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The Narrators and Narratees of Kazuo Ishiguro

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Katherine E. Harrell

June 2014

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Title: The Narrators and Narratees of Kazuo Ishiguro  
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#### ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the narratees of three novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *Never Let Me Go*. In each novel, a first person narrator directs his or her story toward an unidentified narratee. Through their narration, the narrators reveal who they imagine their narratees to be and why they are telling their stories to these particular types of people. In relating their narratives, Ono, Stevens, and Kathy H., the respective narrators, each reveal a secret they have sought to hide from the other characters in the novel, a past action of which they are ashamed and for which they desire to confess and offer justification in the hopes of receiving absolution. Ono reveals to his narratee that he used his art to further the Imperialist movement in pre-World War II Japan and caused the arrest of one of his anti-Imperialist students. Stevens, a British butler narrating from 1956, admits to loyally serving an aristocrat who was both a Nazi sympathizer and an anti-Semite. As part of a cloning program in an alternative 1990s England, Kathy H. calmly submits to and assists a system that will eventually harvest her vital organs for use by others. Unable to find anyone to sympathize with them, understand their reasons for acting as they did, or forgive them for their mistakes, the three narrators turn to narratees they imagine to be much like themselves. Through their relationships with their narratees, these narrators grapple with guilt, responsibility, self-deception, and autonomy in their various contexts.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gerald Prince, in his piece, “On Readers and Listeners in Narrative,” comments on the role of the narratee in narrative, an entity rarely considered in criticism: “critics have paid relatively little attention to the many readers and listeners in narrative, to the receivers of the narrator’s message” (117). Despite their absence in criticism, Prince goes on to explain, narratees appear in some sense in every story and perform certain discernable functions in that story. Sometimes the narratee is a character who responds to and interacts with the narrator, and he or she may even play a role in the narrative itself. However, in other cases, the narratee appears only through implication on the narrator’s part. Somewhere between these two extremes exist the narratees of three novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *Never Let Me Go*, published in 1986, 1989, and 2005, respectively. In each of these novels, a first-person narrator tells a story to a narratee. The narratee has no name and no specific description, but the narrator is highly aware that he or she directs the narration toward someone, often addressing an unidentified “you” and assuming particular knowledge and experience on the part of this narratee. These types of narrators “stay short of outright naming of the narratee, but [their forms of communication] clearly sound like bits from the narrator’s half of a dialogue going on between the two” (Chatman 257). These

invocations of a listener lead to the questions of who the narratees are and why the narrators speak to them.

In all three novels, the narrator has been relegated to the margins of his or her society. Ono of *An Artist of the Floating World* has become an old man with outdated ideas about politics and his own significance, musing over his life from his home in Japan between October of 1948 and June of 1950. No longer an important cultural figure, Ono finds he cannot play much of a role in the new post-war Japan amidst the arising Americanized generation. A few years later, in *The Remains of the Day*, a butler named Stevens narrates a drive through the English countryside and his memories of his life in service, most of which involves his blind loyalty to his Nazi sympathizer employer. Stevens, like his employer, the late Lord Darlington, is part of an aristocratic tradition that has begun to disappear, and his profession grows more and more obsolete. In the most recent novel, *Never Let Me Go*, middle-aged clone Kathy H. reminisces from an alternative 1990s about her life as part of a program that creates clones to one day harvest their vital organs for use by members of the non-clone population. Her society profits from the dismantling of her body while pretending she does not actually exist. All three must therefore tell their stories to someone who will value them, who will give time and attention to such marginalized figures. But their societies have moved past them or chosen to forget them, and as a result, they have difficulty finding narratees in their respective worlds. Neither the remaining members of Ono's cultural circle from before the war nor his daughters and sons-in-law wish to listen to the old artist's memories of accomplishments or his assertions that his political activities before the war were

performed under the belief that he was helping the nation. Stevens cannot explain to any other character that he served an aristocrat who worked to reconcile Nazi Germany with Great Britain before the war, due in part to the changed societal mindset toward such actions and in part to the butler's devotion to dignity and professionalism that will not let him close enough to another character to share his regrets and justifications. Kathy, the victim of an "autonomy-denying system" (Cooper 108), cannot reveal her lack of resistance to the program to even another clone, as her role in the program places her in a position of almost constant solitude. Pushed aside by society, these narrators turn within themselves, into their own minds, to find a narratee who fits a particular type, a category of persons who fulfill their needs. They imagine listeners much like themselves who will understand them, sympathize with them, and offer forgiveness for their past choices. Their manner of speaking to these narratees suggests that they believe such listeners exist somewhere but are not currently available to them. Their narration leaves a space for such a person, a person they imagine as they narrate, with certain characteristics and particular similarities to the narrator.

Past decisions haunt these narrators, causing them to feel guilty and in need of absolution, absolution they cannot find in other listeners. This need shapes the narratee they imagine. Ono regrets that his significant cultural influence toward Imperialism harmed his country. However, the younger generation refuses to forgive him for his participation in a cause that led to so much destruction, and his own generation will not acknowledge that his was a particularly significant influence. His need for both affirmation and absolution requires he visualize and speak to a narratee in his own mind

who can offer both. Stevens imagines his narratee to be a butler like himself who will understand his desire to serve an influential man and his need to maintain his professional attitude, even while the influential man he serves becomes Hitler's pawn. His alienation from other butlers and servants due to the decreasing need for such people separates him from anyone who would share his belief in dignity. Even the few characters with whom he does converse do not understand how his professionalism could require him to devote himself to an employer whose social and political convictions stand in direct contrast to his own. Kathy, due to her alienation from other clones in the program as part of her job as a constantly traveling carer, cannot confide in her fellow clones, the only people who would regard her as human and understand her lack of resistance to the exploitative program. She cannot hope to find sympathy from the world outside the program, leaving her only the option to look inward and imagine a clone narratee, a carer like herself. In order to find appreciation and absolution, which all three narrators need in some sense or another, they must imagine their narratees, carrying these visualized but insubstantial entities with them over space and time as they reveal their regrets and hope for forgiveness.

As part of their roles as listeners, these narratees perform specific functions for the narrators in the text. Prince outlines a few of the possible functions of a narratee in his article. At times a narratee "may be needed as a justification device" (117). While the narrators of these novels indeed attempt to justify themselves, the narratees never agree or disagree with their arguments, as the narrators show no signs of a response to their statements from their narratees. Therefore, the narratees do not actually perform this

function in the narratives, despite the narrators' desires. Prince also points out, "as soon as two characters engage in dialogue, one of them speaks and the other one listens, one plays the role of narrator and the other the role of auditor" (117). All three narrators engage in extensive dialogue with other characters, both at the time of their narration and at the time of narrated events. Ono converses with his old friend Matsuda, his daughters, his grandson, and numerous other characters. Stevens speaks less, often replying curtly when others speak to him, as part of his professional role as well as an indicator of his limited voice in his society. However, at times he speaks to the housekeeper, his father, the other servants in the house, and the people he meets on his travels. Most of Kathy's dialogue takes place during her relation of her memories. She recalls discussing thoughts on classes, the future, and sex, among other topics, with her friends as she grows up. Yet, these narrators reveal the most about themselves when they are no longer in conversation with other characters, but instead simply relating their thoughts to their imagined narratees. Though other characters perform as listeners at various times in these narratives, only the imagined narratees provide everything the narrators desire in their audience. These narratees "also help [the narrator] establish a bond with the potential real-life receiver, the real-life reader or listener to whom [the] narrative is ultimately addressed" (Prince 119). A number of critics comment on the "strong empathetic impact" of these novels "on readers" (Sim 45), a characteristic often attributed in part to the direct address of the narratee. "The novels' confessional technique," explains critic Lydia R. Cooper, "compels readers to associate themselves with the 'you' the narrators address" (111). Though a critic cannot authoritatively state the effect of these narratives on

readers, the use of a narratee can assist in the process of turning the real reader, the individual actually holding and reading the novel, into the ideal reader, the reader who perfectly understands and interprets the text. In this case, the address of the narratee may help transfer to the actual reader the sympathy for the narrators felt by the ideal reader. Seymour Chatman, in his book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, mentions the function of the narratees that proves most significant in these three novels—that of “defining more clearly the narrator himself [or herself]” (261). The narrators, unable to reveal their guilt and desires to other characters, show themselves most clearly when speaking to their imagined narratees, whom they see as like themselves and fully understanding of their narratives.

The following chapters outline the differences and similarities between the narrator-narratee relationships in each of the three novels. In each case, the narrator desires understanding and absolution and chooses to seek these things in an imagined, never fully revealed narratee. Each narrator assumes particular knowledge and experience on the part of the narratee, and each addresses the narratee at points of particular significance in the narration. However, why the narrator desires absolution, what he or she reveals about the narratee, and why he or she chooses particular moments to invoke the narratee differ in each novel. While all three narrators attempt to hide certain pieces of their stories from their narratees, they go about their avoidance in different ways specific to themselves and their situations. Though in different contexts, each novel explores ideas of guilt, responsibility, and autonomy, and considers how these themes affect the narrator’s use of the narratee.

## CHAPTER ONE: *AN ARTIST OF THE FLOATING WORLD*

Speaking from an unidentified city in Japan just after the Second World War, Masuji Ono tells the story of his life, his career as a painter, and his political and social affiliations as asides within the story of finding a husband for his younger daughter. In the midst of his musings on the past, Ono reveals his guilt related to his art and influence, which he used to further the Imperialist cause before the war. Surrounded by the tragic effects of Imperialism, he cannot find the type of listener he desires—someone who will listen to his justifications for his actions, accept those justifications, and in doing so, relieve the burden of his guilt. Ono desires to confess his Imperialist associations but wants to do so in a way that reveals his good intentions and his social influence. He wishes to justify his involvement with the Imperialist campaign that eventually led to the war, but simultaneously, he seeks to avoid acknowledging that he caused the arrest, imprisonment, and torture of one of his former students, Kuroda. Toward this end, Ono chooses to tell the story of his life and his decisions to an imagined person, a narratee whom he envisions to be much like himself, who will relate to his situations, understand his choices, and accept the justification of his actions as an Imperialist, while also allowing him to ignore the harm he has done Kuroda.

Ono lives in a society that has experienced a change in values due to the effects of the Second World War. The support of Imperialism, which once earned “[m]uch credit

and much praise” (*Artist* 110), has become something to hide from public view, and Ono’s “set of beliefs that appear self-evidently correct” are proven “with the passage of time...to be problematic or even repugnant” (Sim 38). However, while society now condemns what it once supported, Ono has not followed society’s lead. His personal values remain what they were before the war, a position that has caused uneasiness about the novel, particularly among Japanese critics (Sugano 74). Like the Hirayama boy, a fifty year old man with the “mental age of a child” (*Artist* 62), who sings Imperialist songs that once earned him kind appreciation from passersby and now results in those same people beating him up (63), Ono has not changed with his culture. He holds to old customs and ideas (80), to what was considered “right” before the war, though the definition of “right” and “wrong” have changed within his society. Before the war, Matsuda, a political activist and Ono’s close friend, presents to Ono a fairly common social concern—care for the poor (183). He then explains to Ono that poverty will only increase while “greedy businessmen and weak politicians” retain power (185), arguing that the only way to solve the problem of poverty is “for Japan to take her rightful place amongst the world powers” through Imperialist expansion (187). After the war, while society still values caring for the poor, it now sees Imperialism not as a saving power, but as a destructive force. Ono, however, still holds to the older ideas, not working toward an empire as he once did, but continuing to believe that his actions were “right.” Because his values no longer align with his society, he requires an entity equally at odds with society to assure him that he was indeed “right,” that the new ideas of “right” and “wrong” do not make him an immoral person. Wayne C. Booth, in his work on the ethics of fiction,

points out the “notion that it is better to be damned for a sincere, passionately individual embrace of a falsehood than to be saved through submission to someone else’s truth,” an idea he sees in Orwell, Byron, and Goethe, among many others (244-5). Ono clings to the belief that he was acting “in good faith,” doing what he thought was best for his country (*Artist* 132-3), and that his drive to do what was best outweighs the effects of his actions. However, such a justification for his actions does not satisfy many of his fellow citizens, including members of his own family. The characters that do excuse his pre-war stance believe he was not a particularly influential figure and thus could not have caused a great deal of harm. Neither of these groups offers what Ono needs; he desires both to be forgiven and to be seen as influential. In order to find both an appreciation of his impact on the country and a willingness to forgive his actions, Ono must turn to a narratee who is not familiar with his past. By speaking to a narratee as yet unacquainted with the narrator, Ono can present events in a manner that will show him to be both influential and deserving of absolution.

Several characters in the novel arise as possible confidants for Ono, yet none provides exactly what he desires in a narratee. He therefore seeks out an unidentified, vaguely described narratee, forming a space within his narration for such a person. His daughters, Noriko and Setsuko, whom he introduces in the first few pages of the novel, seem at first to be possible candidates for his narratee. However, Noriko views her father as a child for whom she must care, condescending to him in conversation and placing him “in a position of subservience” (Bennett 89), choosing not to see him as the influential man he feels himself to be. Still caught up in the culture of comparative status that

existed before the war, Ono cannot reconcile the man he believes he was with the changing ideas of status and respect of Noriko's generation. His elder daughter, Setsuko, does not take her sister's view of her father and appears very uncomfortable when Noriko speaks this way (*Artist* 10). Ono often utilizes her as a listener when discussing Noriko's marriage. Yet, her attitude toward her father's artistic career makes her a problematic confidante as well. She undercuts Ono's belief in his own significant influence on Japan's past, claiming his work "had hardly anything to do with these larger matters" (208). Thus, neither daughter offers one of the characteristics Ono most desires in his narratee—an appreciation for his importance. Their attitudes toward their father suggest that he is no longer and may never have been a particularly exceptional man. Shintaro, one of Ono's former students, does view Ono as someone influential and exceptional, and his deep respect for Ono puts him in the position of listener at various times. However, Shintaro does not quite fit the type of listener to whom Ono wishes to confess. Along with being rather too "childlike" for Ono to seriously confide in him (20), Shintaro wishes to separate himself from his former teacher's influence and claims to have always held opinions opposite to Ono's about Japan's Imperialist campaigns (109). Only his old friend Matsuda shares the history, knowledge, and opinions Ono seeks in a narratee. At a few significant points, Matsuda listens and responds to Ono's anxieties, serving as a momentary narratee. In the final section of the novel, Ono confesses to Matsuda his wish that he had "seen things a little more clearly" before the war (215). This conversation provides one of the few moments in which Ono reveals a desire to have acted differently before the war, indicating that "Ono moves closer than any other Ishiguro protagonist to

admitting past mistakes and false ‘ideals’” (Shaffer 39). Matsuda replies that Ono should not judge himself too harshly, presenting the pardon Ono has sought. However, Matsuda then bestows on Ono the one title he most fears, assuring him that he was just one of many “ordinary men” who attempted and failed to make a great contribution to the world (*Artist* 216). But Ono cannot admit to his own ordinariness. Though each of these characters functions as a listener for Ono at some point, none of them will admire, understand, agree with, and ultimately accept him. Therefore, Ono creates a narratee, attributing the necessary characteristics to his unidentified listener as he tells the parts of his story he cannot reveal to any other character.

