

How to Employ Nagasaki: Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (1982)

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Abstract

Not a few scholars believe that representation of scenery in Nagasaki is a mockery in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills* (1982). However, Etsuko's narration faithfully represents individual facts about Nagasaki, but her combinations of facts are not consistent with the real world. Overall, Ishiguro's narrative strategy is to represent as realistically as possible how a person's memory works; at a time when rigid opposition between history and fiction collapsed as a result of the expanding literary theory of postmodernist positivism. A somewhat distorted narrative of recollections holds true not only in Etsuko but in human beings generally. If everything in the record of one's past life is fictional, realizing how one's memory is distorted or colored is impossible. Thus, Ishiguro wrote Etsuko's reminiscences by faithfully describing facts of Nagasaki, for instance, nonlinguistic artifacts and relics, but making them anachronistic or discordant in time and space. This strategy resists the postmodern view of history and simultaneously emphasizes human memories' ambiguities and distortions. Nagasaki, as a faithful background setting for Etsuko's memories, is entirely plausible because Ishiguro was born and raised there until he was six years old. Yet, the realism of *A Pale View of Hills* encompasses a universal story of reminiscence or human testimony by employing the narratives of an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride.

Keywords: A Pale View of Hills, Kazuo Ishiguro, Nagasaki, narrative, reminiscence, testimony

Introduction

Many scholars, including B. Lewis (2000), B. W. Shaffer (1998) and A. Parkes (2001), believe the Nagasaki that Kazuo Ishiguro describes in *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) is a mockery because they read, literally, his statements in interviews: first, according to Ishiguro, a novelist does not need such correctness as is required of a historian (Aoki, 1990). Second, when Swain (1990, p. 99) commented about setting the “story in Nagasaki” and “get[ting] the feeling of being there without describing every event, every building – that was not [the] purpose, in any event,” Ishiguro explained,

I’m never particular ... as a novelist. I’m not interested in writing down details about the surface textures of places. To me, I’m creating landscapes of the imagination, landscapes that somehow express various themes and emotions that I’m obsessed by. I don’t see my task as being that of a travel writer or a journalist or someone who tries to convey to westerners what it’s like in Japan, or conveys to other people what it’s like in England.

Third, Ishiguro’s answer to a 1990 interview question might support the belief in an unrealistic Nagasaki: Ishiguro confessed that since his early career, he had tried to avoid local color, for instance, English puns and plays on words (Aoki, 1990, pp. 304–305). Thus, Sugano (2017, pp. 68–71) declared that Ishiguro writes novels by focusing on real people’s ease in reading and on ease of translation into other languages. Scholars might therefore associate Ishiguro’s statement about avoiding England’s local color with an avoidance of Nagasaki’s local color.

Literal belief in Ishiguro’s statements in interviews is naïve. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro realistically represents even slangpoken in Nagasaki city, which functions to support Etsuko’s narrative as entwined with Sachiko’s from the very beginning. As Hirai (2011; 2018) also indicates, places and buildings in *A Pale View of Hills* are so concretely identified and realistically described that Ishiguro’s descriptions vividly represent even today’s Nagasaki.

However, when readers confront one fact – of space or time – with another, they discern a certain discord. But such discord represents Etsuko’s reminiscences realistically: she says, “Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here” (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 156). Distorted narratives of memories are characteristic not just of Etsuko but of human beings in general. Even so, if everything is fictional in the record of one’s past life, realizing how one’s memory is colored becomes impossible.

