in Nagasaki as a child of a Japanese family. His father is an educated man who can move to England and work there as an oceanographer. Therefore, Ishiguro can reach a good education on literature and philosophy at the University of Kent. After graduation, he steps to writing process with short stores which would give way to a significant place in the contemporary writers in England. In addition to that, he goes beyond the boundaries and he can reach the audiences in twenty eight languages with the help of translations. Moreover, he has been awarded the Booker Prize and recently Ishiguro has been writing not only books both also scenario (Shaffer & Ishiguro, 2001, p. 2). He indicates that his family is loyal to their roots, language, and culture; therefore, he wants to return to his country but he doesn't consider his Japanese is enough to have a conversation. The main reason behind this loss of language is his British education that he is more familiar with Western fiction than Japanese fiction. Furthermore, Ishiguro declares that his interest in Japanese movies gives him an opportunity to be able to illustrate post-war issues in his writings (Mason & Ishiguro, 1989, p. 336). As it is understood, Ishiguro's life is only an example but it is clear that he is one of the lucky Japanese who has the chance of a good education and a prosperous life after post-war immigration.

Another essential point is that Ishiguro reports Japanese people are keen on overly emotional and tragic narrations in which the characters put an end to their life. However, the prejudice about Japanese people, which puts forward that most of the Japanese people commit suicide, has no reality. Therefore, he constructs his stories on the daily life of Japanese people instead of the narrations which

have suicides in the end (Mason & Ishiguro, 1989, p. 343). It can be inferred that Ishiguro's main and the most significant aim is to demonstrate the reality of Japanese people who need to be accepted as ordinary as all the other nations. Similarly, Brian W. Shaffer evaluates Ishiguro's works as an "a vast web of personal and historical traumas" because Ishiguro creates his works with an amazing effort which include past and present on the same stage (Shaffer, 2001, p. 2). Shaffer's simile is a crucial point which digs out the literary value of Ishiguro as an important contemporary author who can identify the psychological effects of the war and bombing on people. However, Ishiguro states that his works are examined as "emotional repression" examples and he accepts this association to a certain extent. Whereas, the reason behind this association is the literary background of the author in which some fathers of the literature like Charlotte and Hemingway take place (Shaffer & Ishiguro, 2001, p. 14). This emotional repression can be observed in *A Pale View of Hills* in which the main character Etsuko applies the memories and the story of Sachiko to be able to oppress the fear, the feeling of responsibility and guilt and most importantly the post-war trauma.

3. Parallel Effects of Fat Boy on the Lives of Two Important Characters of the Earth; Human and Nature through the Story of Etsuko

Actually the bomb of Nagasaki killed 74,000 people and destroyed more than human life. The explosion is outlined from the eye of Taniguchi Sumiteru, a witness of the explosion, in these sentences "Contrary to what some of us might imagine, the bomb did not explode on the ground but about one-third of a mile above ground. The purpose was to maximize the blast force and the effect of the heat on the city because the blast and the heat would travel further." (How 5 People Survived Nagasaki's Nuclear Hell, n.d., n.p.). These sentences depict the real face of the nuclear war and its merciless aims which disregard human, animals and plants completely. However, the human's inconsiderate deeds, their struggle for power and their eagerness collapse both their own and nature's future. To elaborate the argument, Sumiteru states that "The area directly beneath the blast is called the "hypocenter." The heat on the ground directly below it was about 5,000 to 7,000 degrees Fahrenheit. For quite a long distance, buildings were pulverized and trees, plants, and animals were blown away or carbonized. It's an unimaginable level of instantaneous destruction." (How 5 People Survived Nagasaki's Nuclear Hell, n.d., n.p.). This statement conveys that there is a parallel destruction in which both humanity and nature is severely wounded and killed by mankind. Moreover, these explanations can be assessed as the words of a victim who is exposed to a psychological issues and a traumatic life. As a consequence of this damage a huge number of people immigrate to different countries. In this sense, Rushdie claims that as an immigrant family's son Kazuo Ishiguro composes his works on post-war Nagasaki but he does not write about the bomb of Nagasaki directly (Matthews & Baillie, 2010, p. 47). His narrator represents a picture of her village in these statements "A river ran near us, and I was once told that before the war a small village had grown up on the riverbank. But then the bomb had fallen and afterwards all that remained were charred ruins." (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 4). According to these words the earth is polluted, it cannot breathe and only the mud remains in this riverside. Additionally, the heartbreaking experiences of narrator's friend Mrs. Fujiwara demonstrate how a woman and her family can be destroyed. This unfortunate event is given in these sentences "She had five children. And her husband was an important man in Nagasaki. When the bomb fell, they all died except her eldest son. It must have been such a blow to her, but she just kept going." (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 4). The life goes on and Mrs. Fujiwara should stand and grab one edge of the life just like the "...trees planted when the buildings had gone