The narrator exposes a concept of a narratee through his narration, addressing the imagined entity and explaining the details he believes the narratee should know. He reveals his narratee to be not so much a particular person as a type of person befitting his needs. The fact that the narrator tells his narrative at all provides evidence that he believes he has an audience, even when he does not directly address or describe that audience (cf. Rimmon-Kenan 89). While the narratee he implies is much like himself, his references to what the narratee may or may not know and his descriptions of his intentions and thoughts point to the narratee as a separate entity. Whenever the narrator explains something he already knows in the narration, he explains for the benefit of that narratee (cf. Barthes 260), and thus an idea of whom he believes this narratee is can be gleaned both from what he explains and what he assumes his narratee already knows. In the case of *An Artist of the Floating World*, the narrator addresses this narratee, demonstrating his awareness that someone, though he does not know exactly who,

provides a recipient for his story. Ono begins his narration with a description of his home, and during this description, he addresses “you,” though he does not explain who “you” is, at least not directly. In the novel’s initial paragraph, Ono reveals that he is not actually acquainted with his narratee. The narrator casually proposes that, on seeing his house, “you may find yourself wondering what sort of wealthy man owns it,” indicating that his addressee does not yet know the owner (*Artist* 3). Ono here begins a pattern of mentioning the presence of his narratee when discussing his reputation and significance in the community. The fact that the addressee will recognize it as a home signifying wealth points to an understanding of the signs of wealth in Ono’s culture, revealing the cultural knowledge Ono desires in his narratee. A narratee possessing this cultural knowledge will understand the importance of honor and status in Ono’s society. However, the visitor’s possible assumption also reiterates that he or she does not actually know much about Ono, as he must explain that he is not and has never been wealthy. As his explanation for the grandeur of his home continues, the narrator mentions the previous owner, “unquestionably amongst the city’s most respected and influential men” (3). Ono acknowledges that his narratee may be new to town and unfamiliar with this man. However, he or she would find any number of people in the town who could explain the man’s importance (3), reminding the narratee how much Ono values status and reputation, despite his protestations to the contrary. Ono’s lack of knowledge about his narratee, coupled with the narratee’s lack of knowledge about the narrator, assert that Ono tells his story to someone he has not previously met. This situation opens up the

possibility that the narratee may be no more than a figure Ono has imagined and formulated to be his ideal listener.

Ono explains how he came to own his house despite his lack of wealth, and, by explaining, begins to reveal his community status to his narratee. This explanation allows him to create for his narratee a concept of himself as a good, honorable person, helping him to don his “mask of respectability” (Bennett 90). A few years before the war, Ono’s wife “argued the importance of our having a house in keeping with our status—not out of vanity, but for the sake of our children’s marriage prospects” (*Artist* 4). This idea, though attributed to Ono’s wife, provides the first reference to Ono’s status in his community as well as the first instance in which Ono claims that his actions, which could be viewed as self-serving, are in fact for the good of another person. He then mentions that his students, who, according to Ono, always had an “exaggerated respect” for their teacher, had suggested he look into purchasing the home he now occupies (4). However, the previous owner’s family does not seek a buyer based on financial resources, but “on grounds purely of good character and achievement” (4). The discussion of this process—and the narrator’s resulting acquisition of the house—reinforces his assertions that he is a person of particular influence and good standing in his community, “a likeable old man” (Wong 39), but also a significant figure within his culture. As with the mention of his wife’s argument, Ono emphasizes that he holds a particular status by repeating the words of others rather than simply stating this fact for his narratee, providing evidence of his status from a source other than himself. The burden of proving that he is indeed a person of note falls not on the narrator himself but on those whom he quotes as attesting to his

status. The narrator begins a pattern in the first few pages of the novel of explaining himself through the voices of other people—his wife, his students, the prestigious family from whom he purchases the home—hoping that even if his narratee does not necessarily trust the narrator’s word, he or she will take into consideration the thoughts of other characters. Critic Brian Shaffer points to the narrator’s habit of “commenting on himself (through others)” as one of Ono’s methods for evading his past (43), a method utilized by both Stevens and Kathy in the other novels that will be discussed. All three narrators have built their identities through statements made by other characters, though of the three, Ono gives the most attention to these statements. By repeating what others have said about him, he avoids responsibility for his story, which in turn reflects his avoidance of responsibility for the results of his Imperialist stance. In the society that faults him for his actions regardless of his intentions, Ono invokes the words of members of that society as evidence of his good character, hoping to influence his narratee’s assessment of the narrator.

After he has introduced himself and his reputation, as well as pointed to some of the cultural knowledge he expects on the part of his narratee, Ono describes a visit from his eldest daughter. Relating the details of the visit allows Ono to continue to assert his social importance for his narratee, but his narration of these events also allows the narratee a first hint of the past Ono hides. During Setsuko’s visit, a discussion of Noriko’s as yet unsettled marriage prospects leads to the topic of marriage negotiations from the previous year that did not come to fruition. Setsuko asks her father if he knows why the groom’s family bowed out of the earlier engagement, mentioning that her

husband has asked about the reason for this turn of events numerous times. Ono replies, “a little coldly,” that he knows no more about the reasons behind the Miyake family’s decision than she does herself (*Artist* 15). Setsuko’s implication here is the first suggestion that something distasteful in Ono’s past might keep a family from wishing their son to marry his daughter. Ono goes on to explain to his narratee his theory as to why the Miyakes ended the engagement: “My feeling is that it was simply a matter of family status” (16). Once again, Ono invokes his honor and respect in the community as evidenced by someone else’s behavior. The Miyakes were, Ono believes, “just the proud, honest sort who would feel uncomfortable at the thought of their son marrying above his station” (16). The narrator references the “new ways” of thinking now arising in Japan, a reference he expects his narratee to understand and to view with the same apprehension he does. These “new ways” of viewing society and status would have confused the Miyakes, Ono explains, as would his own relaxed view of his daughter marrying below her station: “Indeed, I have never at any point in my life been very aware of my own social standing” (16), an ironic contradiction of his discussion of his status throughout the novel and an early demonstration of the unreliability of his narration. He does not feel he is lying to his narratee; to Ono’s mind, he is not concerned with status. However, like the narrators discussed later, what he believes about himself and what his narrative shows to be the truth do not always align. Ono suggest that it is not his own idea of himself, but the way others view him, that makes him an honorable member of the community, though he certainly views himself as noble. However, if the community’s belief in his honor makes him honorable, community belief in his guilt would make him guilty, which makes the

role of his narratee all the more important. He assumes his imagined narratee will accept his evidence for his honor and status while rejecting the assumption of his guilt; he cannot make such assumptions when speaking to other characters.

When Setsuko alludes to her father's past, Ono quickly moves his narratee's attention to the actions of other characters, not himself, a tactic for avoidance that he utilizes a number of times in the novel and that leaves gaps in his story. In the case of Noriko's marriage, Ono argues that his family's superior status made the Miyakes uncomfortable, though this point is never proven (53). Ono mentions that he may have answered with greater strength than Setsuko's question required, but informs his narratee, "that was not the first time Setsuko has questioned me in such a way concerning last year and the Miyakes' withdrawal" (16). Setsuko seems unsatisfied with her father's answer, indicating that she thinks that something beyond status affected the Miyakes' decision, though her father disagrees and continually points to status as the most likely motive, which reflects the significance he attributes to his own status. "Why she should believe I am keeping something from her," Ono ponders, "I do not know" (16). However, Setsuko's continued curiosity points to something her father chooses not to consider, as he attempts, without ever lying "in any conventional sense," to be sure "some details from that [earlier] period do not emerge" (Wong 38). Ono makes a conveniently self-affirming case for his suggested reason for the Miyake's withdrawal. However, Setsuko's question haunts his narration. With his response to Setsuko, Ono begins another pattern in his narration—a pattern of evasion, leaving open gaps in his narrative by not revealing what worries Setsuko. When the question of Ono's past arises again in connection to

Noriko's marriage prospects, though this time to a different man, Ono turns his narratee's attention toward other characters, hoping to distract from his own hidden guilt. Setsuko asks if Ono has taken "certain precautionary steps" in regards to the "investigations" (*Artist* 49), a term he does not explain to his assumedly culturally savvy narratee, to "ensure misunderstandings do not arise...[a]bout the past" (50). As the narrator considers what his daughter has said, he shifts to thinking about Setsuko's husband, Suichi, whom Ono believes has induced "his wife to turn suspicious thoughts against her own father" (51). He calls her suspicions "irrational" and "ridiculous" but never alludes to anything in his own past that may have caused such suspicions (51). By casting the blame for these ideas on Suichi, and by extension Setsuko, Ono moves the focus of the narration from himself and continues to tell his story without actually revealing to his narratee what may have caused such suspicions to arise.

In a later conversation, one of Ono's former students, Shintaro, who has always held Ono in particularly high respect, also points to a part of Ono's earlier life as regrettable and dishonorable. However, the narrator turns to highlighting what he sees as shameful in Shintaro's past, rather than considering any failings of his own. In this situation, Ono projects his feelings regarding the past onto Shintaro, as he does a number of times in the novel with other characters, including his grandson, his eldest daughter, and several friends (Shaffer 44). Through projecting and redirecting, Ono attempts to convince his narratee of the guilt of various other characters and lessen his own guilt by comparison (cf. *Prince* 117). Shintaro worries that his association with Ono will be a barrier in his attempt to gain a teaching position and seeks to distance himself from his

former teacher for the sake of his career. Shintaro calls on the narrator at his home and reminds him of a past disagreement over “the China crisis” (*Artist* 109). Ono claims no memory of the disagreement, though Shintaro eventually succeeds in bringing the situation to Ono’s mind. The former student carefully frames the incident as one in which he “perhaps drank too much and had the rudeness to express [his] views to [Ono]” (109). However, Shintaro does not seek reconciliation over this event, but division, which Ono ultimately realizes: “‘You wish me to write a letter to your committee,’ I said eventually, ‘disassociating you from my influence’” (110). Shintaro asserts that he does not wish to remove himself completely from association with Ono, but only to specifically show he held a different view on the China crisis from that of his teacher. Ono advises his former student to “simply face up to the past,” accepting his role in the poster campaign for which he was praised at the time, though “[t]he world may now have a different opinion” (110). In this exchange with Shintaro, Ono allows his narratee a closer look at what he hides in his past, though even here, Ono carefully avoids attributing blame to himself or casting shame on his own actions. Instead, the fault falls on Shintaro, who, Ono believes, is not “facing up” to his past actions, reflective of the narrator’s inability to face up to his own past. Ono never actually states his position on the China crisis and the poster campaign, nor does he explain what the China crisis was, assuming his narratee to be familiar with this “crucial time for the nation” (109). The narratee can only guess that Ono has been one of the artists who supported Imperialism and the invasion of China, a position considered not merely misguided but in fact detestable by the world—as well as the people of Japan—by the mid twentieth century (Sugano 78). Thus, if Shintaro wishes

to take the post as teacher, he must convince the hiring committee that he was always against the invasion and Imperial interests, and had only been following the orders of his teacher when he took part in the poster campaign. Having assured Shintaro that it is better to accept his past than to deny it, Ono dismisses his former student with a display of emotional injury, though this hurt stems from Shintaro's desire to distance himself, not from any remorse for Ono's own part in the China crisis. By projecting this incapacity to accept the past onto Shintaro, Ono avoids any discussion of his own past and his own inability to consider that he may have been wrong in supporting the Imperialists and the war.

Along with refocusing his narrative when someone alludes to his past faults and projecting those faults onto others, Ono uses his poor memory to avoid discussing the parts of his life he wishes to hide, as evidenced above by his inability to recall the disagreement over the China crisis posters when Shintaro first raises the subject. Because he has imagined a narratee unfamiliar with his past, he does not risk his narratee contradicting his memories. At various times in his narration, Ono expresses some confusion or lapse of memory regarding events, a characteristic of his story that allows him to "forget" what he does not wish to reveal to his narratee, at times intentionally, it would seem, and at times unintentionally. Even Ono's accidental forgetfulness may be the work of his subconscious trying to stay away from painful memories. Dr. Daniel Goleman, in his work on psychological self-deception, references the greater difficulty most people experience in recalling painful memories as compared to positive memories, pointing to this as a natural, unconscious function of the mind (109). Without realizing it,

Ono may experience difficulty recalling memories of events that pain him or cause him to feel guilty, as well as memories of people or things connected to those events. His narrative strings together the recollections he is able to reach while leaving spaces for those that escape him, a technique Leona Toker labels “eloquent reticence,” allowing spaces in which a narratee may “arrange and rearrange material, extrapolate, make gap-filling conjectures, form and adjust expectations” (*Eloquent* 3). Though Ono’s narratee does not respond to his narrative and may or may not fill in these gaps, the opportunity is left open for a potential real-life reader to do so. The narrator attempts to gather “fragmented memories of the past to form a self-justifying narrative in the present,” explains critic Caroline Bennett in her work on the trauma discussed in *An Artist of the Floating World*. However, as Bennett also points out, this attempt is complicated by the fact that “memory is not just fissured, but always in flux” (88). Ono’s memories of his past, be it years or days before, move between clarity and opacity. This tendency may cause the narratee—as well as the potential real-life reader—difficulty in putting his story together, as well as deciding when his memory actually fails him and when he chooses not to remember.