To ensure reality in the record of Etsuko’s past life, Ishiguro needed Nagasaki, especially because he wrote *A Pale View of Hills* when the rigid opposition between history and fiction collapsed due to the expanding literary theory of postmodernist positivism. Thus, Ishiguro realistically represented (Etsuko’s) memory by faithfully supplying facts, for instance, about nonlinguistic artifacts and relics, along with discordances for combinations of facts.¹ Nagasaki was appropriate for Ishiguro’s faithful descriptions because he lived there until he was six years

¹ As A. Whitehead (2009) suggests, “memory” is a huge area of scholarship and concepts of “memory” and approaches to it have changed since ancient Greek times. Henri Bergson created the concept of habit memory and James E. Young has pointed out that scholars always argued “collected memory” of individuals, as a counterargument against Maurice Halbwachs’ insistence on collective memory. This essay focuses on texture of memory as finds expression in texts by Rousseau and Proust, and constructability and reconstructability of the past in mind and in discourse.

old and then used Nagasaki as a background setting for realism of reminiscence or, to put it another way, for a universal novel of testimony. This viewpoint brings up Etsuko's identity as an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride, who has "insomniac," or unsleeping, but unspoken experiences always in mind. In this respect, Etsuko's reminiscence is a testimony of sad memories.

This article serves to develop the preceding arguments. In the next section, I argue the novel's representations as faithful to facts about Nagasaki by confirming slang and incidents and by identifying its places and buildings. In the third section, I offer examples of discordant combinations of facts in space and time. In the fourth section, I explore what is needed to write reminiscence: nonlinguistic artifacts and relics form firm ground for judging the historical narrative's veracity. In the fifth section, I argue Etsuko's identity as an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride. Such a woman must be concerned about the health and well-being of her daughters Keiko and Niki. She must feel guilty about passing to them the possibility of "a bomb disease" due to radioactivity. *A Pale View of Hills* begins and ends with Niki, who seems to frame Etsuko's reminiscence. Etsuko's current feelings for Niki are complicated, so Etsuko muses, "often [memory] is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 156).

Faithful Representation of Nagasaki in Etsuko's Reminiscence

By identifying them, this section confirms that the novel's representations – slang, incidents, places, and buildings – are not fictional. Let us begin with confirming slang spoken in Nagasaki city. At the novel's beginning, Etsuko remembers Sachiko's utterance "I must get into town" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 15). "Getting into town," or "*machi e iku*" in Japanese, has long had a certain special meaning in Nagasaki city. It is a phrase spoken by people living in and around Nagasaki's central district when they signify "getting into Hamanomachi," Nagasaki's bustling shopping and entertainment district. In *A Pale View of Hills* and reality, Hamanomachi was also crowded with many Allied soldiers. It follows, then, that Etsuko recalls Sachiko saying to her, "I must get into Hamanomachi," probably to meet a soldier. Just after saying "I must get into town," Sachiko says, "I have to go into Nagasaki" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 15). In Nagasaki, "going into Nagasaki," or "*Nagasaki ni iku*" in Japanese, also means "going into Hamanomachi" although the phrase is usually spoken by those who live in areas away from Nagasaki's central district.

These facts tell readers a certain truth from the novel's very beginning; that Etsuko's narrative is inseparably entwined with Sachiko's. Sachiko had moved from Tokyo to Nagasaki city about a year earlier. However, she never used any Nagasaki slang, and she was easily identified as a Tokyoist because she used a Tokyo dialect. A woman who met her in Nagasaki city pointed out that she "had spoken with a Tokyo dialect and certainly was not from Nagasaki" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 13). To people in Nagasaki, Sachiko "seemed unfriendly—proud probably" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 13). In addition, Sachiko certainly did not want to integrate herself into Nagasaki's society and thus did not speak the slang; she disdains Nagasaki. Indeed, she protests, "I didn't need to leave Tokyo" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 45), and "After Tokyo, Nagasaki seems a tame little town" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 68). Therefore, Sachiko is unlikely to have ever spoken any Nagasaki slang, including the phrases "I must get into town" and "I have to go into Nagasaki." This tells us that it is not Sachiko in Etsuko's memory but Etsuko herself who says, "I must get into town" and "I have to go into Nagasaki." In fact, Etsuko was born in Nakagawa, a town near Nagasaki's central area, so she would likely use the phrase "get into town" to signify going to Hamanomachi. Additionally, to express the same meaning, Etsuko who lived away from central Nagasaki, would likely say, "I have to go into Nagasaki."

