

129

TO LEAVE OR TO SETTLE?

KAZUO ISHIGURO'S REMAINS OF THE SUMMER IN NAGASAKI

1. INTRODUCTION

A literary discourse consists of the author-specific, functional-schematic world, or the author-specific frame of reference of the time in which he or she lives. Without the description of this world intra-textually and inter-textually across his or her works, one cannot find anywhere in the text the source of coherence of literary significance of the underlined part in (1) below ('It'), a passage from Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, for example:

- (1) "I was just thinking the other day," I said, "perhaps I should sell the house now."
"Sell it?"
"Yes. Move somewhere smaller perhaps. It's just an idea."
"You want to sell the house?" My daughter gave me a concerned look. "But it's a really nice house."
"But it's so large now."
"But it's a really nice house, Mother. It'd be a shame."
"I suppose so. It was just an idea, Niki, that's all." (*Pale*: 183 (Chap.11))

This is an exchange scene between Etsuko, a Japanese woman who goes over to Britain with her British husband, and her second daughter Niki. Why does Niki say that it is a shame to move out of the present house to a new place? No one can give a good explanation of coherence to this part without a functional description of the author's entire discourse world. The source of coherence of this part has to be correlated intra-textually with a complicated story of Etsuko in her Nagasaki days, to which Niki, who was born in England, could never have access, and inter-textually with the other works by the same author. A surface analysis of cohesion and coherence of this exchange, therefore, is of little use for the full understanding of literary discourse.

2. THE TEXTUAL FUNCTION IN THE LITERARY DISCOURSE OF KAZUO ISHIGURO

In the following, I will show how the theme-rheme structure of Firbas (1964, 1966), Mathesius (1975) and Halliday (1976, 2004) is realized at the text level, showing that Ishiguro's LEAVING (what I call 'discourse theme') is transformed, or mediated, into SETTLING (my 'discourse rheme') through several 'mediating' stages of an opposition-weakening process.¹ For this, I will first focus on the irreducible form of Ishiguro's psychological antitheses that can be expressed in such abstract Event pairs as MOVING vs SETTLING. These abstract Event terms MOVING vs SETTLING can be realized with such Location pairs as: JAPAN vs BRITAIN, i.e., CHANGE IN LOCUS; and PAST vs PRESENT, i.e., CHANGE IN TIME. These two pairs are the more specific features he has to carry throughout his life as one ethnically different living in Britain. At the level of his work, these abstract features take on much more specific forms such as: home town vs big city, people on the ground floor vs people on the first floor, world affairs vs family affairs, and traditional vs non-traditional. In the course of my discussion, I will show how these two polar terms are mediated into less extreme terms, which are, to Ishiguro, psychologically easier to overcome.

Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* can be viewed in terms of two types of change: i.e., the change in locus and the change in time. The two abstract EVENT types for these changes can be termed MOVING and SETTLING. By combining these two EVENT types with the above-mentioned Location pairs JAPAN vs BRITAIN and PAST vs PRESENT, we can diagram them as *Figure 1* below. These diagrams illustrate the abstract and two-dimensional change underlying all Ishiguro's novels, not only *A Pale View of Hills*:

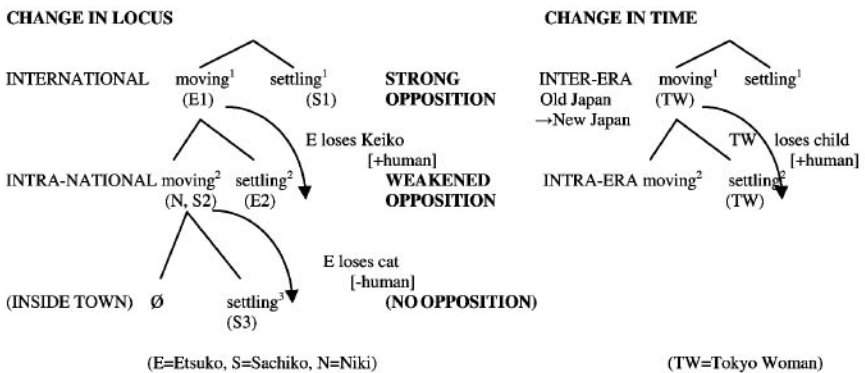


Figure 1 A Pale View of Hills

I will start my discussion with *A Pale View of Hills*, with which it is easier to explain Ishiguro's sort of cognitive patterns that I propose here. *A Pale View of Hills* is a story about two women: one is Etsuko, who leaves Japan and her former Japanese husband. She moves to Britain with her new English husband. The second heroine is Sachiko. Her first hope to marry an American husband and live in America fails, and she stays in Japan, though later she moves with her daughter Mariko from Nagasaki in Western Japan to Kobe in central Japan.