Toward the beginning of the novel, Ono describes an evening in a bar in town with a few of his students. This anecdote illustrates one of his instances of forgetfulness in connection with a possibly guilty association. He begins by telling his students: “[I]nfluence and status can creep up on someone who works busily, not pursuing these ends in themselves, but for the satisfaction of performing his tasks to the best of his ability” (*Artist* 22-3). This description, which Ono attributes to a young man whom he

recommended for a job, he hopes is also descriptive of himself, though the narrator does not say this about himself directly. Instead, he tells the narratee what a student said in praise of his teacher as a response to this statement. However, Ono cannot remember at the time of narration which of his students gave the response. At first, he says only that “one of them” spoke up, then amends his statement: “no doubt it was Kuroda” (23). The student claims that Ono does not realize his status in the city or the influence he possesses, stating, “our proudest honour will be to tell others that we were once the pupils of Masuji Ono” (23). The student asserts that he has “no doubt” that the pupils will benefit from the acclaim of the master, a particularly interesting assertion given that Ono himself now doubts which of his students said it: “Today, when I try to recall that evening, I find my memory of it merging with the sounds and images from all those other evenings” (23-4). While Ono’s memory has lost the specifics of who spoke or on what night, he does recall the high esteem of his students, pointing again to his belief in the positive influence of his life. The narrator hopes this story will earn him respect from his narratee similar to the respect shown by his students. However, this incident also brings to the forefront the particular statement that his students will benefit from his name, a declaration proved incorrect, as seen earlier with Shintaro’s request. Ono’s inability to clearly recall this conversation points to his association of Kuroda with a shameful part of his past, though he may not even realize the connection in this particular instance. His trouble remembering also points to an underlying suspicion that he has not transferred honor to his students through association, a suspicion he hopes does not become evident to his narratee.

Ono's forgetfulness does not just apply to his memory of pre-war events, but also affects his memory of situations from a mere month before the time of his narration. During the visit from his elder daughter and his grandson, Ono attempts to encourage his grandson, Ichiro, to draw in his sketchbook. However, the young boy quickly loses interest and returns to running around the house, playing an imaginary game. Though he seems to recall fairly easily the conversation with Ichiro, as well as Ichiro's childish and eventually futile attempts to draw, Ono admits that, after his grandson has left the room, he cannot remember what he did for the next several minutes before returning to the veranda to speak with his daughter (33). This instance reflects Ono's inability to recall moments of pain or discomfort. The exchange with his grandson just before his lapsed few minutes includes discussions of Ichiro's preference for American heroes rather than those of Japanese history and the connection between Japan's defeat in the war and the end of Ono's artistic career (29-30). This exchange ends with Ichiro choosing to pretend to be one of his American heroes instead of working in his sketchbook with his grandfather (33). All of these topics point to both the generational gap between Ono and his grandson and the aging artist's increasing triviality within Japan's changing culture (Shaffer 46). Ichiro's dismissive attitude toward Japanese history as well as his indifference concerning his grandfather's artistic legacy greatly distress the narrator, though his grandson pays no attention. Thus, in the few minutes before rejoining his daughter, Ono would understandably feel a great deal of pain, causing him to experience difficulty recalling that period of time when he later narrates the event. He suggests that his narratee cannot expect him to fully recall what happened long ago if he cannot bring

to mind what took place only a few weeks before, but the narrator also unwittingly reveals to his narratee his difficulty recalling painful incidents, particularly those that make him appear ineffective, insignificant, or dishonorable, be it in the eyes of his grandson or of his community.

Ono has particular difficulty recalling situations that have the potential to impress upon him—and on his narratee—his past mistakes and their consequences. When he recalls such situations, he continues in his explanatory, conversational tone, but he does not address his narratee, hoping he or she will not pay much attention to these particular pieces of narration. As Brian Shaffer points out in his discussion of the novel: “It becomes clear, for example, that Ono conveniently forgets certain things and remembers (or misremembers) others in an attempt to allay his feelings of guilt” (44). The “convenience” of forgetting lies in his resulting ability to keep his guiltiest secrets from his narratee; he cannot narrate what he cannot remember. In one particular instance of forgetfulness, Ono relates what he believes to have been a conversation with Jiro Miyake just before the Miyakes ended Jiro’s engagement to Noriko. Miyake tells Ono that the president of his company has committed suicide in an attempt to atone for ““certain undertakings [the company was] involved in during the war”” (*Artist* 56). When Ono says the sacrifice seems rather too extreme, Miyake replies, “But these are the men who led the country astray, sir. Surely, it’s only right they should acknowledge their responsibility. It’s cowardice that these men refuse to admit their mistakes” (57). However, just after relating these sentiments, Ono questions whether in fact it was Miyake who said them, wondering if his son-in-law Suichi may have spoken them

instead. Though he does believe he had a conversation on this topic with Miyake, Ono convinces himself that he is confusing this conversation with another such discussion, which took place between Ono and Suichi after the ceremony for Ono's son Kenji, who died in the war. The narrator does not attribute his confusing the two conversations to their similarity in subject—the fear on the part of certain men to admit their responsibility for the atrocities of the war. Instead, Ono explains that he had “come to regard Miyake as my prospective son-in-law, and I may indeed have somehow associated him with my actual son-in-law” (58), which causes him confusion as he attempts to remember the conversation. Whether or not Ono notices the connecting theme of the two conversations, he presents to his narratee the proposition that he is merely confused because of his similar relationships with the two men, not because their comments suggest that he may be among the men too cowardly to take responsibility for their past actions.

However, despite having spent a great deal of the novel avoiding blame, perhaps becoming the sort of man Miyake and Suichi refer to, Ono does eventually admit to making mistakes in supporting the Imperialists. He narrates the *miai*, the meeting between his family and that of Noriko's fiancé, the Saitos. However, he does not explain that this meeting is a normal part of the marriage procedure, once again assuming his narratee possesses the cultural knowledge required to understand what the *miai* is, who is involved, and why it is a significant part of the marriage negotiations in this culture. In the course of conversation, Dr. Saito mentions coming across a young man who had been injured in a political demonstration and asks Ono's opinion. The narrator explains to his narratee that he felt this question was an attempt to probe his political sensibilities,

though he admits, “It is quite possible, of course, that I imagined this” (128). Ono’s interpretation of the purpose behind the question places particular weight on the rest of the conversation and what it portrays about Ono’s politics. However, his admission that he may have misunderstood Dr. Saito’s intention suggests to his narratee that others may not care as much about Ono’s politics as Ono himself does. Later, when Dr. Saito brings up Kuroda as a mutual acquaintance, Ono fears that his poor relationship with the younger man may have biased the Saitos against him, particularly if Kuroda has informed the family of Ono’s support of Imperialism, an idea opposed to the democracy and liberality Dr. Saito had praised in discussing the demonstrations (129). Worried that this knowledge will endanger the marriage negotiations, Ono concedes:

There are some who would say it is people like myself who are responsible for the terrible things that happened to this nation of ours. As far as I am concerned, I freely admit I made many mistakes. I accept that much of what I did was ultimately harmful to our nation, that mine was part of an influence that resulted in untold suffering for our own people. . . . All I can say is that at the time I acted in good faith. I believed in all sincerity I was achieving good for my fellow countrymen. (132-3)

Yet, even as Ono seems to take responsibility for the wrongdoing he has tried to avoid up until this point in the novel, “his confession appears insincere and even hypocritical” (Sim 36). Rather than speaking out of actual regret, Ono gives his oratory in the hopes of saving his daughter’s marriage prospects. He also avoids explaining exactly where his division with Kuroda began, allowing the Saitos to think they merely disagreed concerning the war. He takes credit for the success of the *miai*, legitimizing his confession to himself, and, he hopes, to his narratee. By assuring the Saitos that he only did what he believed to be right as far as the war was concerned, Ono seeks to placate

both his daughter's future in-laws and his narratee. However, as evidenced by the fact that the narration continues, this confession does not offer the full story. As Ono continues to narrate, he is aware that he has not fully revealed the source of his guilt or received the pardon he desires. His guilty conscience forces him to continue on toward the repressed memory of Kuroda's arrest.

Ono admits to his involvement in the war, but the event he ardently tries to avoid is Kuroda's arrest and subsequent imprisonment and torture, which the narrator instigated. He intends his narrative to rationalize and justify his involvement with the Imperialist movement that led to the war, and, as seen above, he does admit to harming the nation, though he never offers any sort of restitution. He does not, however, actually confess his involvement in Kuroda's arrest. His confession at dinner with Noriko's future in-laws stems from his treatment of Kuroda but does not reveal any sense of responsibility for what happened to his former student. In his confession to the Saitos, he only states that Kuroda is among those "who believe my career to have been a negative influence" (132). As Matthew Beedham points out, "[g]iven the many allusions to Kuroda, readers can deduce that Ono thinks about Kuroda all the time, but he apparently does not feel remorse for his betrayal" (36). Though Ono hopes his narratee will understand his justifications for his Imperialist art and influence, he does not actually try to rationalize his treatment of Kuroda, denying his injury of the younger man by never stating for his narratee that he caused Kuroda's imprisonment and torture.

Ono's refusal to admit he has wronged Kuroda and his selective filtering of their past relationship appear particularly vivid when he attempts to visit Kuroda. Ono begins

relating his visit to Kuroda's home by mentioning that, "once I had assured [the art professor at Uemachi College] of my good intentions," he had been given Kuroda's address as well as some information about the younger man's life (*Artist* 115). The narrator feels the weight of convincing not only the professor but also his narratee of his "good intentions" in seeing Kuroda, despite the fact that he has not given any reason why he ought not have good intentions. He suspects his narratee may assume he means Kuroda some sort of harm, a suspicion that would suggest he has caused Kuroda harm in the past. Ono then goes on to explain that his former student has actually profited from his imprisonment, that the time in jail "gave him strong credentials" and he "thus experiences little difficulty finding work" (116) implying that Ono has done Kuroda a service by informing on him and having him sent to prison. Ono admits that "it may seem somewhat perverse" for him to take pleasure in hearing that Kuroda has done so well since the end of the war, but "then it is only natural after all that his former teacher should continue to take pride in such things" (116). Ono does not mention that the true paradox is not in his pride in his former student's success but rather in his taking pride despite having been the reason for Kuroda's imprisonment and torture. He also does not articulate the possibility that his pleasure may also be derived, at least in part, from Kuroda's low social status, though he does reveal to his narratee, "Kuroda did not live in a good quarter" (116), in contrast to Ono's own impressive home. When Ono arrives at Kuroda's apartment and learns that Kuroda is not there, he does not identify himself, but allows Kuroda's student to believe he is "a work associate" (120). Under this belief, the student shows Ono a cordial welcome, offering tea and asking that he stay until Kuroda

returns. However, upon learning Ono's name, the young man's cordiality fades, though he continues to speak politely. Ono replies indignantly to the student's suggestion that he leave rather than continue to await Kuroda's return, stating that the student cannot possibly know the "full details" of his relationship with Kuroda (120). He has repressed the memory of his informing on Kuroda, as the act itself does not even enter the narration, and believes he can now present himself to his former student as a friend and colleague, perhaps even as the one more wronged in their past relationship (Wong 47). The student asserts that Ono himself does not know the "full details," as revealed by the fact that he has visited at all, particularly under the guise of "a friendly visitor" (*Artist* 121). Yet even as the exchange grows heated, the narrator never mentions what precisely happened to cause this rift between himself and his former student. Kuroda's student speaks of his teacher's torture and his being called a traitor, and even states that he knows "who the real traitors are," but he never actually points to Ono as the reason Kuroda was sent to prison (121). The narrator explains that, when he left, he did not "allow the young man's words to upset" him unnecessarily (122). However, "the possibility that Kuroda was as hostile to my memory as [his student] suggested was indeed a disturbing one," though only disturbing in the sense that, were Noriko's future in-laws to learn about Kuroda's animosity, they might not continue with the marriage negotiations (122). As with his later confession to the Saitos, Ono's worry does not come from the actual harm he caused Kuroda in the past, but from the chance that someone might find out about his Imperialist leanings and view him badly as a result. To manage his narratee's view, Ono tells this anecdote before discussing the dinner with the Saitos, revealing first that he

reached out to this former student of low status and was rejected. By showing his narratee that Kuroda's student rebuffed his cordiality, Ono hopes to bias his narratee against Kuroda and soften the effect when he finally indirectly reveals that he played a part in Kuroda's arrest.

When Ono does expose what happened to Kuroda, he chooses to depict the scene in which he comes to Kuroda's home to find the police have taken his former student away for questioning. He never actually tells his narratee about informing the authorities of Kuroda's anti-Imperialist art, carefully avoiding the confession of the actual offense by filtering what he allows his narratee to learn (Beedham 33). After describing the conversation with his own teacher in which Ono chose a different path for his art, he suddenly turns to telling what happened the night he arrived at Kuroda's home just after the young man's arrest, an odd shift from the associative recall used previously in his narration. At no point in the few pages he devotes to the incident does Ono address his narratee, as if hoping he may be able to reveal his transgression without drawing his narratee's attention. The narrator only reveals his action by extension, relating a memory in which he mentions informing on Kuroda without narrating the inciting incident itself. Only once does Ono mention what caused Kuroda's arrest, claiming he "merely suggested to the committee someone come round and give Mr Kuroda a talking-to for his own good" (197). Even Ono's actions that resulted in Kuroda's imprisonment are presented in terms as though they were for Kuroda's benefit, for "his own good," in the hope that the narratee will understand Ono's motives. By focusing his narratee's attention on Ono's concern for Kuroda's "own good," Ono asserts that his intentions matter more

than his actions or their effects, whether in informing on Kuroda or backing the Imperialists. Unwittingly, however, Ono reveals that his concern for Kuroda might not be as intense as he suggests to his narratee. After asking a few questions about Kuroda's arrest, Ono is distracted by a burning pile of Kuroda's paintings (197). His concern for the works of art almost equals his concern for his former student. He reveals to his narratee, despite the narrator's intentions, that he is not quite the humanitarian his concern for the poor would suggest (181). When the first policeman he speaks to does not recognize his name, Ono's belief in his own reputation and influence wavers (196). However, the second man he speaks to seems to be aware of who he is and his significance. Yet, his reputation is not enough to turn the policemen from their task as they continue to burn Kuroda's paintings. The police escort Ono from the house as they burn Kuroda's "unpatriotic trash" without further explanation of why they have taken Kuroda or what they intend to do with him (198). After narrating this scene, Ono explains, "But this is all of limited relevance here" (198), a particularly ironic statement, as his entire story exists due to his need to justify and receive pardon for his past actions. In this piece of narration, Ono comes closest to confessing his action against Kuroda, an action that was not part of his career or the result of his Imperialist influence, but highly detrimental to a single man. However, even here, he manages to avoid giving his narratee an actual confession or statement of remorse.