Contrary to the view of scholars including B. Lewis (2000), B. W. Shaffer (1998) and A. Parkes (2001), as mentioned earlier, who insist that Ishiguro did not describe Nagasaki faithfully, this evidence supports a past and present entwined in Etsuko's narrations; obviously, Etsuko identifies herself with Sachiko from the novel's beginning. Conversely, scholars have insisted that Etsuko's identity gradually overlaps with Sachiko's by focusing on Etsuko's conversation with Mariko, Sachiko's daughter, in the novel's latter part. Etsuko attempts to persuade Mariko to go to the United States with her mother, "if you don't like it over there, *we* can always come back" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 173, italics added), instead of "*you* can always come back." However, Ishiguro's details about Nagasaki reveal that Etsuko's identity immediately, not gradually, overlaps that of Sachiko.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, not only language but also incidents and buildings, stations, houses, mountains, and towns are faithful to the real Nagasaki. For instance, Sachiko (or Etsuko in her own memory) drowns unwanted cats in the river; people in Nagasaki commonly did so or placed a box of kittens in the sea when they could not take care of them. Infanticide also occurred, not only in Nagasaki, but all over Japan. After World War II, a woman who delivered a baby, especially a "GI baby" from a man with the occupation forces, but felt she could not bring up the child, frequently committed infanticide. Such deliveries were reported as stillbirths at registry offices.

The Peace Park, Mt Inasa, Mt Inasa Park, the ropeway, and the TV tower on the mountain, the Hamaya department store, and other locations are also realistically represented in *A Pale View of Hills*. The noodle shop run by Mrs Fujiwara on "a busy sidestreet" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 23) used to be on Shindaikumachi street near Nakagawa in Nagasaki. Even without names, identifying Nagasaki's places and buildings is easy. For instance, Etsuko and Ogata "were standing in a concrete yard surrounded by several empty tram cars. Above our heads, a maze of black wires crossed the air" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 141). This scene is the Hotarujaya streetcar stop in Nagasaki. The following description is faithful to Shin-Nakagawamachi, where Kazuo Ishiguro was born: "As we walked, the narrow roads twisted, climbed, and fell. Houses, many of them still familiar to me, stood wherever the hilly landscape would permit; some were perched precariously on slopes, others squeezed into unlikely corners" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 141). I could list many other examples.

Faithful Representation of Individual Facts; Discordance of Combined Facts

Interestingly, however, faithfully represented facts, when combined in Etsuko's narration, contradict Nagasaki's physical reality. As an example, let us focus on the area of Etsuko's apartment. The closest streetcar stop can possibly be identified by Etsuko's remark "We were standing on a railway bridge and on one side of the tracks at the foot of the hill could be seen a cluster of roofs as if houses had come tumbling down the slope" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 13). Currently, three stops fit her remark: Suwajinja, Shin-Nakagawamachi, and Sōfukuji, all on a bridge, with hills of houses to one side of the tracks. Additionally, all three stops are east of Nagasaki, within 10 minutes of Hamanomachi by streetcar. This accords with Etsuko's explanation of her apartment's location: "My husband and I lived in an area to the east of the city, a short tram journey from the centre of town" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 11). However, scenery at all these stops differs completely from the description of the area around Etsuko's apartment. According to Etsuko (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 11),

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. Rebuilding had got under way and in time four concrete buildings had

been erected, each containing forty or so separate apartments. Of the four, our block had been built last and it marked the point where the rebuilding programme had come to a halt; between us and the river lay an expanse of wasteground, several acres of dried mud and ditches.

As Kyoko Hirai (2011, p. 42) also indicates, this description fits only the Urakami district, north of Nagasaki city, where the atomic-bomb exploded.