up.” (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 19). All these memories are presented throughout the book to show the parallel destruction and struggle of reconstruction of human and nature. In this sense, Eckert Ken (2012) indicates that *A Pale View of Hills* coincides with the reconstruction period of Nagasaki (79).

As it is discussed from the beginning of the paper, the memory and the illustration of the post-war trauma on the narrators are among the crucial points of the books by Kazuo Ishiguro. Another common point of his narrators is that they are “...ordinary figures in extraordinary times and places...” and their narration is “unreliable” (Matthews & Baillie, 2010, p. 45). One of these narrators is Etsuko, a middle-aged woman in *A Pale View of Hills*, who has undergone loss, despair, a second marriage and the grief of losing her daughter. As a result of all these destructive experiences, Etsuko tries to purify herself through a story of a bad mother example, Sachiko, and her neglected daughter Mariko (Matthews & Baillie, 2010, p. 47). Actually, Etsuko is in a blurred area about her Japanese identity because of her miserable memories of post-war Nagasaki which overshadows her happy days (Eckert, 2012, p. 81). However, from time to time she tries to remind herself the good sides of her county as it is stated in this nostalgic scenery description:

Inasa is the hilly area of Nagasaki overlooking the harbour, renowned for its mountain Scenery; it was not so far from where we lived in fact it was the hills of Inasal could see from my apartment window but in those days, outings of any sort were rare for me, and the trip to Inasa seemed like a major excursion. I remember I looked forward to it for days; it is, I suppose, one of the better memories I have from those times (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 57).

As it can be inferred from this description *A Pale View of Hills* is not the scenery as it is observed, it is the point of view of Etsuko who loses the colors and joys of the life. The color of life has based on the life of person and the narrator of the book loses the meaning of life despite of all her struggle in post-war period in Nagasaki. While she recalls her memories in the small village she emphasizes her wish of being alone in these words:

... there were those who had suffered, those with sad and terrible memories. But to watch them each day, busily involved with their husbands and their children, I found this hard to believe — that their lives had ever held the tragedies and nightmares of wartime. It was never my intention to appear unfriendly, but it was probably true that i made no special effort to seem otherwise, for at that point in my life, I was still wishing to be left alone (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 5).

This is not only a wish but also a foreshadowing of the future English husband and life in England. Indeed, Etsuko is a woman whose heart flutters for freedom and she has a necessarily marriage with her husband Jiro. Above all she wants love, care, a promising life in better conditions and far from her disappointments; therefore, even the street of her small village bothers her. Hey psychic trauma can be understood from her words “In those days, returning to the Nakagawa district still provoked in me mixed emotions of sadness and pleasure. It is a hilly area, and climbing again those steep narrow streets between the clusters of houses never failed to fill me with a deep sense of loss.” (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 11). It was not only Etsuko who suffers from the outcomes of the bomb but also Mrs. Fujiwara, Sachiko and Mariko suffers; notably, as Sachiko reports “Everyone who lived in Tokyo saw unpleasant things.” As well as physical and psychological deformation there happens a cultural corruption in Japanese post-war generation. For instance; Etsuko’s ex-husband has no respect to his

father, does not listen his father and does not give satisfying answers to his father (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 32). It can be observed that Jiro criticizes old education system of Japanese while Ogata-San criticizes the effects of American education on Japanese students (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 36). Moreover, when Etsuko asks Niki, her daughter from her second husband, whether she will get married with her boyfriend or not, Niki reacts in these sentences;

“Well, why, should I get married? That’s so stupid, Mother.” She rolled up the calendar and packed it away. “so many women just get brainwashed. They think all there is to life is getting married and having a load of kids.” I continued to watch her. Then I said: “But in the end Niki there isn’t very much else.” “God, Mother, there’s plenty of things I could do. I don’t want to just get stuck away somewhere with a husband and a load of screaming kids (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 102).