As mentioned earlier, some men, including the president of Jiro Miyake's company, have sought pardon for leading Japan into the destruction of the Second World War through suicide, but Ono refuses this sort of attempt at redemption. In his

conversation with Ono towards the beginning of the novel, Miyake explains the president's suicide as "an apology on behalf of us all to the families of those killed in the war" (56). Ono regards the president's suicide as a "rather extreme" way to apologize, calling it a "great waste" (57). "After all," he tells Miyake, "if your country is at war, you do all you can in support, there's no shame in that" (57). In response, Miyake explains that the employees of the company, himself included, now feel relieved, able to "forget our past transgressions and look to the future" (57). In this statement, Miyake unknowingly articulates what Ono is seeking—freedom from his past and hope for his future. However, Ono does not see his influence on the nation before and during the war as anything but his patriotic duty, and he cannot admit to the extensive harm he did Kuroda; he cannot atone for what he refuses to see as wrong or refuses to see at all. Though he desires to be free of societal judgment for his past, Ono wishes to maintain that he was indeed influential, and while he craves hope for the future, he continues to define himself by his past. When the idea of suicide arises again toward the end of the novel, Ono's view has not changed. He assures his grandson that Yukio Naguchi, a composer who committed suicide, felt remorse for the popular patriotic songs he had composed during the war but was not a "bad man" (166). In a conversation chronologically earlier but related later in the course of the narration, Ono suggests to Setsuko that he and Naguchi have much in common, to which his daughter replies, "Father is wrong to even begin thinking in such terms about himself. Father was, after all, a painter" (207). The narrator assumes Setsuko fears he will commit suicide and assures his daughter—and his narratee—that he has no intention of "taking the sort of action Mr

Naguchi did” (207). As Ono explains, he only meant that both he and the composer were men of “some influence, who used that influence towards a disastrous end” (207).

Though he hopes his daughter and his narratee see the modesty in his description of himself as a man of only “some influence,” the narrator maintains that his influence was enough to cause “a disastrous end.” Ono still believes he acted in what he understood to be the best service of his country, and thus his good intentions, despite negative results, free him from the need to atone in the way Naguchi has. However, Setsuko’s assertion that Ono “was, after all, a painter” strikes at the artist’s pride and sense of reputation. He continues to claim that he possessed a significant influence and may have improperly utilized his influence (207-8). He only apologizes for what he did during his career as an artist, an apology that seems hollow compared to the apologetic actions of other men. At no point does Ono concede that the actions of his private life, in particular his treatment of Kuroda, also require repentance.

Ono’s narrative leads to the question of whether or not a cultural figure bears the responsibility of his actions if his good intentions lead to negative results. Japanese critic Motoko Sugano explains: “War, particularly in its relation to the issue of war responsibility, is an inherently ambivalent topic of exploration in post-war Japanese society” (75). Much like Ono’s difficulty recalling uncomfortable events, “the Japanese have found it difficult to formulate a communal body of memory that incorporates the history of the war in which the Japanese are accountable” (75). Ono presents the specific case of the war propaganda artist, which Sugano goes on to consider in his discussion of the novel. He describes a debate in a Japanese newspaper over the artists’ wartime role

and resulting responsibility from the mid-1940s. While one side argued for artists involved in producing propaganda to “refrain from practice for a while,” the opposing side insisted “the artists had no choice but to collaborate” with the Imperialists (78). This second assertions refers to the National Mobilization Law of 1938, “which forced the nation to contribute to the war effort” (75). Many artists of varying reputation were enlisted to create works promoting Imperialism. Ono, however, represents a third group in a rather more complex situation. He did not simply follow the dictates of the Imperialists; he whole-heartedly joined them and of his own volition used his work to further the cause of the Emperor. While other artists can say they did only as they were required by law to do, Ono has no such excuse. He does not exist in an “autonym-denying system” (Cooper 108), unlike the narrators of the works discussed later, *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. Ono makes a choice as a young man to leave his teacher and devote his art to a political cause, explaining that he is following his conscience (*Artist* 193). He has the “opportunity for individual choice” which allows him “independence in error” instead of “a dependent truth” (cf. Booth 245). Ono exhibits the particularly modern value of the freedom to choose and possibly choose incorrectly. However, he also illustrates the possibility that the individual’s freedom to choose may cause harm to the collective. Therefore, his narrative raises the question of whether or not following his conscience excuses him from the consequences of his actions. His society answers with a resounding “no,” as represented by Jiro Miyake and Suichi, who express a desire for well-intentioned leaders to atone for leading the country astray and regard suicide as an appropriate apology (*Artist* 57-9). Matsuda, on the other hand, believes

“there’s no need to blame ourselves unduly,” reminding Ono, “We at least acted on what we believed and did our utmost. It’s just that in the end we turned out to be ordinary men” (216). Matsuda excuses his actions by asserting that his was an unexceptional contribution. Ono, however, refuses to accept either side of the argument. After relating the conversation with Matsuda, Ono assures his narratee that both he and his friend can look at their lives with “the satisfaction of knowing that whatever we did, we did at the time in the best of faith” (218). However, he does not accept Matsuda’s belief in their ordinariness. Just after describing his final conversation with Matsuda, Ono recalls visiting his former teacher’s province after receiving an award and taking pride in his achievements in light of his teacher’s fall from prestige (219). Ono points to the difference between himself and ordinary men, like Shintaro (221), then turns to describing a recent morning when he sits in the city watching young men, full of enthusiasm, going about their work (223). He understands that it is these young men, rising to replace the generation who “led the country astray” (57), who will move Japan forward. Neither the young men with new ideas nor the old friend who believes he was ordinary offer Ono the appreciation and absolution he needs. He is unable to reconcile his desire for significance with his desire for absolution. The narrator therefore turns to someone he believes will reconcile these conflicting ideas—his imagined narratee.

Ono hopes he has convinced the narratee of his honor and influence as well as his positive ambitions. However, because his narratee is purely imagined, he or she cannot respond to these issues and leaves Ono in the same irreconcilable position as at the beginning of his narrative. While his narratee has functioned as a sounding board for his

arguments and justifications, Ono finds himself no closer to absolution after his confession. The narratee cannot show that he has proved himself honorable or remorseful, merely that he has tried. Unable to answer the question of whether or not his good intentions free him of responsibility for the negative consequences of his actions, and still afraid he is not the influential force he believes, Ono can only hope that Japan will move past its mistakes toward a bright future (223). The artist, however, has denied himself any such opportunity.

## CHAPTER TWO: *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*

Critics often compare *An Artist of the Floating World* to Ishiguro's next novel, *The Remains of the Day*. The narrator of *The Remains of the Day*, an aging English butler referred to only as Stevens, has reached the end of his life with the sense that he must tell his story to someone who can offer him some sort of absolution, some comfort that his actions are excusable. Stevens has spent the majority of his adult life serving as butler to a man whom he believed to be noble and honorable, the late Lord Darlington. However, his lordship collaborated with the Nazis prior to the Second World War, and Stevens sees himself as a coconspirator due to his service to Lord Darlington. Stevens feels he has given his life of service to the wrong man, but his guilt makes relating his most shameful memories difficult. Telling his story as he drives through the English countryside in 1956, Stevens describes his travels, his earlier experiences, and his ideas on what comprises "greatness" in his profession to a narratee like himself—a serving man in a similar house who has seen the world change as a result of the war and who will understand the importance of greatness, dignity, and loyalty in their line of work. However, no such person appears before the narrator, forcing him to turn for his narratee within "the confines of his own mind" (Hammond 97). Stevens speaks to an unidentified, imagined figure with these qualities, hoping, as Ono does, that such a person will understand him and accept his justifications.

Like Ono, Stevens lives in a society that has realigned its values. Prior to World War II, many British citizens believed the best way to secure peace was to appease—and leave the way open to possibly align with—Germany. Certainly, the number of delegates who attend Lord Darlington’s conference in 1923 to discuss “releasing Germany from the cruelties of the Versailles treaty” points to the commonality of sympathy for Germany in the decades before the war (*Remains* 76, Stedman 38). Even as late as the mid thirties, Stevens points out, a number of “the most established, respected ladies in gentlemen in England were availing themselves of the German leaders,” visiting the country and enjoying the hospitality of members in the National Socialist Party (*Remains* 137). However, Lord Darlington goes beyond mere sympathy to become one of the very few who actually collaborated with the Nazis (cf. Stedman 38). Like Matsuda in *An Artist of the Floating World*, Lord Darlington sees great injustice in the world, particularly in the treatment of Germany after the First World War, and Stevens declares with certainty that “a desire to see ‘justice in the world’ lay at the heart of all his actions” (*Remains* 73). However, also like Matsuda, the means by which Lord Darlington seeks to rectify this injustice prove misguided, and even before the beginning of the war, public opinion has turned against him. Unlike Mr. Cardinal, his lordship’s godson, who worked towards leniency for Germany at the 1923 conference but now stands adamantly against German actions in Europe (225), Lord Darlington refuses to change his methods for seeking peace. Stevens, ever the loyal servant, continues to place his faith in his lordship’s decisions. Stevens’s refusal to renege on his loyalty to Lord Darlington in light of the Second World War puts him, like Ono, at odds with his “changed social environment”

(Sim 47). Society has redefined “right” and “wrong” based on events surrounding the war. Lord Darlington was at first applauded for seeking better conditions for the people of Germany than those outlined in the Treaty of Versailles. However, even those as close to him as Mr. Cardinal believe he has become “the single most useful pawn Herr Hitler has had in this country” (*Remains* 224). Because Stevens has dedicated his life in service to Lord Darlington in the belief that such service is the best way he can influence the world, he has fallen onto the “wrong” side of the issue along with his employer. Like Ono, Stevens has chosen “to be damned for a sincere, passionately individual embrace of a falsehood”—that Lord Darlington is a great man—“than to be saved through submission to someone else’s truth” (cf. Booth 245). However, while Stevens clings to the “falsehood” of Lord Darlington’s honor, he does not so much embody Booth’s hero in conflict with the world as the old man holding to outdated, debunked beliefs. Therefore, just as Ono must confide in a narratee who still holds to pre-war ideas, Stevens looks for a listener who will share his own more traditional values rather than the changed values of his culture, who will agree that loyalty and dignity are more important in serving than standing up for one’s political convictions.

Whereas *An Artist of the Floating World* reveals a number of possible—if ultimately inadequate—confidants for Ono, Stevens lives in a world where he is very much alone, professionally and socially, having spent the past several years within the confines of Darlington Hall, formerly the home of Lord Darlington and now in the possession of Mr. Farraday. Stevens is unable to form a connection with any other characters in the house or on his trip through the countryside that would allow him to

confess and reveal his guilt. He hopes for a narratee who will affirm his values and assure him that his justifications are valid, but no such person is available. He never considers revealing his thoughts to Mr. Farraday, first, because Mr. Farraday is his employer and such a relationship would be unthinkable inappropriate, and second, because Mr. Farraday is “an American gentleman” unfamiliar with Steven’s vocation and culture (*Remains* 4). The former housekeeper of Darlington Hall, Miss Kenton, would be in a position to understand Stevens’s situation, vocationally and culturally, and as his intention in traveling is to see her (13), it could follow that she would be the one who listens to the narrative of his travels. During her tenure at Darlington Hall, Stevens comes closer to confiding in Miss Kenton than in any other character in the novel, and they develop a habit of spending the evenings listening to one another’s thoughts over hot cocoa (157). However, Miss Kenton does not share Steven’s belief that a servant must obey her employer when an order goes against her conscience (149). Given that she cannot accept Stevens’s submission to his employer as a legitimate reason for him to follow unconscionable orders, Miss Kenton would be unable to comprehend, relate to, and offer absolution for Stevens’s actions. Their unresolved feelings for one another, which Stevens attempts to hide from both his narratee and Miss Kenton under a layer of strict professionalism, further complicate their relationship, causing her to become less of a confidante for Stevens as the novel progresses. Stevens’s father certainly would have understood, himself a believer in suppressing one’s emotion and opinions under dignity and professionalism. However, Stevens’s father has passed away before Stevens begins his narration. Even were he present, a professional detachment “bereft of any warmth or

consideration” characterizes their relationship (Wong 60), not unlike that which characterizes Stevens’s relationship with Miss Kenton, making such a confession impossible. Beyond his father and Miss Kenton, Stevens has never developed much of a relationship with any members of staff. The only viable candidate for Stevens’s narratee within the novel appears in the final scene, when an older man who was himself a butler sits down beside Stevens on a pier in Weymouth at the end of his journey. Stevens does offer a rather cloudy confession to this man, but the listener admits that he does not understand much of what Stevens says about his former employer (*Remains* 243). Also, the old man only appears in the novel’s final pages, absent during all but the last bit of the narration. As none of these characters provides the knowledge, experience, and understanding Stevens seeks in a narratee, he must look elsewhere. Therefore, like Ono, Stevens tells his story to a narratee he vaguely outlines as he narrates, unable to find anyone among his acquaintance to whom he can fully relate his guilt.

