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Narrative Technique Of Kazuo Ishiguro In Context Of *"When We Were Orphans" And "An Artist Of The Floating World"*

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Abstract:

Kazuo Ishiguro is renowned for his preoccupation with the fallibility of human memory. This paper examines how Ishiguro employs narrative unrealiability to explore the theme of guilt, trauma and identity in *An Artist of the Floating World* and *When We Were Orphans*. By analysing the protagonist Masuji Ono and Christopher Bank this study argues that Ishiguro uses the structure of "detective quest" and the "reminiscent diary" not to uncover objective truth but to illustrate the psychological mechanism of self- deception and the impossibility of fully reconciling personal history with collective national trauma. This research paper explores the intricate narrative technique of Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro, focusing on his use of unreliable first person narration , ''the texture of memory" and the blurring of historical reality in *"An Artist of the Floating World*(1986) and *When We were Orphans* (2000). This research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the sophisticated narrative strategies employed by Nobel laureate Kazuo Ishiguro in his novels*, An Artist Of the Floating World* (1986) and *When We were Orphans* (2000). At the heart of Ishiguro's literary project is an obsession with the fallibility of human memory and psychological mechanism of self- shielding. The study argues that Ishiguro uses "unreliable - person narration" not merely as a structural trope, but as a profound exploration of how individual navigate the intersection of personal guilt and collective national trauma. By examining the protagonist Maxy Ono and Christopher Bank, the paper demonstrates how Ishiguro subverts established literary genres- the "reminiscent diary" and the "detective quest" to illustrate the impossibility of getting objective truth. The analysis delves into the technical nuances of Ishiguro's prose, specifically his use of a particular technique, a stylized, formal distance and cultural displacement. In *An Artist of the Floating World,* the narrative focus on the "texture of memory" where digression and rhetorical hesitation serve to obscure wartime culpability. In contrast, *When we were orphan* utilizes a shift from Victorian realism to hallucinatory surrealism to depict the disintegration of the traumatized psyche. Ultimately, this paper highlights that Ishiguro's narrative technique forces the reader to move beyond the text's literal meaning to engage with the underlying meaning of the "silence' and "blind spots'' of the narrator. Through this comparative study, it is revealed that for Ishiguro

character, storytelling is a s defensive act of survival- a way to construct a "floating world" or a "heroic myth" that portrays the self from the unbearable weight of reality.

Introduction;

Kazuo Ishiguro born in Nagasakhi , Japan is recognized as England's highly notable contemporary writer, novelist, screenwriter and short story writer. He is known for his tales of regrets fused with subtle art of optimism. In 1989, he was awarded Booker Prize for his novel, Remains of the Day. And in 2017, he won the Nobel prize in literature, which praised him for uncovering "the abyss beneath our illusionary sense of connection with the world". He was knighted in 2018 for his service to literature. His literary style is noted for his exploration of traumatic memory, making him one of the foremost contemporary authors writing in English. In An Artist of the Floating World, aging artist Masuji Ono reflects on his propagandistic past amidst Japan's post World War 2. Similarly, When We were Orphans follows detective Christopher Bank's obsessive quest to solve his parents disappearance in pre-war Shanghai. Both employs unreliable narration, a technique where the storyteller's credibility falters due to bias ignorance or delusions to expose the fragility of personal history.

Unreliable Narration as a technique used by Ishiguro:

Kazuo Ishiguro employs unreliable first person narration in both the novels, "*When We were Orphans" and* "*An Artist of the Floating World*" using memory's subjectivity to explore theme of guilt, self deception and historical reckoning. These technique create ambiquity, focusing readers to question the narrators's account and reconstruct event from oblique details. In *An Artist of the Floating World, Masuji Ono* recount his past as a propagandist artist through fragmented, digressive memories that downplay his role in Japan's contradiction with family accounts. Similarly, Christopher Bank in *When we were Orphans* idealizes his Shanghai childhood and detective prowess, but discrepencies like conflicting testimonies exposes his delusion about his parents disappearance. Kazuo Ishiguro employs unreliable first person narration in both the novels *An Artist of the Floating World* and *When we Were Orphans* to explore themes of memory, self- deception and historical reckoning.

Non chronological structure

Both the novel structure narratives around associative memory rather than linear timelines with Ono's reflections jumping across past second world war (1948-1950) triggered by marriage negotiation, blending past propaganda work with present regrets. Bank's narration shifts in tone using emotional quirks to mirror unconscious repression and oscilliates between childhood fantasy and adult disillusionment.