If Etsuko's description is of the Urakami district, her apartment might have been near the streetcar stop at the Shimonokawa bridge, both of which survived at least to the Korean War period. Near the stop, reinforced concrete apartments for employees of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, one of the "expanding firms" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 12) in Etsuko's remark, were built after World War II. As Etsuko reports, the apartment had a "tatami" floor and "bathrooms and kitchens of a Western style" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 12). Contrary to Etsuko's recollection, however, many more than four apartment buildings were built there. Besides that, no "side of the tracks" at the Shimonokawa streetcar stop "has a hill full of houses." In Shōwamachi, very near the Urakami district, four-story apartment blocks of reinforced concrete were erected as part of rebuilding after the war, but the closest streetcar stop is not Shimonokawa. R. Taketomi (2018, p. 224) asserts the Uonomachi public complex east of Nagasaki city to be Etsuko's apartment block. Indeed, the Uonomachi apartment has exactly the same room arrangement Etsuko describes, and the Nakashima river flows near Uonomachi. However, the area has never been a charred ruin, and the closest streetcar stop is Shiminkaikan, which is not on the bridge.

Of course, a novel's scenery need not be faithful to the real world. Significantly, however, individual facts about Nagasaki are accurate, but combinations of facts are not. Indeed, the discordance of anachronism often occurs in the novel. As K. Hirai (2011) observes, although descriptions of the Peace Park and Mt Inasa are realistic, the Peace Park was established August 8, 1955, the ropeway on Mt Inasa opened in 1958, and the TV tower on Mt Inasa was built in 1959. None of these fit the novel's setting – the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. They did occur from approximately 1954 to 1960, when Kazuo Ishiguro lived in Nagasaki. Another example is the restaurant at the Hamaya department store. Etsuko says she "had been eating supper on the restaurant floor of the Hamaya department store" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 120). That would be sometime from 1950 to 1953. According to the Hamaya department store (1960, pp. 284–5, 496), however, the restaurant on the building's second floor was ruined during World War II, and a new restaurant was built on the fifth floor in 1958. Obviously, we can trust Etsuko's reference to each fact but not to their combination.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, discordance emerges only when we confront one fact with another. If the novel's Nagasaki was truly unrealistic, no one could recognize the discordance itself and thus call Etsuko an unreliable narrator. From another perspective, the novel's Nagasaki needed to be faithfully represented so that we can easily recognize the discord. According to K. Hirai (2018, p. 66), Kazuo Ishiguro "could get a map and a chronicle of Nagasaki," and Ishiguro also confesses, "I obviously looked in the history books once I figured out the story and was in the process of fine tuning" (Krider, 1998, p. 129). Thus, Ishiguro dared to emphasize discordance in combinations of facts through faithful representation of individual facts because he wrote during an era when writing reminiscences was difficult.

History and Memory: Reality of Testimony

Etsuko's reminiscence is a kind of recorded history, or historiography, in that it narrates past events from her life. Historiography has contained tension between truth and imagination, or

objective accounts and subjective projection, since ancient Greek times. In the twentieth century's latter half, however, a distinction between truth and fiction was denied, as he typically observed in Hayden White's study (1978), which had a major effect on the study of historiography. Rigid opposition between history and fiction collapsed as a result of the expanding literary theory of postmodernist positivism, or "the so-called 'linguistic turn' that holds language to be a closed system of signs, its meaning determined by and within that system rather than by any extra-linguistic reality" (Zhang, 2015, p. 98). Any past event is passed down to the generations within the closed system of signs. As a result of the linguistic turn, hence, the Holocaust has been treated as a non-affair, and famous historical persons, for instance, Ieyasu Tokugawa in Japan, as non-persons. However, denial of historical truth, as the distinguished comparative-literature scholar Zhang Longxi persuasively argues, has "other than linguistic motivations" because, despite "all the sophisticated theoretical argument about the textuality or linguistic nature of all discourses, including historical narratives, history as past event has a claim on us that is not at all linguistic in nature" (2015, p. 100). Indeed, as "reconstructed narratives, history may be prone to errors and lapses, not to mention ideological biases and spots of blindness." But "underneath all the layers of relations, descriptions, and imagined dialogues or motivations, there is a core of verifiable facts as the basis of all the narration." This "core of facts together with nonlinguistic artifacts, relics, and archaeological findings ... form[s] a firm ground for judging the veracity of historical narratives" (Zhang, 2015, p. 101).