Also like Ono, Stevens begins addressing his narratee early in his narration, building up a concept of the type of person he hopes will listen to his story, and as he does so, he begins to reveal himself. Though Stevens makes very few choices in his narrative, having made the original and all-encompassing choice to serve his employer with dignity, when he does make a choice of some kind, he often invokes his narratee. This tendency points his uncertainty about his choices and his need for affirmation. He first addresses the narratee in the prologue, after Mr. Farraday suggests that Stevens take a trip while his employer is in America. “As you might expect,” Stevens tells his narratee, addressing a second-person entity that is not named here or elsewhere, “I did not take Mr

Farraday's suggestion at all seriously that afternoon" (4). Along with addressing the narratee, he also references expectations on the part of that narratee, whom he assumes understands the narrator's attitude toward his employer's suggestion. In this situation, Stevens supposes his narratee agrees that the proper course in this situation was to ignore Mr. Farraday's suggestion. This assumption reflects Stevens's belief that his narratee has some experience in his specialized position as a butler in a well-established English home and therefore understands why Stevens does not take the suggestion seriously (Hammond 97). His expectations regarding the narratee become more obvious when Stevens states that his listener knows how difficult it is to find "recruits of a satisfactory standard" for servants in the house (*Remains* 8). As choosing new members of staff would fall under the butler's responsibility, Stevens reveals here that he assumes his narratee is a butler as well. Continuing to explain the difficulties of his staff plan, Stevens makes further references to the narratee: "I undertook for myself a number of duties which you may consider most broad-minded of a butler to do" (8). Here, Stevens reveals that he believes his narratee is a person who has experienced the "old ways" of large English manor houses and who has a pre-existing concept of what a butler is generally expected to do in such a house (7, 8). He later says again that his narratee "may be amazed" (9), echoing the "may consider" of the above quote. The use of "may" suggests that Stevens, like Ono, is not yet personally acquainted with his narratee and thus unable to discern whether or not the narratee would feel as Stevens does about his staff plan and his duties. He begins to outline a narratee who is familiar with his lifestyle but not yet a personal acquaintance. Stevens's reiterates his unfamiliarity with his narratee when he turns to the consideration

of what makes a “great butler” (28), one of the topics that most preoccupies him as he narrates his trip. He mentions the names of a few men he considers to be great butlers, specifically “Mr Marshall of Charleville House, or Mr Lane of Bridewood,” names he expects his narratee to recognize (29). Though he is unsure whether or not his narratee has met these men, he claims that, if the listener has come into contact with them, “you will no doubt know of the quality they possess to which I refer” (29). Stevens expects his narratee to be familiar with these names and with this undefined “quality,” and he often mentions his narratee when considering dignity, hoping his listener has the same views on the topic. Toward the end of the novel, Stevens explains that “such great affairs,” like the international issues that Lord Darlington grapples with before the Second World War, “will always be beyond the understanding of those such as you and I,” and given this fact, the only thing to do is serve those who can understand and take part in these “great affairs” (199). Here, he makes very clear his assumption that he addresses a person in service much like himself who has had at least similar experiences serving influential people. Just before ending his narration, Stevens addresses his narratee, saying, “Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least *try* to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy” (244 emphasis original), a final reference to his imagined listener and a plea for his narratee to agree that his attempts to do something good were enough to justify his life’s work, despite the negative outcome. Though Stevens hopes his listener will make him feel that his explanations have been accepted, this narratee, who is merely imagined and therefore unable to add to the text, performs the function of further illuminating Stevens.

While Ono spends much of his narration trying to portray himself as a good, honorable person, Stevens places more emphasis on proving to his narratee that Lord Darlington was a noble, good-hearted individual, worthy of the butler's many years of service. Certainly, Stevens desires to present himself as one of the "great" and "dignified" butlers he describes, but he does not put forth much evidence to show he is a good man, focusing instead on various attributes of Lord Darlington's character. Stevens presents his arguments in favor of Lord Darlington's good character as rebuttals to published statements and public discussions about his lordship's actions. This preoccupation with Lord Darlington and the image the public has developed of him points to Stevens's deep anxiety that perhaps Lord Darlington is not the great man he believed him to be, and his fear that his narratee may have already passed judgment on his lordship based on public opinion. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Ono has developed a reputation as an influential man, if also an Imperialist; similarly, society knows Lord Darlington as a wealthy, politically active gentleman with Nazi sympathies. Comparatively, Stevens himself has almost no reputation to speak of. While he may be known among other house servants, he does not possess an image before the public like that of Ono or Lord Darlington. He is defined by his employer, both socially and in his own mind, a belief shown most powerfully in his later assertion that he can only leave a mark on society by devoting himself in service to an employer who "embodies all that I find most noble and admirable" (200). By choosing to serve Lord Darlington, Stevens bends all of his future actions and choices to the will of his employer as well as "his political conscience to his professional loyalty" (Shaffer 79). Therefore, any orders

Stevens carries out can be traced back to Lord Darlington's wishes and to Stevens's initial choice to serve Lord Darlington, as the butler experiences what Brian Shaffer labels an "emotional fascism" rather than a political one, "an extreme and perverse identification" with Lord Darlington (74). In order to justify himself and his choice to serve this man, Stevens must justify Lord Darlington, knowing that his butler-narratee will judge him by his employer just as he defines himself by his employer. To that end, the narrator seeks to convince his narratee of the righteousness of his employer, hoping to portray himself as righteous by extension.

Stevens's attempts to justify Lord Darlington to his narratee begin well into the novel, when the narrator first describes a conversation with his former employer. Up until this point, Stevens has devoted his narrative to explanations of what makes a "great butler," descriptions of the places he visits, and portrayals of past interactions with Miss Kenton during the time she was employed at Darlington. In the course of discussing his father's dignity as a butler and his past relationship with Miss Kenton, Stevens's narration digresses to mention a conversation with Lord Darlington regarding Stevens's father's health. Though Stevens certainly puts great effort into describing his lordship's good character, the fact that this first description comes as a digression from a separate story suggests that Stevens uses considerable care when he reveals pieces of Lord Darlington's past to his narratee, hoping to soften the eventual revelation that will show his lordship's glaring fault. Lord Darlington uses a "ploy" to begin the conversation with Stevens, pretending to be invested in reading an encyclopedia (60), which Stevens attributes to his "essentially shy and modest nature" (61). This aspect of his character,

Stevens asserts, stands in direct contradiction to the “utter nonsense” written about Lord Darlington in recent years. This “utter nonsense” regards Lord Darlington’s “prominent role” in “great affairs”: “some utterly ignorant reports have had it that he was motivated by egotism or else arrogance” (61). As he defends Lord Darlington against these accusations, Stevens does not describe his lordship’s involvement with the Nazis. Instead, the narrator points to the motives for these actions, claiming that his former employer acted out of “a deep sense of moral duty” (61), regardless of what those actions actually were or what they accomplished. By pointing to Lord Darlington’s motivations, Stevens steers his narration away from any discussion of what his lordship did or whom he supported before the war, showing Lord Darlington to be a person of deep moral feeling long before revealing him to be a Nazi sympathizer. Stevens hopes, by speaking in this manner about Lord Darlington and by carefully timing what he reveals to his narratee, he will be able to justify his lordships actions and his own loyalty.

Though Steven’s narration allows fewer clues for his narratee than Ono’s as regards what each narrator attempts to hide, the narratee does receive a number of suggestions that there is something about Lord Darlington and Stevens’s service for him that the narrator desires to keep hidden, at least for most of the novel. Whereas Ono’s daughter, son-in-law, and former students ask questions or make veiled accusations that force him to hint at the secrets he hides, Stevens only receives the occasional question about his former employer and is not constantly surrounded by people aware of Lord Darlington’s past. He spends a great deal of time at the beginning of the novel discussing his journey, his current employer, his father, Miss Kenton, and his thoughts on great

butlers, but only mentions Lord Darlington some sixty pages into the narration.

Immediately upon bringing up Lord Darlington, Stevens acknowledges the “great deal of nonsense” that has arisen in recent years in the press and in public discussion regarding his former employer (61). However, without explaining further, Stevens assures his narratee that Lord Darlington was “a truly good man,” then returns to his story (61), refusing to linger over his former employer’s reputation. Later, Stevens states that Lord Darlington made several trips to Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, but he devotes only a few lines to this fact before relating in great detail an instance of Lord Darlington’s particular sense of justice (71-3), choosing not to reveal what his lordship did or saw while visiting Germany. Stevens suggests that his narratee may have heard the “utter nonsense” spoken about Lord Darlington again in a later chapter, and he again pushes these rumors aside without any clarification as to what people are saying about his lordship. Two particular rumors about Lord Darlington come to light in an aside from a discussion on polishing silver, specifically his anti-Semitism and his connection with the British Union of Fascists. Stevens denies both of these, though he concedes that the question of anti-Semitism may be rooted in “one very minor event in the thirties which has been blown up out of all proportion” (137). Finally, in the next chapter, Stevens explains this “very minor event” of his lordship’s termination of two Jewish maids because of their race (145). However, little of the anecdote includes Lord Darlington himself, focusing instead on Miss Kenton’s reaction to the incident, and Stevens quickly moves away from this line of narration to consider other aspects of the staff from that time. However, the story of

the two maids provides the first basis for the “nonsense” concerning Lord Darlington that Stevens has tried to avoid and that looms larger as he continues to tell his narrative.

Stevens uses a number of methods to try to avoid discussions of Lord Darlington’s Nazi sympathies and his own choice to serve his lordship despite his beliefs. Certainly, Stevens trip around England is “a metaphorical journey of introspective self-exploration” (Guo). However, as he explores, he chooses not to consider parts of his past. Like Ono, Stevens conveniently forgets bits of his story and redirects his narratee if one of these guilty subjects arises in his narration. However, Stevens also utilizes other forms of avoidance not seen in Ono’s narrative, specifically his professionalism, his emulation of other butlers, and his denial of facts. These methods reflect the particular nature of Stevens’s situation as compared to Ono’s. The importance of detail and memory in Stevens’s job requires him to recall well; if he had a poor memory, he would be a poor butler. Therefore, he possesses a mind trained to remember detail, though Stevens does experience occasional lapses of memory connected to painful events (Shaffer 70). Stevens utilizes his professionalism much the way Ono utilizes his poor memory, turning to this vein of his narration when he feels he may be leading his narratee too close to what he wishes not to narrate. This aspect appears particularly in his constant return to his “narrative apologia” on “dignity” and what it means to be a “great” butler (Hammond 100). While originality holds great value for an artist and much of Ono’s story portrays him throwing off the ideas of his predecessors, Stevens shows his profession to be one of emulation as he seeks to follow the example of his father and of other butlers whom he considers to be great. If he is only following the example of others, he cannot be held

entirely responsible for his choices, or so he believes. Most startlingly, Stevens denies his connection to Lord Darlington on more than one occasion, lying in an uncharacteristically bold fashion to several different characters. His ability to tell such lies connects to another difference between his situation and Ono's situation: while Ono is surrounded by people who have heard his name and are acquainted with his pre-war ideas and actions, Stevens does not possess the same sort of renown. Many people know the name "Lord Darlington," but they have no reason to know his butler. This fact offers Stevens anonymity denied Ono, anonymity he takes advantage of by lying about his previous employment. These methods are particular to Stevens and his profession, and he uses all of them to keep away from what he does not want his narratee to know.

Like Ono, Stevens has difficulty recalling events as he narrates, but his recollections do not falter to the same extent that Ono's do, though he also deals with "the unreliability of his aging mind" as he attempts to assert "narrative power" (Hammond 97). And like Ono, Stevens has particular trouble recalling events and conversations related to points of pain in his past. On more than one occasion, when he attempts to remember an incident connected to his father, his memories grow confused. At the time of narration, he cannot recall whether it was Miss Kenton or Lord Darlington who suggested Stevens's father, the under butler at Darlington Hall, take on fewer responsibilities due to his age and health (*Remains* 60). Stevens's difficulty remembering the conversation, similar to Ono's difficulty recalling whether he spoke to Miyake or Suichi about cowardice and responsibility (*Artist* 58), connects to his absence at his father's death, as well as the strained relationship between Stevens and his father. As he

reflects on Miss Kenton's time at Darlington Hall, he relates a conversation in which she pointed out his father's increasing inability to go about his staff duties by mentioning a dust-pan his father left in the hall (55). The narrator admits, "It is very possible there were a number of other instances of this sort which I have now forgotten" (56), a moment of forgetfulness connected to his admiration for his father and his guilt about his father's death. Stevens, now advanced in age himself, experiences similar lapses in the completion of his duties (9), as well as lapses in memory, though his memory issues seem more connected to his desire to avoid painful recollections, like his relationship with his father, than his age (Beedham 47).

Whereas his forgetfulness only appears occasionally, Stevens's professionalism permeates the novel to the point that this attitude characterizes almost all of the narration, forming a barrier between himself and his regrets (Shaffer 76). Professionalism, to Stevens, is represented through the repression of emotion in favor of a calm outward demeanor and the maintenance of proper bearing in every situation. In fact, professionalism becomes the topic of much of the narrator's discourse in what critic Bo G. Ekelund labels "an essay on values" (73), in which Stevens uses the terms "dignity" and "greatness" as synonyms for "professionalism." Stevens uses this essay on values not only to separate himself from his regrets, but also to convince his narratee of the importance of this value above all others, as it is professionalism that motivates most of the narrator's actions. When he feels he has strayed too close to revealing his lordship's anti-Semitism, Stevens admits to having drifted from his topic and turns to discussing the importance of silver polish as a representation of a butler's quality (*Remains* 138). His

depiction of himself as professional takes on even greater importance in light of his belief that his narratee is a butler like himself who values this quality as much as he does and would think less of him were his narration to lapse into the sentimental, emotional, or overly personal. Therefore, as he describes professionalism, he also narrates with professionalism, using the same demeanor in his related narrative as in his work. In one of his musings on the idea, Stevens describes professionalism as clothing a man puts on and removes “when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone” (43). Because he imagines himself to be speaking to an individual, if only an individual within his own mind, he never takes off his professionalism in his narration. In his final conversation with his father, as with almost all the dialogue in the novel, the narrator removes dialogue tags (97). If the members of the conversation speak with any particular emotion, those feelings do not appear in the narration of the dialogue. The narrator does not allow emotion to enter his narration, stating what he did as opposed to what he felt in various situations. When Miss Kenton informs Stevens that his father’s state of health “has gone very poorly” during the evening of the conference, Stevens acknowledges the emotion of the situation but does not actually attribute any feeling to himself: “It is most distressing” (104). He then narrates his return to the lower floor and the diplomatic conference, where both Mr. Cardinal and Lord Darlington ask if he is all right, to which he replies that he is (105). As he closes his narration of the event, Stevens only mentions his father in an aside as he suggests that Stevens himself displayed “at least in some modest degree a ‘dignity’ worthy of someone like Mr Marshall—or come to that, my father” (110). He turns his attention and the attention of his narratee away from

the tragic event and his guilt over being away from his father's deathbed, a moment of particularly poignant depersonalization through professional discourse. Rather than consider his father's death, he focuses instead on his professionalism, as he will again at other difficult points in his narration, believing his narratee to be as uncomfortable with emotion as he is himself.