What the left diagram in *Figure 1* above illustrates is this: after moving from Japan to England, Etsuko in the end 'regains' the feature of 'settling' in her new home near London, i.e., the same feature she had in Japan before moving to England. What this diagram, and the right-hand diagram as well, shows is the attenuation of change whether in place or time. Etsuko, by moving internationally, loses one of her daughters, Keiko, her daughter by her Japanese husband. On the other hand, by staying in England, and in her English home, i.e., by refusing to move from her new home, Etsuko does keep her second daughter, Niki, her daughter by her English husband. Sachiko, the second heroine in this novel, represents the opposite pattern. This second heroine, Sachiko fails to fulfill her dream of going to America with an American husband and stays in Japan instead. By not moving internationally, luckily for her, she keeps her daughter Mariko, though she suffers a comparatively small loss; i.e., she loses her cat. Instead of moving internationally, she moves intra-nationally to central Japan to live with her uncle in Kobe. Here, Sachiko's international opposition between moving and settling is weakened into a geographically less distant opposition. Similarly, for Etsuko, the geographically great opposition between Japan and England is reduced to a geographically small opposition between her English home town and a new one. Just as for Sachiko, the geographical difference between Nagasaki and Kobe is only a small one, so for Etsuko, it is a small geographical difference between her home near London and a new home elsewhere in Britain, though in the end Etsuko dismisses the idea of this small move and chooses to stay in her original home. By replacing the strong opposition with the weaker one, Etsuko, or Ishiguro, psychologically attempts to overcome the international difference in reality that she or he faces in life in England as a Japanese. Only with this thematic structure of weakening oppositions in mind, can we appreciate the comment that Niki, Etsuko's second daughter, makes about her mother's idea of moving out of the house in the final scene of the novel in (1) above.

The same discursual implication can be seen in the following lines at the beginning of *The Remains of the Day*:

(2) 'You realize, Stevens, I don't expect you to be locked up here in this house all the time I'm away. Why don't you take the car and drive off somewhere for a few days? You look like you could make good use of a break.'

(Remains: 3)

132

What is implied here is that Stevens finally returns to the Manor. He has to return because his 'break' is in his master's car. He returns there, though not to completely the same environment. This is also the case with Ishiguro's long novel, *The Unconsoled*, in which towards the end of the story, the narrator narrates as follows:

(3) I filled my coffee cup almost to the brim. Then, holding it carefully in one hand, my generously laden plate in the other, I began making my way back to my seat.

(*The Unconsoled*: 535)

'My seat' here is a seat in a tram. After taking his breakfast at the rear of the tram, the world-travelling pianist here too RETURNS to his seat in the tram.

The extract from his latest novel, *When We Were Orphans*, below shows us the stage he has reached through his mother or his mother's love for him; i.e., no change in location and in time:

(4) What I mean is, I realised that she'd never ceased to love me, not through any of it. All she'd ever wanted was for me to have a good life. And all the rest of it, all my trying to find her, trying to save the world from ruin, that wouldn't have made any difference either way. Her feelings for me, they were always just there, they didn't depend on anything. I suppose that might not seem so very surprising. But it took me all that time to realise it.

(*Orphans*: 305-306) (Ishiguro's italics)

Here I will turn our attention to the right-hand diagram in *Figure 1*. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Sachiko, the second heroine, witnesses a woman drowning her baby in the ruins of air-raid Tokyo just after the war. It is possible to diagram this as a parallel of the left diagram. The parallelism shows us that our transition from one era to another is accompanied by a big loss, just as Etsuko's moving from Japan to England was accompanied by her daughter's death. What is implied here is clear: negative evaluation of a big change in time.

This is also the case with *The Artist of a Floating World*. Ono, the hero of this novel, is a nationalist artist who supported his country on its disastrous path into war, from which New Japan emerged. The painter, who, as it were, helped bring about the transition in time, is denied a future. He has two daughters and one grandson, the child of one of the daughters. His only son, Kenji, is dead, and his grandson will inherit his father's family name. Without a son or a grandson to inherit his family name or his artistic tradition, he hero painter is denied a future. Five years after the end of the war he says to Matsuda, his nationalist friend:

(5) 'Indeed. I've been most fortunate as regards my daughters.'