Actually, marriage is a very important institution in Japanese culture; in contrast to American culture. In this respect, Niki’s sharing her house with her boyfriend can be assessed as an American corruption on family institution. Further to this, Sachiko leaves her daughter outside at midnights and does not care about her own daughter (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 49); similarly, Etsuko lets her daughter Keiko leave home and live in Manchester (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 27). Both of these bringing up children are against Japanese culture and tradition.

4. Conclusion

To conclude the argument of the article, the bombing of Nagasaki needs to be differentiated from all the other war tactics until America applies to chemical bombs and gives the start to nuclear war. As it is discussed throughout the article, this bombing cannot be justified under any circumstances and cannot be seen as a victory for American history. Obviously, it is carnage both for humankind and for nature that is to say, men and women of all ages are killed and an extensive area was destroyed. This carnage causes a traumatic effect on Japanese and destruction on nature. As an immigrant Japanese, Kazuo Ishiguro applies this traumatic atmosphere, on which he has information from Japanese movies while writing his first novel *A Pale View of Hills*. He spins a web of psychological consequences of the bombing through his narrator Etsuko’s memories and their effects on her mind. Equally important is the constant effects on the animals, plant and the mother earth. Thus, the soil pollution could bring the end of a nation; fortunately, the effects of this nuclear attack vanish in time. Actually, this is nothing more than a wish because the destructive side effects of the nuclear bomb cannot lose its effect totally. Furthermore, Japanese culture has been corrupted and Japanese traditions are collapsed similar to their land and psychology. Final point, which will be summarized, is that the child which is accepted as the future of a nation has been neglected and killed. Then, it can be inferred that the future of Japanese nation has been deformed as a result of nuclear war for the sake of power.

References

- A Photo-Essay on the Bombing of Hiroshima an Nagasaki. (2017,10 Oct) *Modern American Poetry*. Retrieved from http://www.english.illinois.edu/Maps/poets/g_l/levine/bombing.htm
- Eckert, Ken. (2012). Evasion and the Unsaid in Kazuo Ishiguro's a Pale View of Hills. *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*. 77-92.
- Fowler, Edward. (1992). Rendering Words, Traversing Cultures: On the Art and Politics of Translating Modern Japanese Fiction. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 18 (1), 1–44. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/132706.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. (1990). *A Pale View of Hills*. Vintage Books.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo & Oe Kenzaburo. (1991). The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation. *Boundary 2*, 18 (3), 109–122. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/303205.
- Mason, Gregory, & Kazuo Ishiguro. (1989). An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro. *Contemporary Literature*, 30 (3), 335–347. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1208408.
- Matthews, Sean & Baillie Justine. (2010). History, Memory, and the Construction of Gender in A Pale View of Hills. In Matthews, Sean & Baillie Justine (Eds). *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (pp. 45-54) London: Continuum International Pub. Group.
- Shaffer, Brian W. & Kazuo Ishiguro. (2001). An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro. *Contemporary Literature*, 42 (1), 1–14. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1209082.
- Shang, Biwu. (2017, Sept.). The Maze of Shanghai Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*. *Purdue*. 19(3). Retrieved from <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol19/iss3/7>
- Simon Worrall. (2015, 9 August). How 5 People Survived Nagasaki's Nuclear Hell. *National Geographic*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/08/150809-atomic-bomb-hiroshimanagasaki-radiation-world-war-II-ngbooktalk>
- Sodei, Rinjiro. (1995). Hiroshima/Nagasaki as History and Politics. *The Journal of American History*, 82 (3), 1118–1123. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2945118.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca L. (2001). Ishiguro's Floating Worlds. *ELH*, 68 (4) , 1049–1076. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30032004.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca L. (2007). Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 40 (3), 216–239. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40267701.