Stevens's professionalism dominates all of his relationships, but this characteristic shows most vividly in his interactions with Miss Kenton. In this particular relationship, Stevens uses his professionalism to hide his affection for the former housekeeper, both in his dealings with Miss Kenton and in his explanation of those dealings for his narratee. Stevens readily states that Miss Kenton's letter convinced him to take the trip Mr. Farraday had suggested, though the butler quickly gives a professional reason: he is going to ask Miss Kenton to return to work at Darlington Hall. He believes she will be particularly interested in returning due to "distinct hints" in her letter, hints he assures himself and his narratee he has not misinterpreted (9). However, as he later admits, Miss Kenton does not explicitly state her desire to return to Darlington Hall in her letter (48), from which his narratee can see that Stevens's assumption is based less on the contents of Miss Kenton's letter than on his feelings for her. Stevens seems to regret speaking so warmly about Miss Kenton's letter, fearing his narratee may have developed the same thoughts Mr. Farraday expresses about his relationship with her, jokingly calling her the butler's "lady-friend" (14). To counterbalance these possible assumptions, Stevens relates several instances in which he and Miss Kenton were at odds, about her address of his father (53), her assessment of his father's abilities in light of his poor health (59), and

about the narrator's condescending manner (79). While he admits to admiring Miss Kenton's "exemplary professionalism" (9), she occasionally displays too much familiarity for Stevens's comfort. She comments on his distaste for having pretty girls on staff and asks, "Might it be that our Mr Stevens fears distraction?" (156). Stevens bristles at the comic accusation but explains to his narratee that such "harmless talk" had become part of his interactions with Miss Kenton, "which did much, one should say, to relieve the many tensions produced by a hard day" (157). He assures his narratee that such conversations, much like his trip to visit Miss Kenton, have a perfectly professional basis, though his tendency to over-explain such incidents suggests his suppressed emotions are far warmer toward Miss Kenton than he would have his narratee believe. While Miss Kenton admires Stevens in return, she does not fully appreciate his dignity. When Stevens explains to Miss Kenton that he found no pleasure in dismissing the two Jewish maids, she is amazed and confused, asking, "Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?" (154 emphasis original) She does not understand Stevens's overwhelming conviction that his job requires the complete suppression of his emotions in all of his interactions. Even when she stumbles upon him reading in the butler's pantry, Stevens maintains a professional distance from her, refusing to remove the garment of his dignity even when they are alone:

You will appreciate then that in the event of Miss Kenton bursting in at a time when I presumed...that I was to be alone, it came to be a crucial matter of principle, a matter indeed of dignity, that I did not appear in anything less than my full and proper role (169).

At no point in their relationship does Stevens allow Miss Kenton to see him "in anything less than my full and proper role," even at the end of the novel when, after marrying,

leaving Darlington Hall, and experiencing an unsatisfying relationship with her husband, she confesses that she has cared for Stevens and often imagined a life with him (239). Stevens does not express any reciprocal feelings, though his admiration for Miss Kenton has pressed through the surface of his narration at various times. “[T]he cost of his misguided investment in an ethos of self-abrogation” (Sim 45), of his never-wavering professionalism, has proved to include his relationship with his father as well as any possibility of romance with Miss Kenton. Yet, even as he narrates these events for his listener, he maintains his vital lie, his belief that dignity is the most important value he can uphold, even if it costs him companionship.

He ends his chapter on the political conference and his father’s death by mentioning the dignity of his father and Mr. Marshall. The narrator examines this concept by looking at other butlers, reminding his narratee that theirs is a profession of emulation, of following prior examples, a factor which he hopes removes some of the blame for his own actions. In his quest for dignity, Stevens looks to his father, whom he identifies as “the embodiment of ‘dignity’” (*Remains* 34). He relates a story that his father often told about a butler in India who refused to let the appearance of a tiger in the dining room rattle him in his duties (36). As Stevens points out, his father “must have striven throughout his years somehow to *become* that butler of his story” (37 emphasis original). The story shows that Stevens’s father, like himself, seeks to emulate the dignified behaviors of other butlers. Later, when Stevens speaks of “loyalty *intelligently* bestowed” (201 emphasis original), another significant aspect of his “dignity,” he invokes Mr. Marshall and Mr. Lane again as examples he intends to follow:

Can we imagine Mr Marshall arguing with Lord Camberley over the latter's latest dispatch to the Foreign Office? Do we admire Mr Lane any the less because we learn he is not in the habit of challenging Sir Leonard Gray before each speech in the House of Commons? (201)

If such great butlers did not question their powerful employers, Stevens asserts, neither can he. Therefore, when he refuses to balk at Lord Darlington's questionable decisions regarding the expulsion of Jewish servants from the house or his support of Hitler's campaigns and ambitions, the narrator shows his narratee that he cannot be held responsible for his continuous loyalty. He is only emulating those he considers to be "great" and "dignified," and he believes his narratee would do the same in such a situation.

Whereas Ono never deliberately denies his connection to Imperialism or to Kuroda's arrest, Stevens states on more than one occasion that he was never in Lord Darlington's employ, a strategy that, like his forgetfulness and focus on professionalism and emulation, "fails to conceal his shame" (Wong 62). The first instance of this denial appears in the narration when Stevens has stopped at a large manor house during his journey through Dorset. In a discussion with the chauffeur, Stevens mentions that he serves at Darlington Hall, unintentionally leading his companion to ask if he knew Lord Darlington. Stevens explains, "Oh, no, I am employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house from the Darlington family" (*Remains* 120). The chauffeur expresses a desire to know "[w]hat sort of bloke [Lord Darlington] was" but does not push Stevens for further information, assuming he has none to give (120). Stevens claims not to know why he lied, though he gives another example of a similar situation from a few months before his trip. When Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, friends of

Mr. Farraday, visit Darlington Hall, Mrs. Wakefield inquires about Lord Darlington, to which Stevens replies that he was never in Lord Darlington's employ (123). Mrs. Wakefield does not question his statement, though she does tell Mr. Farraday what Stevens has said. Farraday then confronts Stevens, claiming his butler's statement caused him to "look pretty much a fool" in front of his guests when he tried to assure them that Stevens had worked for Lord Darlington (124). Stevens claims that "the ways of this country" do not permit him to discuss his former employer, though he admits to his narratee that this explanation, "though, of course, not entirely devoid of truth—was woefully inadequate" (125). Having denied his service of Lord Darlington and been "caught in this lie, Stevens lies again, rationalizing his betrayal" (Shaffer 69). Stevens proposes uncertainly to his narratee that he may have lied "as the simplest means of avoiding any unpleasantness" (*Remains* 126), not out of any guilt connected to his former employer. The narrator attempts to dispel any thoughts his narratee may have had toward the idea that he was ashamed of his service to Lord Darlington, though later events reveal that he is ashamed of serving his lordship, and that shame is the reason for his denial.

Later in his narration of his trip, Stevens reveals one of the specific reasons for his shame. He pauses to "clear up this matter of a supposed bar against Jewish persons on the staff at Darlington Hall" (145), part of his attempt to justify the actions of Lord Darlington. However, this particular story places himself and his employer in a negative light, certainly not Stevens's intention. He explains that the incident that sparked these rumors came during "that brief, entirely insignificant few weeks in the early thirties" when Lord Darlington spent time with a woman known for anti-Semitic ideas (145).

When his lordship tells Stevens, “We cannot have Jews on the staff here at Darlington Hall,” Stevens does not reveal any emotional response to his employer (146-7). This decision specifically affects two Jewish housemaids, whom Lord Darlington explains must be fired. Stevens asserts that his narratee “will appreciate I was not unperturbed at the prospect of telling Miss Kenton I was about to dismiss two of her maids” (147). While his “every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal,” Stevens does not consider any course of action other than following his employer’s directions (148). However, Stevens admits that he expresses his thoughts to his narratee within the context of a later decade, when “the Jewish issue” has become a particularly sensitive topic (148). Therefore, the narratee cannot be certain that Stevens’s regrets were felt as vividly at the time of the incident as they are now that society’s concerns have changed. Miss Kenton, however, states her convictions at the time of the incident without hesitation: “Does it not occur to you, Mr Stevens, that to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would be simply—*wrong?*” (149 emphasis original). She threatens to resign if the maids lose their positions, though she does not go through with her plan. A year later, Lord Darlington admits, “It was wrong what happened and one would like to recompense them somehow,” though he manages to avoid actually stating that he committed the wrong himself (151). When Stevens goes to Miss Kenton to tell her about his lordship’s changed mind, she states that it was “simple cowardice” that kept her from resigning a year earlier (152). Though she does not state as much, it is clear that such cowardice may be why Stevens did as Lord Darlington asked regardless of the consequences to others. Stevens tells her what Lord Darlington said and calls it “a great comfort” to hear him say so,

much to Miss Kenton's surprise, as she had thought Stevens agreed with the choice to terminate the two maids. Stevens assures her that the situation caused him "great concern, great concern indeed," though he did not reveal these sentiments to her or to Lord Darlington at the time (153). This incident, though intended by the narrator to "clear up" a mark on Lord Darlington's character, actually reveals more than Stevens desires. He shows no resistance to the firing of the two maids, despite his personal convictions, believing that, in order to attain his goal of "greatness" in his work, his only option is unquestioning obedience to Lord Darlington (Terestchenko). While he does not state that what happened was "wrong," as both Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton do, he acknowledges his concern over the issue and his "instinct" against the action. However, he represses such beliefs of his own in favor of his employer's, as both his duty and his loyalty demand, giving "the impression that service to Darlington is his only and most important aim" (Wong 64). While Miss Kenton at least claims she will sacrifice loyalty and employment for her conviction, such a possibility does not occur to Stevens. Though he regrets what happened, he assumes his narratee, unlike Miss Kenton, takes it as a matter of course that he could not disobey Lord Darlington, regardless of his lordship's decision.

Though Stevens has revealed his neglect of his dying father on the grounds of his professionalism and his part in the firing of the two maids because of his loyalty to his employer, he continues to avoid the "nonsense" about his lordship that has led to numerous moments of redirection, evasion, and even denial in the novel, denoting that it is this point for which he feels the greatest shame. He has attempted to create a

sympathetic portrait of Lord Darlington “because he cannot divorce his unquestioned loyalty to his lordship without undermining his own devotion to serving him all these years” (Wong 62), but he can no longer avoid this aspect of his former employer’s life. Throughout his story, Stevens points to Lord Darlington’s love of justice and desire for peace, but the narrator avoids explaining exactly how his lordship hopes to bring these aspirations to fruition until the final pages of the novel. Certainly, at various times, Stevens references his lordship’s trips to Germany and his concern over what he witnessed there (*Remains* 71), and occasionally the narrator mentions Lord Darlington’s more general views, such as his thoughts on the importance of allowing strong leadership to act (198). However, Stevens manages to skirt around the particulars of what Lord Darlington attempts to do in light of these views. When Stevens finally reveals the specific actions his lordship hopes to take, he does so to illustrate his own dignity and close proximity to significant events, rather than the particulars of his lordship’s actions. A lack of reference to the narratee as well as very little explanation outside of the dialogue characterizes this piece of narrative, as though Stevens wishes to forget he has a narratee as he relates the point of which he is most ashamed. He recalls the occasion on which Miss Kenton informed him of her engagement, a significant event for the narrator himself, given his suppressed romantic interest in her. As he informs his narratee of how Miss Kenton explained her engagement and her intention to leave Darlington Hall, he also mentions the other events taking place in the house at the same time, specifically the arrival of Mr. Cardinal and the arrival a few hours later of the German Ambassador, the British Prime Minister, and the Foreign Secretary (213, 221). Between Mr. Cardinal’s

unexpected appearance at Darlington Hall and the entrance of the three diplomats, Miss Kenton informs Stevens that her “acquaintance,” a man she has mentioned to the butler before, has asked her to marry him (215). In his professional manner, Stevens does not tell his narratee what emotion he felt on hearing this news. Any emotional reaction is attributed to him by another character, in this case Miss Kenton, who points out that he creates “so much commotion in the kitchen...stamping back and forth like this outside [her] parlour” after she tells him that she will be visiting her fiancé (216). Stevens then turns to narrating Mr. Cardinal’s curiosity over his lordship’s eminent guests and their subsequent arrival (216-7), attempting almost comically to both avoid discussing emotion and avoid revealing Lord Darlington’s collaboration with the Nazis. Not long after, Miss Kenton returns and tells Stevens that she and her fiancé often joke about him, and once again, Stevens shows no emotional response. He relates the conversation without dialogue tags, removing even little descriptions that might have betrayed his tone or attitude (219). Minutes after this conversation, Mr. Cardinal asks Stevens about the men meeting across the hall, to which the butler only says he cannot discuss the meeting. Mr. Cardinal then explains that he knows exactly who is visiting Darlington Hall and why they have come: “his lordship is discussing the idea of His Majesty himself visiting Herr Hitler.... At this very moment, Stevens, his lordship is doing what he can to remove Foreign Office objections to this appalling idea” (225). Just as he shows no response to Miss Kenton’s statements, Stevens also withholds any reaction to Mr. Cardinal’s pronouncement. After leaving Mr. Cardinal, he comes across Miss Kenton again, who apologizes for her earlier comments, which Stevens claims he cannot remember. A

moment later, walking past Miss Kenton's door, he experiences "an ever-growing conviction mounting within me that just a few yards away, on the other side of that door, Miss Kenton was at that moment crying" (226). However, rather than speak to her, he ignores her outburst of unprofessional emotion and continues with his duties, following his pattern of telling what he does, not what he feels. Finally, in a rare mention of emotion as the chapter closes, Stevens admits to feeling "somewhat downcast," though he does not attribute this feeling to any cause, and he goes on to state, a moment later, "[A] deep sense of triumph started to well up within me" (227). He believes he has preserved his dignity and, while the most powerful men in Europe debate a few feet away, "come as close to the great hub of things as any butler could wish" (227). Stevens redirects his narratee's attention from Mr. Cardinal's accusations toward Lord Darlington by describing Miss Kenton's comments and actions and by returning to his commentary on "dignity" in his profession. However, his narratee now knows what Stevens has tried to avoid throughout the novel and can begin to apprise the narrator in light of this knowledge.