(*Artist*: 198 (June 1950))

These words imply his lament over his life without a son. His nationalist friend, Matsuda, is not married and he is also denied a future because he has no son. This is why towards the end of the novel, at Matsuda's house, they meet a boy in a tree in the neighbour's garden. The lines go as follows:

(6) It was while we [= Ono and Matsuda] were standing at the edge of the pond, looking into the thick green water, that a sound made us both glance up. At a point not far from us, a small boy of about four or five was peering over the top of the garden fence, clinging with both arms to the branch of a tree. Matsuda smiled and called out:

'Ah, good afternoon, Botchan!'

:

...But he [the small boy]'s shy and if I [Matsuda] try and speak to him he runs away.'

(Artist: 200-201 (June, 1950))

Towards the end of the story, the hero, Ono, sees 'groups of employees in their bright white shirtsleeves emerging from the glass-fronted building' for lunch. They are of course the young people who belong to New Japan, but none of them belongs to the painter. Ono and Matsuda, both played a positive role in changing Old Japan into New Japan, though it did not turn out the way they hoped it would. And in the process of transition, a lot of people suffered great hardships. In this way, also in *An Artist of the Floating World*, a big transition in time is negatively evaluated.

By considering the closely parallel relations of the two diagrams in *Figure 1*, we can see that someone has to die when one makes a big change in location or in time. Our next topic is *The Remains of the Day*, in which these two dimensions are again closely interrelated, both resisting a change.

Through his works, Ishiguro attempts to give a solution to the two contradictory terms of JAPAN vs BRITAIN and PAST vs PRESENT. Ishiguro unconsciously hopes to solve the irreducible form of antitheses that can be expressed in these abstract pairs, JAPAN vs BRITAIN paralleling PAST vs PRESENT. And I hope my discussion so far proves the correctness of my assumption about Ishiguro's view of his life as composed of two sorts of duality, spatial and temporal.

Now I will go back to the discussion of *The Remains of the Day*. *Figure 2* below illustrates that *The Remains of the Day* has the same structural network, one that gradually reduces the original contradiction by replacing one opposite pair with a weaker one until it is felt easy to overcome:

134

N A U K A O K N J I Ž E V N O S T I

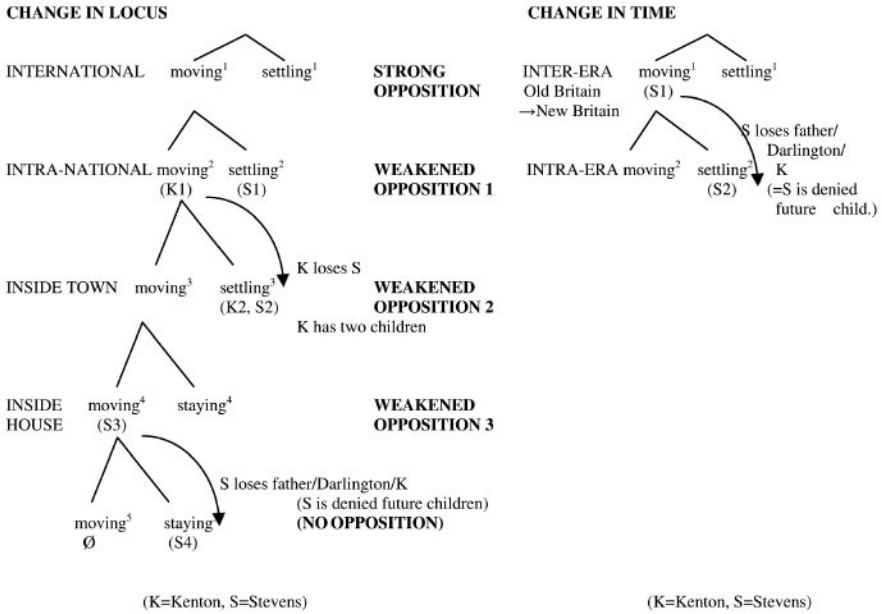


Figure 2 *The Remains of the Day*

The strong international opposition at the top level that Ishiguro presented in *A Pale View of Hills* is now mediated into a weak opposition of Upstairs vs Downstairs. In the first part of the novel, Stevens's father dies upstairs, while on the ground floor an international secret meeting is held. In the second half of the novel, an international meeting with Ribbentrop, the German Ambassador, is held upstairs, while on the ground floor, Stevens and Miss Kenton separate. The two events—the international affairs and the family affairs—are combined with two geographically contrastive places, namely, Upstairs and Downstairs, in an antithetic manner. Though the opposition between Upstairs and Downstairs is smaller than that between Japan and Britain, the hero still loses his father due to old age, and Miss Kenton or his future. However, compared with Etsuko's loss of her Japanese daughter or the Tokyo Woman's drowning of her baby in the ruins of Tokyo, Stevens's loss is small. Namely, in the weakened oppositions the hero's loss is attenuated. He loses his father, but this is due to old age. He may lose Miss Kenton and may not have a child or a future, but he does not positively cause the death of a human being.