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Nagasaki's Peace Park, Mt Inasa, the noodle shop, the Hamaya department store, the charred ruin in the Urakami district, and others are "nonlinguistic artifacts [and] relics." In the 1980s when Ishiguro wrote *A Pale View of Hills*, the view that historiography is fiction, typified by Hayden White's view, was popular. Contrary to this academic mode, Ishiguro clearly denied the postmodernist view: "I try to avoid that very postmodern element in my books" (Mason, 1986, p. 8). Rather, Ishiguro's interest in writing a novel lies in "metaphor and myth," "a universal story," and "a human story" (Ono, 2006, p. 144). To write such novels, he certainly needed a narrative strategy that would resist postmodernist positivism.

Ishiguro's strategy was to compose Etsuko's reminiscences by faithfully describing Nagasaki's "nonlinguistic artifacts [and] relics" but to discordantly conflate them in geographic space and time. This strategy simultaneously resists the postmodern view of history and emphasizes the ambiguity and distortion of Etsuko's memories. Indeed, Etsuko herself acknowledges both accurate and inaccurate recollections of facts. She admits, "Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 156). On the other hand, she emphasizes her memory's accuracy by intentionally asserting, for instance, "they [journeys ...] serve today to bring a certain distinctness to that summer" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 99). Nagasaki's "nonlinguistic artifacts [and] relics" are truths for which she does not need to emphasize accuracy. Faithful representation of "nonlinguistic artifacts [and] relics" in Nagasaki – the Peace Park, Mt Inasa, the ropeway, the TV tower, streetcar stops, and the Hamaya department store, among others – and discordance of combinations of facts show "imagined dialogues or motivations" and underneath them "a core of verifiable facts as the basis of all the narration."

"Imagined dialog or motivations" are Etsuko's "circumstances in which one remembers," which mean, in turn, the current state of Etsuko's mind, filled with painful memories: the deaths of her family and her boyfriend in World War II, marital lives in Nagasaki and England, the

death of her second husband, and Keiko's suicide. In this regard, T. Shōnaka (2018, p. 112), a Japanese scholar of Kazuo Ishiguro, remarks, "Etsuko tries to reawaken her distant, vague memories slumbering at the back of her mind and harks them back, consciously or unconsciously wrenching them because of her anxiety and desire."

When we read her following remark, however, we doubt that Etsuko "tries to reawaken her distant, vague memories slumbering at the back of her mind":

I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture—of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end. The horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter; as with a wound on one's own body, it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 54).

Etsuko's statements – "the horror of that image has never diminished" and "it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things" – suggest that her memory never slumbers. Thus, has Etsuko realized the insomnia of memory. She can now understand how women in Nagasaki have developed "an intimacy" with insomniac memories about World War II, the atomic bombing attack, or a terrible wound to the psyche. Etsuko says:

Now I do not doubt that amongst those women I lived with them, 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 (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 13).