Stevens concludes that he recalls the evening when he "came as close to the great hub of things" with a sense of triumph (227-8), similar to the sense of triumph that masked his shame after his father's death (110). However, in the novel's final pages, his previous assertions break down, and his attempts to create a positive story of the past disintegrate into a final request for consolation (Wong 65). After meeting Miss Kenton in Weymouth, Stevens finds himself seated on a pier next to a man who "had been a butler of a nearby house" (*Remains* 241). As he converses with this fellow professional, Stevens

reveals what he believes to be the reason for his trivial errors in serving Mr. Farraday: “I’ve given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington” (243). He then goes on to tell the man on the pier and his narratee that he still believes Lord Darlington was not a “bad man” but only a man who made “his own mistakes,” something Stevens himself cannot claim (243). While he has asserted up until this point that he feels no shame in having served Lord Darlington, he now explains that he sees Lord Darlington’s poor choices as a betrayal of his trust in his employer: “All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can’t even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that?” (243). Even as he relates this moment of confession, Stevens refuses to narrate his emotional response to this realization. The only suggestion that he does in fact feel a great deal as he speaks lies in the other man offering him a handkerchief, presumably to wipe his tears (243). Having revealed Lord Darlington’s mistake in supporting Nazism, Stevens now reveals the mistake for which he feels the greatest regret—giving all his loyalty to Lord Darlington. However, this final confession, in which he reveals his shame far more than in his discussion of his father or the Jewish maids, does not offer the absolution he seeks. As his narratee is unable to respond, existing inside the narrator’s mind, only the old butler beside him replies, and like Matsuda at the end of *An Artist of the Floating World*, he does not offer forgiveness but redirection: “Don’t keep looking back all the time, you’re bound to get depressed” (243). Any hope Stevens had of receiving forgiveness through this man is dashed. Therefore, like Ono, in his final revelation of the act for which he feels guilty, Stevens cannot find the comfort he desires.

In *An Artist of the Floating World*, characters occasionally mention suicide as a way of apologizing for past wrongs, a path Ono refuses to consider. Similarly, in *The Remains of the Day*, there exists a far less extreme means by which Stevens could deal with his guilt: he could resign from Lord Darlington's staff. However, while he mentions this option in relation to other characters, the narrator never considers it for himself. Some characters, Miss Kenton included, leave service at Darlington Hall to marry, which Stevens claims he does not hold against them, though he feels a "major irritation" toward members of the staff "who have no genuine commitment to their profession and who are essentially going from post to post looking for romance" (51). Prior to leaving to marry, Miss Kenton threatened to resign when the two Jewish maids lose their positions, though she does not go through with her plan, for which she feels ashamed, as she later tells Stevens (153). The narrator himself, however, does not exhibit Miss Kenton's conviction, even if she does not actually do as she threatened. Stevens never contemplates leaving Lord Darlington, regardless of his lordship's decisions. Having seen, at least at one time, "all that I find noble and admirable" in Lord Darlington, Stevens has devoted himself completely to his service: "This is loyalty *intelligently* bestowed" (200-1). Stevens believes he can only have some effect on the world by serving a powerful man, though the people of a village he stops in during his trip assert that this is not the case, that any man can help change the course of the world. The villagers of Moscombe argue that democracy, as opposed to Hitler's Nazism in particular, means every citizen has a right and a duty to affect change (190). These villagers possess notions "more in tune with post-war egalitarian ideals" than those which Stevens holds to, revealing the gap between

the butler's values and those of post-war society (Sim 48). Yet Stevens cannot let go of the self-concept he has held to for so long. In order to give his life purpose, Stevens feels he must dedicate himself to his employer, refusing to abandon him regardless of the choices he makes.

Stevens has become a prisoner to the idea of dignity, to unflinching loyalty to his employer. His mindset is saturated by these ideals to the point that he never considers leaving Lord Darlington despite his claim to different views, particularly regarding his lordship's anti-Semitism. Certainly, as a serving man in a time when such positions in great houses are disappearing (Cooper 111), Stevens's options are limited. However, Miss Kenton, though she does not go through with her threat to leave, "may have limited autonomy, but she understands her complicity and is able to identify immorality and reject its corrosive attitudes" (112). Stevens, on the other hand, does not have such awareness of his situation, having fallen into an "emotional fascism" that leaves him devoid of choice (Shaffer 74). Lydia R. Cooper identifies his situation as part of an "autonomy-denying system" in which he can no longer make his own choices or his own mistakes (108). His need to invoke his narratee as he makes decisions points to his uncertainty about his choices and his need for either affirmation, in the case of his narratee, or another party to make these choices for him, in the case of Lord Darlington. As a result, Stevens's narrative brings up the issue of just how much responsibility he can avoid for his choices. He contends that he can only really contribute to the world through serving a great man, but Harry Smith, a villager in Moscombe, heartily disagrees: "no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free and you're born so

that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out” (*Remains* 186). Smith maintains that Stevens need not connect himself to great men to change the world; the democratic system guarantees him that chance. However, Stevens’s emotionally fascist mindset will not allow him such beliefs. Instead, he devotes himself to his work, preferring “obdurate blindness” to the weight of freedom of thought (Cooper 111). He clings to the ease of following his lordship’s commands even as “his memories suggest that he was not entirely powerless” (107). Cooper connects Stevens’s defense of dignity to Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann’s defense of his war crimes. Eichmann claimed he had done nothing wrong as he was only carrying out the orders of his system, much as Stevens was only following the dictates of his profession (108). Stevens’s attitude also bears similarities to the attitude of many British citizens before the war who, like Lord Darlington, preferred a policy of appeasement and peaceful coexistence with Germany to the possibility of war (Stedman 42). Stevens finds security and some sense of purpose in serving Lord Darlington and does not wish to sacrifice such personal peace even in the face of serious ideological differences from his employer. At the end of the novel, Stevens tells his narratee he will return to Mr. Farraday and commit himself to his best possible service (*Remains* 245). His confession to his narratee has not freed him from his enslaved mindset, and he goes back to the only life he can imagine—one of dignity in service.

Just as Ono reaches the end of *An Artist of the Floating World* without finding someone beyond his imagined narratee to listen to his confession and pardon his mistakes, Stevens comes to the end of the novel with no true resolution of his guilt. He

ends his narration by commenting on his intention to better serve Mr. Farraday, particularly in taking part in his employer's comic banter (245). However, as he has already stated on the pier, he has nothing left to offer his employer; he has given his whole self to Lord Darlington, only to discover that his lordship was not worthy of such loyalty. Perhaps an individual with similar experiences and values will one day read his narrative and forgive his choices, but Stevens cannot be certain of this happening. Therefore, he has offered his confession to an imagined narratee and received no absolution for his efforts. Like the aging artist in the previous novel, he remains at odds with society's values and cannot find a way to change his ethical position without sacrificing the beliefs in loyalty and professionalism that define him. Stevens concludes with the hope that "it is enough that the likes of you and I at least *try* to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy" despite his knowledge that his "small contribution" has resulted in nothing of the kind (244).

### CHAPTER THREE: *NEVER LET ME GO*

Themes of guilt, avoidance, and confession appear again in Ishiguro's most recent novel, *Never Let Me Go*, published in 2005. Kathy, a clone created for the purpose of donating her vital organs to non-clones in need of transplants, not only acquiesces to this system but also works in service of the system, helping the cloning program take advantage of others. She becomes a tool of this establishment, caring for and placating the clones who are exploited. Kathy feels guilty for her cooperation with the program as well as her choice not to rebel against the abuse to herself and others and wants to confess what she has done. However, she also wants to prove that she has done her job well, even if it has led to the deaths of her fellow clones. Her society has relegated her to the level of the "non-human," believing she is not a real person because she is a clone. Therefore, if Kathy is to confess, receive absolution, feel affirmed, and be seen as human, she must choose carefully to whom she will tell her narrative. To fulfill her needs as she relates her confession, Kathy narrates to an narratee she imagines as another clone like herself who will understand her place in the exploitative system, uphold her humanity, and forgive her lack of resistance.

While the two novels discussed previously deal with the fairly immediate results of the Second World War, *Never Let Me Go* examines an alternative version of the final decades of the twentieth century. Within the story world, post-war scientific advancement has been in the field of biotechnology, rather than nuclear physics. At the time of the

narrative, these advances have led to the creation of clones whose vital organs can be transplanted into non-clones. Each clone becomes a “donor” and goes through “donations,” the processes by which their organs are removed, piece by piece, until the clone can no longer survive. At this point, they “complete,” dying after barely reaching adulthood. However, before becoming a donor, each clone takes on the job of “carer,” supporting and assisting the clones who have already started their donations. At the time of her narration, Kathy has been a carer for eleven years and has cared for, among others, her close childhood friends Ruth and Tommy (*Never* 3-4). During that time, she has traveled across England caring for clones in their final weeks and months, comforting and motivating them as their bodies are taken apart to heal others. Kathy needs a narratee who understands this system and the role she plays in it. Her narratee must understand her life, created for and defined by the cloning program. However, she also desires to narrate to someone who will see her as human, worthy of attention and consideration. Her society prefers to act as though she and the cloning program do not exist, believing that “organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum” (262). Even when they can no longer hold onto this idea, people still refuse to see the program as abusive to other human beings. Uncomfortable with the reality of murdering the clones for their organs, the world outside the program has convinced itself that the clones are not human and thus can be used without compromising what they believe is “right.” While this society still believes murder is wrong, the dismantling of a sub-human object for the sake of healing humans has become not only permissible but necessary: “How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to

put away that cure, to go back to the dark days?" (263) Like the Japanese, seeing the consequences of Imperialism, and the Europeans, confronted with the atrocities wrought by fascism, the society of this alternative history has restructured its values. However, while Ono and Stevens stand in opposition to the new values of their respective societies, Kathy has known no other societal mindset. She is a product of and completely immersed in the cloning program, believing along with her society that she is merely doing what she is "*supposed* to be doing" (227 emphasis original). However, accepting her assigned role does not excuse her submission to and cooperation with the system. The very existence of the cloning program reveals the importance Kathy's society places on self-preservation: the clones are created due to people's "overwhelming concern...that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease" (263). The clones themselves, however, are the exception, the sacrifice necessary to the preservation of the whole. Her wrongdoing lies in her choice not to rebel or at least resist. As critic Lydia R. Cooper explains, "Kathy's acquiescence in the attitudes imposed on her by her society make her an enabler of the systematic murder of clones for their viable organs" (108). Cooper considers Kathy's situation in light of post-Holocaust ethical philosophy, which asserts that "the individual remains responsible for rejecting unethical social systems" (108-9). According to Cooper, though Kathy's attitude is in line with that of all the other clones, their general apathy toward their fate is inexcusable. At one point, recalling a class discussion, Kathy mentions prison camps from the Second World War. During the class, the teacher compares the fences around the clones' boarding school to those around a prison camp,

though Kathy does not recognize, at the time or later, the deeper connection (*Never* 78). Kathy and her fellow clones are trapped, both by literal fences and by the program that uses them. Because they have no agency over this system, their most significant actions are not large motions of rebellion against the system but small statements for resistance within the system (Cooper 109). However, Kathy does not even engage in any sort of small, personal resistance. By choosing to show no anger against the society that ignores and abuses her, as well as uses her to assuage malcontent among other clones, Kathy gives up her ethical responsibility. As a result, she is ashamed of her choices, but her society cannot accommodate her emotion, given that they refuse to accept her personhood. Therefore, in order to confess and justify herself, she must speak to a narratee who is like herself—a clone within the program. She understands that this society does not value her beyond her organs. Her idea of a clone narratee reveals this knowledge as well as her need for affirmation of her humanity—affirmation society would not give her even if it were to listen to her narrative.

Never named or fully described, the references to this narratee do not reveal an actual person as listener so much as they reveal Kathy and her needs, as seen in the narratees of *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*. As mentioned above, Kathy wishes to be seen as human. Only at the end of the novel does she reveal that society does not see her as a person with a soul, a realization that makes her all the more human, according to critic Shameem Black (801). Throughout her childhood, Kathy has viewed herself as human and is surprised to discover that society views her differently (*Never* 260). In order to give her narrative validity, she must speak to someone

who also sees her as human, narrowing her audience to another clone or one of the “guardians,” the teachers who care for the clones in institutions similar to boarding schools during their younger years. However, as the head guardian, Miss Emily, explains, even the guardians felt some amount of revulsion toward the clones: “We’re *all* afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day” (269). Though the guardians view the clones, which they refer to as “students,” as people worthy of humane treatment, they still see them as a separate class of persons. The guardians value and care for the clones, but they cannot fully sympathize with them. Kathy desires a sympathetic narratee and thus envisions a fellow clone. The narrator also feels a need to show she has done her job as carer well, much like Stevens needs to show he has acted with dignity, or Ono needs to show he has been influential. Therefore, to prove this point, Kathy envisions a narratee at some distance from the other characters and the events narrated (cf. Chatman 259-60). The narratee is close to the narrator, examining the narrative world from the narrator’s point of view and unfamiliar with the events and characters beyond what the narrator reveals. However, the narratee has only recently entered the narrator’s sphere. While the narratee understands the organization and Kathy’s general situation, he or she does not yet know much about Kathy’s past. By imagining a clone narratee who did not grow up with her, Kathy leaves herself the space to show her own actions in a positive light while also knowing her listener sympathizes with her situation and sees her as a human being.

While the larger society believes the exploitation of clones is simply a necessary part of a greater positive outcome, Kathy mentions several characters who argue for the

humane treatment of clones, if not their actual salvation from their fate. Her descriptions of these characters and their work on behalf of the clones points to a narratee who is not yet familiar with these figures, as these explanations are told purely for the narratee's benefit (cf. Chatman 257). The first such character described is Miss Lucy, one of the guardians. Miss Lucy supports the full disclosure to the clones of their fate, informing them of what they have "been told and not told," the truth that they do not fully understand (*Never* 81). Her speech to the children about their future as compulsory organ donors is the first time Kathy explains this fact to her narratee (81). As Miss Emily, the head guardian, later explains to the adult Kathy, "[Miss Lucy] thought you students had to be made more aware. More aware of what lay ahead of you, who you were, what you were for" (267). Though neither Miss Emily in her explanation nor Kathy in her narration actually state any end goal for revealing so much to the clones as children, Miss Lucy's motives may well have been exactly the sort of rebellion against the system that Kathy refuses to consider. She explains to the children their situation in response to two of the students discussing the possibility of becoming movie stars (80-1), suggesting that she hopes an understanding of their purpose will cause them to act out in favor of their dreams, not the fate established for them. However, if this resistance is indeed her intention, she does not gain her desired result as the children meet her statements with general apathy (82). Miss Emily believes a different approach is the best way to prepare the clones. She argues for the souls of the students, attempting to demonstrate "to the world that if students were reared in humane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any other ordinary human being" (261).