Memory and Self-Deception

Ishiguro portrays memory as fallible and reconstructive Masuji Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World*, reassures his "error'' obliquely, concealing cruelties like denouncing students while Bank fabricates a solvable mystery from trauma, conflating real Shanghai with childhood myths until confronted by truths like his parents opium ties. This emphasis how narrator hide personal and collective failure behind selective recall.

An Artist of the Floating World:

Masuji Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* is a retired painter in post war Japan, self justifying his past propaganda art through selective recall and prideful rationalizations.

Masuji Ono serves as the unreliable narrator, recounting his life as a former propaganda artist in the post second world war , Japan through fragmented , non- chronological memories that reveal his denial and selective forgerting . Ishiguro uses digressions, reassessments of past events and discrepancies between Ono's self- image and external evidence to undermine the reader's trust in his account, highlighting the subjectivity of memory.

This technique mirror Japan's collective grappling with wartime guilt, as Ono gradually confronts his role in promoting imperialism.

When We Were Orphans

Christopher Bank narrates as a detective fixation on solving his parents' disappearance in 1930s Shanghai, blending childhood reminiscences with adult delusion in a fragmented structure that breaks realist conventions of time and place. The narrative withholds keys truths, offering multiple interpretations through Bank's self-deluded perspective, which transforms personal trauma into metaphor for collective historical neuroses. Ishiguro's controlled withholding of meaning emphasizes how fragmented memory shape identity amid global unrest.

Narrative structure in both the novels

Both the novels features introspective narrators whose flawed recollections drive the plot obliquely, using denial and emotional censorship to critique personal and societal failures. Ishiguri avoids direct exposition, instead revealing cracks in the narrator's stories through contradictions and omission. This approach invites readers to piece together the real narrative from the fringes.

Kazuo Ishiguro masterfully uses unreliable first

person narration in both the novels to probe memory's distortion but the novel differ in focus, structure and thematic payoff.

Central to both novels are first person narrator whose unreliability stems from repressed guilt and idealized self images, yet their pathologies diverge sharply.

Ishiguro uses unreliable first person narration , a focus on memory and self deception and ambiguous understated prose to explore fragmented prose to explore fragmented identities and historical trauma in both the novels where protagonist like Ono and Christopher Banks construct palatable version of their past through biased storytelling, blending realism with elements of detective fiction and aesthetics. The narrator Ono portrays their memories to downplay past mistake or justify their roles in historical events that minimizes personal culpability. The narratives are driven by the narrative biased recollection forcing the readers to piece together the truth from incomplete or distorted perspective .

Ishiguro emphasizes the psychological state and internal struggles of ordinary people grappling with large historical shifts like post waw Japan or colonial upheaval. His style relies on vagueness and irony drawing from Japanese aesthetics to create unease and prevent simple reading. In When We were Orphans parodies the detective genre, using its tropes to explore trauma and unreliable accounts .

In essence, Ishiguro uses his narrators to show how individual construct their identities by rewriting their personal histories often revealing more about their psychological needs than the objective past .

Ishiguro's unreliability demands reader complicity, fostering hermeneutic play.

Conclusion

Ishiguro's unreliable narrator in *An Artist of the Floating World* and *When We Were Orphan* illuminate memory's treacheries, with Ono's poised evasion contrasting Banks fervent illusion. Structural finesse and thematic depth unify them urging readers towards vigilant interpretation. Kazuo Ishiguro's narrative techniques in *An Artist of the Floating World* and *When We Were Orphans* converge on unreliable first person narration as a cornerstone, wielding fragmented memory and ironic distancing to unmask the fragility of self perception and historical truth. Masuji Ono's diary like reflections, laced with cultural evasion and selective recall gradually

fracture under familial scrutiny , transforming personal denial into a metaphor for Japan's post war reckoning. Christopher Banks' delusional detective quest, blending non linear reveries with genre subversion to expose imperial fantasies amid Shanghai's chaos. Shared structural choices, associative digressions, peripheral truths bin dialogues and omissions posed readers as active interpreters, piecing together reality from narrative voids.

Ultimately, Ishiguro elevates these techniques beyond stylistics innovation, forging a profound ethical lens on human fallibility. Ono's tentative atonement contrasts Banks unresolve ambiguity, yet both affirm memory's dual role as shield against guilt and pathways to insight. In an era of contested histories, Ishiguro's artistry compels vigilant reading, reminding us thar stories, however flawed, harbor the redemptive potential to confront and transcend illusion.

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BIO NOTE

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