Following this schematic information structure of fictional discourse, it is possible to see that another implication in *The Remains of the Day* is that a

raft of troubles will accompany Farraday, a new American master of Stevens, who came to Britain all the way from the other side of the Atlantic.

Also in this work, the CHANGE IN LOCUS parallels the CHANGE IN TIME. Stevens, helping Lord Darlington, assists Britain in its transition into New Britain after its great difficulties in war, which in turn causes Darlington's suicide. Lord Darlington himself brings about the consequent social change in Britain and is denied future by not having a child. Also in this novel, resistance to change is thematically implied. ²

My next discussion is about a story of a world famous pianist in *The Unconsoled*. The pianist is traveling worldwide. The pianist's name is Ryder, the same name as a big moving company in the US, 'Ryder', a suitable name for a world-traveling pianist.

As the tree diagram in Figure 3 below shows, here also several strong oppositions are mediated down to a weak one of moving inside a tram:

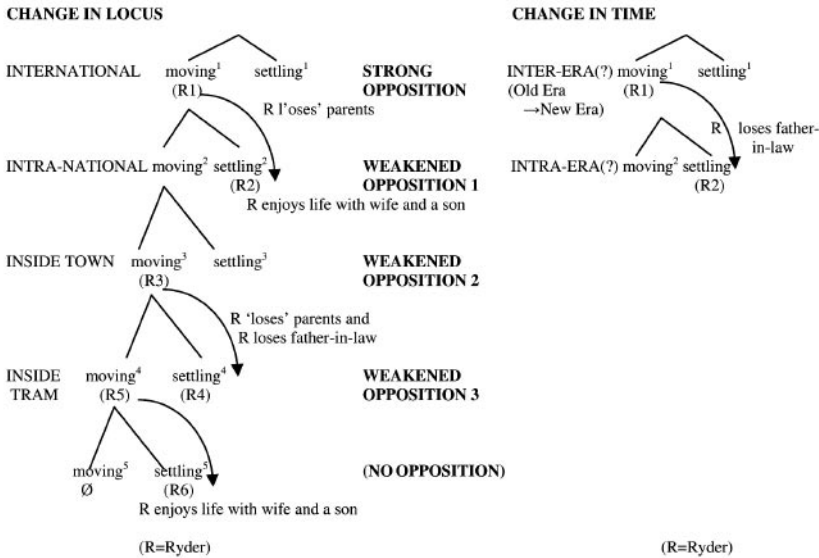


Figure 3 *The Unconsoled*

The hero comes back to a Hungarian city, in which he travels from his hotel to several areas in the city and returns to the hotel every time he goes out. 'And however far away he goes on his tours through the town, he finds himself in a building which is just another wing of the hotel' (Chaudhuri, 1995: 30). This story ends with the hero's moving from his seat on the tram to the back of it to take a delicious breakfast, and returning to his seat. Moving in the world is geographically reduced to moving in a city and then to moving in a tram:

136

(7) I filled my coffee cup almost to the brim. Then, holding it carefully in one hand, my generously laden plate in the other, I began making my way back to my seat.

(*The Unconsoled*: 535)

In the process of reduction of oppositions, there is certainly a death, that of Ryder's father-in-law, but this is almost like a death due to old age. The hero does not positively cause his death. Also the hero's parents never appear before him. Again there is no positive act by the hero to make them disappear. And at the bottom of the diagram, weakest in opposition, the hero seems to be promised to live with his wife and son in the city. How about the change in time in this novel? The right diagram shows no big change in time.