For Etsuko, as well, losing her family and her boyfriend during the war and the atomic-bomb attack – "tragedies and nightmares of wartime" – must hold as horrific memories as remembering the loss of her daughter Keiko to suicide – one of "the most disturbing things" with which she can "develop an intimacy." Etsuko's marital life with Jiro must also be such a thing. First, she hesitated to marry Jiro, as revealed when she began her marital life in Mr Ogata's house. She told Ogata that she "wouldn't live in a house without azaleas in the gateway" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 136). Her remark partially foretells the theme of Ishiguro's next novel *An Artist of the Floating World* (see Suzuki, 2020), for, in Japan's flower language, the azalea indicates hesitation or not going forward. Indeed, Etsuko and her husband soon left Mr Ogata's house and began marital life in another place, but in this case, her husband decided on their move. In other words, Etsuko's concern was not life with Mr Ogata but hesitation about her new marital life. Eventually, she leaves Jiro and marries a British man, repatriating to England with him. Still her life in England must also be one of "the most disturbing of things" with which she can just "develop an intimacy." She arrived in England with hope (Ishiguro 1982, p. 182), but gradually succumbed to disappointment: she was not well received in England, judging from the newspaper full of Japanese stereotypes, from her criticism of her husband's lack of cross-cultural understanding, and from her daughter's suicide. Regarding Etsuko's life in England, we can again rely on flower language. Behind the orchard, at the grass field's crest, Etsuko observes, "we could see two thin sycamore trees" (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 181). In Japanese culture, sycamore trees mean beautiful change, but in Anglophone countries, they mean endurance. Besides that, one could see the sycamore trees most clearly from Keiko's room – the daughter without friends in England, who committed suicide.

These insomniac events, past and present, coexist in Etsuko's mind, causing her to say, "I must get into town" and "I have to go into Nagasaki" as if they were Sachiko's utterances and "if you don't like it over there, we can always come back," instead of "you can always come back":

that is, “often [memory] is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers.” Actually, calling Etsuko’s narrative “reminiscence” is inaccurate because her memory never sleeps. Her narrative represents the reality of testimony, in which the insomniac past and the present are conflated and confused. This reminds us of L. Langer’s experience of conducting interviews with many Holocaust survivors. Langer explains:

I think the terminology itself is at fault here. There is no need to revive what has never died. Moreover, though slumbering memories may crave reawakening, nothing is clearer in these narratives than that Holocaust memory is an insomniac faculty, whose mental eyes have never slept. In addition, since testimonies are human documents rather than merely historical ones, the troubled interaction between past and present achieves a gravity that surpasses the concern with accuracy. Factual errors do occur from time to time, as do simple lapses; but they seem trivial in comparison to the complex layers of memory that give birth to the versions of the self that we shall be studying in this volume (1991, p. xv).

Etsuko’s remark “often [memory] is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers” is equivalent to Langer’s descriptive phrase “the complex layers of memory that give birth to the versions of the self.”

Thus, to condemn as an error of fact the discordance between Etsuko’s memories and Nagasaki’s reality is trivial. Etsuko, for instance, places her apartment “east of the city” in a district that is a “charred ruin”; in truth, it is north of the city. But this discordance is uttered through “complex layers of memory that give birth to the versions of the self.” And, in fact, such utterances are often heard in Nagasaki. Many who tragically experienced the atomic bombing attest, and believe, that the bomb exploded near their homes. From a factual perspective, the bomb did not explode where Etsuko remembers, but from the perspective of human testimony, Etsuko’s narration, with all its unreliability, circumscribes the reality of human testimony.

A Story Beginning and Ending with Niki: Testimony by an Atomic-bomb Victim and a War Bride in Front of Her Daughter

Finally, in connection with the reality of human testimony, I point out Etsuko’s identity as an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride, even though Ishiguro (e.g., Mason, 1986, p. 8; Bigsby, 1987, p. 24) often says in interviews that he will not bring the atomic-bomb into his novels. His narrator Etsuko was born and grew up in Nakagawa in Nagasaki. Nakagawa was not charred by the atomic-bomb but has been designated a bombed area by the Japanese government (Ōta et al., 2014, p. 27). This means that Etsuko is an atomic-bomb victim. Some scholars emphasize the complete lack of references to the atomic-bomb in *A Pale View of Hills*, but according to Ōta et al. (2014), who conducted a detailed analysis of atomic-bomb victims’ testimonies, many victims do not want to speak of their experiences. In other words, the atomic bombing is “an insomniac but unspoken experience.” Ōta et al. also analyzed what words victims tend to utter in referring to the experience; according to their analysis, the words female victims frequently use are “wind,” “light,” “mother,” “scare,” “water,” and “passed away” (Ōta et al., 2014, pp. 54–58). Etsuko also uses these words. Besides that, atomic-bomb victims tend to feel physically and mentally unwell in summer, when the bomb attack occurred (Ōta et al., pp. 103–104). Etsuko, too, felt unwell in summer. More significantly, atomic-bomb victims in Nagasaki were discriminated against even by people who lived outside the bombed area. Young female and male victims were avoided as marriage partners, and if they did marry, especially the female victims feared delivering a baby because of concern about heredity of “a