In discourse analysis, what is called 'discourse' consists of 'text', a linguistic stretch of language, and 'context', or roughly speaking, things that surround the 'text' (Cook, 1989, 1994; Downes, 1998). In understanding a literary discourse, it is not enough to specify what the pronoun 'it', for example, refers to in Niki's comment on her mother's plan to move to a smaller house. In (1) above, Niki says, 'It'd be a shame'. The pronoun 'it' anaphorically and cohesively refers back to her mother's plan of moving out. But this identification of cohesion is not enough for the appreciation of a literary discourse. Considering the discussion I have made so far, what Niki discursively means is: It would be a shame to move out of the house into a new one because it might cause another disaster like someone's death. For the same reason, the butler, Stevens, returns to Darlington Hall after his brief excursion and he stays there; and Miss Kenton never says yes to Stevens, who wants her to move back to the Hall with him. Instead she stays with her family in a small port town. Following the same scheme, the world famous pianist, Ryder, decides to settle in the Hungarian city where his wife and son live, not returning to Britain, the original place where he was born and his parents live. And he returns to the hotel in the city several times and in the end he goes back to his seat on the tram with breakfast, gradually making oppositions weaker. All these discursively imply the further weakened state of MOVING, or CHANGE IN LOCUS.³

In his newest novel, *When We Were Orphans*, there appear zero oppositions in Time and Location, as is naturally expected, when the hero says as follows. Here I quote the silings again:

(4) What I mean is, I realised that she'd never ceased to love me, not through any of it. All she'd ever wanted was for me to have a good life. And all the rest of it, all my trying to find her, trying to save the world from ruin, that wouldn't have made any difference either way. Her feelings for me, they were always just *there*, they didn't depend on anything. I suppose that might not seem so very surprising. But it took me all that time to realise it.

(*Orphans*: 305-306) (Ishiguro's italics)

3. CONCLUSION

So far I have compared five of Ishiguro's novels to show that his first theme of moving internationally and experiencing a big cultural change, the topic or discourse theme is progressively mediated through the weaker oppositions into the comment about the topic, or discourse rheme. At the stage of discourse rheme, there are no oppositions or there are only small oppositions that mean almost no psychological burden. I will conclude this paper with a small interpretation of a phrase in *The Unconsoled*; that is, the phrase 'Number Nine', or the name of a toy football player whom Ryder's son, Boris, is a great fan of. Anyone who was born or lived in Nagasaki connects this figure 9 with the 9th of August, 1945, not with the centre forward of football. However, as the last diagram shows, the disaster that Nagasaki experienced in the summer of 1945, a historical disaster that is placed in parallel with his own traumatic experiences of moving to Britain, seems to have been given a psychological solution in Ishiguro's mind through the mediations of the episodes that gradually reduce the original psychologically hard experiences to something that is surmountable in his mind.

1 For a detailed discussion of 'discourse theme', 'discourse rheme' and 'mediation', see Kikuchi (forthcoming). As for the importance of the text world an author created, see Hasan (1996). She emphasizes the significance of the third layer of the three, saying 'Thirdly, ...there is the reconstructed context which is specific to that one text—what it is about, in what relations the characters and events are placed *vis-à-vis* each other, how do these hang together and what are the strategies through which the text achieves a generally recognizable generic shape...' (Hasan, 1996: 52). For the multi-layered communication system working in a fictional text, See also Chatman (1978), Leech and Short (1981), Short (1996), Herman (2003) and Keen (2003). More cognitively, for Werth (1999).

2 Ono and Stevens are positively rationalizing 'past', but not 'past "professional" failures' (Shaffer, 1998).

3 We may call this the process of reduction of 'disconnection' caused by 'misunderstandings and missed chances' (Pico, 1995).

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SUMMARY

TO LEAVE OR TO SETTLE? KAZUO ISHIGURO'S REMAINS OF THE SUMMER IN NAGASAKI

In this article, by extending the Prague School linguists' and M.A.K. Halliday's notion of the theme-rheme sequence at clause level to the level of the entire fictional text, I attempt to analyze the theme-rheme structure of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, concluding that his 'discourse theme' of LEAVING is 'mediated' and given a solution of SETTLING, or 'discourse rheme', in the end in his attempt to overcome cultural and ethnic differences he faces in Britain. Etsuko's LEAVING Nagasaki is MEDIATED into her SETTLING in a new English hometown (*A Pale View of Hills*); Stevens's LEAVING the old Manor is MEDIATED into his SETTLING in his 'new' Manor (*The Remains of the Day*). In the light of this structure, one can better appreciate the passage at the beginning of *The Remains of the Day* ("Why don't you take the car and drive off somewhere for a few days?"). What is thematically important here is that Stevens' returning to and remaining in the Manor is inter-textually implied in this phrase. After his 'break in his new master's car', he returns there, though not to completely the same environment.

KEYWORDS: literary discourse, discourse theme, discourse rheme, mediation, attenuation of change, functional.