bomb disease” from radioactivity. This is one reason Etsuko fears delivering her baby in Nagasaki. Another lies in Etsuko’s lack of confidence in her married life with Jiro. As previously mentioned, Etsuko hesitated to marry Jiro, and as Nakai (2017) mentions, she was tired of patriarchy. That is why she finally left Japan; as she (Ishiguro, 1982, p. 170) confesses in Sachiko’s voice, “Japan is no place for a girl. What can she look forward to here?”

In a sense, Etsuko is “a war bride,” a woman who married an American, British, or Australian man who stayed in Japan after World War II and then repatriated along with her husband. As Tolbert (2016) revealed by conducting interviews with Japanese war brides, they left because they lost hope for a life in Japan and wanted to escape to another country. However, like Etsuko, despite their hopes for a new land, they suffered during their marital lives due to gaps between the real and the ideal – discrimination, cultural barriers, and so on. As the title of Tolbert’s investigative report “The Untold Stories of Japanese War” suggests, like atomic-bomb victims, war brides do not want to speak of their experiences, making those experiences also “insomniac but unspoken.”

No doubt Etsuko has complicated feelings about her daughters. Etsuko must have been concerned about Keiko’s health and likely felt guilty because her decision to come to England made Keiko suffer and finally commit suicide. Etsuko must also be concerned about Niki’s health and feel guilty about passing the possibility of a bomb disease to her. Although Niki completely denies the value of marrying and having a baby – Etsuko’s life – she is Etsuko’s irreplaceable daughter. *A Pale View of Hills* begins and ends with Niki as a kind of a frame of Etsuko’s reminiscence. Etsuko’s complicated feelings toward Niki spur her reflection, “often [memory] is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers.”

A Pale View of Hills is not a singular story of an atomic-bomb victim or a war bride but a universal story of the realism of human testimony against a background narratives of an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride. Because Ishiguro is interested in “metaphor and myth,” “a universal story,” and “a human story,” *A Pale View of Hills* emerges as a universal story about a person with “complex layers of memory that give birth to the versions of the self” (Langer, 1991, p. xv).

Conclusion

A Pale View of Hills is configured through the narrator Etsuko’s memory, which “can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections [Etsuko] ha[s] gathered here.” Distortion of her memory in recollection is true not only of Etsuko but of human beings in general: if the record of one’s past life is fictional, realizing how one’s memory is colored is impossible. Indeed, Ishiguro wrote *A Pale View of Hills* when rigid opposition between history and fiction collapsed as a result of expanding postmodernist positivism. Therefore, Ishiguro realistically represents human testimony to describe faithfully such facts as nonlinguistic artifacts and relics, along with discordant combinations of facts. But discordances appear only when the reader can confront one fact with another. For faithful description of facts about nonlinguistic artifacts and relics, Nagasaki is an appropriate setting for Ishiguro’s first novel because he was born and grew up there.

Judging from facts about Nagasaki in Etsuko’s memory and the framework of the novel that begins and ends with Niki, Etsuko is an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride. However, *A Pale View of Hills* is not an atomic-bomb victim’s story or a war bride’s story but a universally

realistic story of human testimony that justly employs the background narratives of an atomic-bomb victim and a war bride.

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