However, while Miss Emily believes in the humanity of the clones, she does not urge them to circumvent their fate. Madame, a mysterious figure who occasionally visited Hailsham, where Kathy grew up, is with Miss Emily when she explains their aspirations of protecting the clones from the knowledge of their fate, though not their actual deaths (268). Miss Emily tells Kathy and Tommy that Madame, whose real name is Marie-Claude, “has given *everything* for you” (269 emphasis original). In an attempt to prove to society that the clones possessed souls, Madame collected the children’s artwork, suggesting that art would assert their humanity. She does not succeed in convincing “others of [the] students’ right to humane consideration” (Black 794), but Miss Emily assures the students, “Marie-Claude is on your side and will always be on your side” (*Never* 269). Yet, though she has “worked and worked and worked” for the humane treatment of the clones (269), Madame stops short of ever encouraging them to resist their fate. Though they believe in the clones’ humanity, these characters never go so far as to say that murdering the clones is wrong. Their resistance to the exploitative system is just as “horrifyingly modest” as that of the clones themselves (Black 791). Kathy presents these characters to her narratee, and perhaps she does so to convince the narratee of everyone else’s guilt in order to relieve her own (cf. Prince 117). However, she may also wish her narratee to understand that no one, not even those who sought the clones’ humane treatment, saw a way to escape the system.

Like Ono and Stevens, Kathy mentions other characters who could function as her narratee, though none of these characters possess all the characteristics she desires in a narratee. Kathy speaks to numerous characters in the course of the novel, but she also

narrates the entire narrative to a narratee who is not actually a character, which is not the case for the other characters with whom she converses. The first such character to appear is a patient, a donor she cares for well before the time of narration. This donor, who grew up “some place in Dorset,” asks Kathy to tell him about Hailsham and her experience there during his final days. As Kathy soon realizes, “What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham, just like it has been his own childhood” (5). While this donor, as a clone himself, provides a narratee for Kathy in this particular situation, he does not fit the concept of the narratee of the entire novel. He enters her life in her third year as a carer, long before she feels the urgency to confess that comes at the end of her career (Cooper 110). His request—that she talk about Hailsham—limits what she can reveal. She cannot tell him about the Cottages where she lives after Hailsham or her time as a carer, and she feels a great need to confess her mistakes in this final part of her life. Thus, while she does tell the donor her story, he is not the narratee of the entire novel. Kathy later becomes carer for her closest childhood friend, Ruth. Ruth could also be Kathy’s narratee, being a clone herself and returning to Kathy’s life near the end. As she recalls her time as Ruth’s carer, Kathy explains that she and Ruth spent many evenings “talking about Hailsham, the Cottages, anything that drifted into our minds” (*Never* 235). Ruth also shares Kathy’s belief that the clones are doing something “right” by becoming donors and going along with the organization (227), though, unlike Kathy, Ruth allows herself to fantasize about life outside the program. However, Ruth dies before the time of Kathy’s narration, just after her second donation. She also does not provide the distance from narrated events that Kathy requires. Because Ruth witnessed

much of Kathy's life, she has already formed an opinion of Kathy and whether or not she has been a good carer. Similarly, Tommy, Kathy's childhood friend and later her lover, is too close to the events Kathy narrates to be her narratee. Kathy has been his carer as well, and he has also already formed his opinions. Like Ruth, Tommy dies before the time of Kathy's narration. Unlike Ruth, Tommy resents the system that confines him, and he expresses this resentment through emotional outbursts. When he and Kathy learn that their love is not enough to defer their donations, Kathy "quietly accepts the news and does not seek any form of reprisal against the system" (Whitehead 73). Tommy, however, runs into a field and thrashes about, screaming (*Never* 274). He has not simply accepted his role as Kathy has. Were Kathy to attempt to convince Tommy that she did the best she could in her situation, she cannot be sure he would understand or agree. Therefore, while Tommy and Ruth could sympathize with Kathy, and though she does spend much of the novel reminiscing with both of these characters, neither is the narratee to whom she gives her confession, the audience for the entire novel. This mysterious narratee remains a shadowy figure, addressed but never specifically described, who provides the characteristics Kathy needs in a listener.

Much like Ono and Stevens, Kathy establishes the presence of a narratee early in her narration. Certainly, her explanations assume the presence of an "explainee" (cf. Chatman 257), but numerous clues about this narratee appear in her account of her life. Her narratee falls somewhere between a fully realized character and a merely implied entity. Kathy provides little detail about the narratee but does occasionally address her story to "you." Unlike Ono or Stevens, she introduces herself to her narratee

immediately: “My name is Kathy H. I’m thirty-one years old, and I’ve been a carer now for over eleven years” (*Never* 3). Her introduction shows she does not know her narratee yet, and her narratee does not know her name or anything about her time as a carer.

Kathy assumes that her narratee is a person who is somehow part of the cloning program (Whitehead 22). From her opening sentence, she uses terms unfamiliar to those outside of the program, establishing the code with which she speaks to her narratee (cf. Prince 119).

In the above quote, she refers to herself as a “carer,” a word with connotations of assistance and protection but not commonly used in the world outside the novel. She then goes on to explain, “That sounds long enough, I know, but actually they want me to go on for another eight months, until the end of this year” (*Never* 3). The references to “they” is left unexplained, both reflective of Kathy’s casual tone as well as her assumption that her narratee already knows who “they” are. A few sentences later, she begins using the word “donor” without explaining who is donating or what they are donating. She utilizes a vocabulary particular to the cloning program without giving definitions or explanations, indicating she is speaking to another person in the program who will know what these terms mean. A few sentences later, she addresses her narratee: “If you’re one of them, I can understand how you might get resentful” (4). When she says “one of them,” she is referring to “carers, working now, who are just as good [as Kathy] and don’t get half the credit” (4). Thus, when she proposes that her narratee might be “one of them,” she assumes her narratee is a clone like herself as well as a carer. After making this statement about possible resentment, Kathy goes on to explain the way certain other carers talk about her, suggesting that her narratee might have some of the same ideas: “Kathy H.,

they say, she gets to pick and choose, and she always chooses her own kind; people from Hailsham, or one of the other privileged estates” (4). This paraphrase of criticism from other carers offers the first mention of Hailsham as well as “privileged estates” as Kathy continues to speak in the terms of the program without providing definitions. She acknowledges that “you,” her narratee, have probably heard “plenty more” discussions of her preference for clones from “privileged estates,” acquiescing that there might be some basis for such statements (4). This possible resentment as well as the solitude necessitated by being a carer point to the narratee as an imagined fellow carer and probably not an actual person (207); rarely around other carers and experiencing resentment from them, Kathy turns inward to find her narratee. She reminds her narratee that “Carers aren’t machines,” a particularly interesting statement given the assumption on the part of society that they are not human (4). Kathy then uses “you” as a substitute for a first person pronoun: “You try and do your best for every donor, but in the end, it wears you down. You don’t have unlimited patience and energy. So when you get a chance to choose, of course, you choose your own kind” (4). This usage of the second person pronoun is a shift from addressing the narratee. However, though Kathy is describing her own mindset when she says, “You try and do your best,” she is also speaking of her narratee, pointing to their similar situations. This gesture connects her to her narratee and reminds her narratee that they are alike. By speaking to a clone, Kathy hopes to find a listener who will credit her humanity, understand her motives, and validate her choices.

Kathy, like Ono and Stevens, feels she must prove she has done well, especially as a carer, and as a result, she often addresses or invokes her narratee when talking about

her career as a carer. However, the silence of the narratee leaves the question open as to whether or not she has argued successfully. While Ono tries to show he has been influential and Stevens attempts to assert that he has acted with dignity, Kathy hopes to prove that she has been a good carer. Even though, as a carer, she is helping the organization that exploits the clones, she wants to convince her narratee that she did the best she could in her situation, that being a “good carer” justifies her lack of resistance to the system. She begins discussing her success as a carer just after introducing herself, explaining that the organizers of the program want her to continue working as a carer, despite the eleven years she has worked already. While she concedes that this request is not necessarily related to her performance as a carer, she states, “I do know for a fact they’ve been pleased with my work, and by and large, I have too” (3). Kathy admits that she may be “boasting” but explains, “it means a lot to me, being able to do my work well” (3). Later, after describing her time at Hailsham and the Cottages, Kathy tells her narratee about her work as a carer: “For the most part being a carer’s suited me fine. You could even say it’s brought the best out of me” (207). Her phrasing is ironic, as she has become part of the team that takes vital organs—“the best”—out of the clones. Her statement also asserts that she is at her best when she is caring, that no other position or role would suit her as well. Kathy wants her narratee to see her at her best and understand that, by being a carer, she is doing the greatest good of which she is capable. She then compares herself to Laura, a fellow carer who has never learned to cope with the demoralizing effects of the job (207). Kathy goes on to describe these effects, particularly the solitude, with “no one to talk to about your worries, no one to have a laugh with”

(207). She assures her narratee that she has learned to deal with the solitude, though the fact that she is telling her story to an imagined individual points to her need for contact with others. Later, having become Tommy's carer, she explains to him that by being a good carer, she "makes a big difference to what a donor's life's actually like" (282). Tommy, however, points out a tragic fact that Kathy refuses to accept: "The donors will all donate, just the same, and then they'll complete" regardless of whether or not they have a good carer (282). Kathy "offers up [her] memories as evidence of the... 'successes'" of her life (Cooper 107). She hopes her success will be enough to show she acted correctly, even if she let herself be confined by the program. However, as Tommy reminds her, the system will go on whether or not she does her job well. Yet she still insists that she was a "good carer" and that being a good carer is important (282). As she comes to the end of her career as a carer, Kathy explains, "though I'll miss being a carer, it feels just about right to be finishing at last come the end of the year" (4). She echoes Ruth's comment that it felt "right" to become a donor (227), to follow the path intended for them. She hopes that her narratee will agree that she was "right" to accept her role, though the possibility of not becoming a donor, of rebelling against what is "right" according to society, lurks just beneath the surface of her narration. And because her narratee never answers, at least not within the text of the novel, Kathy can never be sure that she has fully convinced this individual of her success as a carer.

Kathy carefully times when she reveals to her narratee her knowledge of what she is and what will eventually happen to her. The narratee is aware that Kathy is a clone; Kathy, however, does not want to admit when she herself gained this knowledge. She

wishes to avoid acknowledging that she knew at an early age, as receiving such knowledge gives her the choice to resist. The earlier she knows, the more time she has wasted acquiescing to the system. However, she cannot fully avoid mentioning what she and the other clones knew about themselves at various stages of childhood. Early in her narrative, she describes one of Madame's visits to Hailsham to collect the students' art when the students decided to "swarm up" around her to test Ruth's theory that she is afraid of the clones (*Never* 34). As they do so, Kathy notes that Madame comes "to a stiff halt" and seems "to be suppressing" a shudder (35). Kathy explains to her narratee that they "were just at the age when we knew a few things about ourselves—about who we were, how we were different from the guardians, from the people outside—but hadn't yet understood what any of it meant" (36). Kathy hopes that, while her narratee will know "what it meant," he or she will not yet realize the responsibility this knowledge places on Kathy or the guilt she now experiences for not taking that responsibility. Later, Kathy recalls one of the guardians explaining to the students that, while it is unhealthy for anyone to smoke, "for you, all of you, it's much, much worse to smoke that it ever was for me" (68). She reminds the students, as Kathy reminds the narratee, that they are "special," that staying healthy is particularly important for them. Kathy points out that none of the students question the statement that they are "special" because they "knew just enough to make us wary of the whole territory" (69). Kathy attributes their avoidance of this topic to embarrassment, much as Stevens claims that he lies about working for Lord Darlington to avoid "unpleasantness" (*Remains* 126). However, this avoidance reveals the preference among those at Hailsham to leave unsaid the truth about the

students. With similar hesitance, Kathy warily chooses what to relate to her narratee, moving carefully around the uncomfortable subject to ward off the moment of revelation.

As she works to avoid discussing her true situation, Kathy uses methods similar to those of Ono and Stevens to keep away from the issue. She carefully tailors the story her narratee receives, enclosing his or her “attention within an account of the past that appears to be a rejection of the reality of the present” (Elliott 95). Most often, she cloaks her narration in the language of the program. By utilizing seemingly harmless words, she creates a more comfortable “reality” for herself and her narratee. The terms—“carer,” “donor,” “complete”—mask the realities of the program. Kathy has become so acclimated to these words and their meanings in her context that she uses them without ever betraying the haunting realities behind them. Because her narratee is part of the program and thus familiar with this “code,” Kathy never explains most of the terms she uses (cf. Prince 120), keeping herself and her narratee well away from their horrific definitions. Along with describing herself as a carer and those she cares for as donors, Kathy mentions guardians, estates, and donations in the first few pages of her narrative. By discussing her life as a carer with donors, rather than as a person caring for people whose vital organs are methodically removed in preparation for the day when her own vital organs will be methodically removed, Kathy staves off the unpleasantness of surgeries and death. While these terms do not hide the eventualities of the program from a fellow clone, they do soften the discussion. Kathy uses this vocabulary much like Stevens uses his professionalism or Ono uses his forgetfulness—to skirt around uncomfortable issues. Even when one of the guardians, Miss Lucy, explains to the

children that they will donate their vital organs, she does not actually use the word “murder” or even “dead.” She states that the children will not grow beyond adulthood or reach middle age, but she does not actually speak of death, much as Ono does not use the word “Imperialism” when discussing his past mistakes and Stevens does not himself call Lord Darlington a “fascist.” Similarly, Kathy calls the clones “students,” the people overseeing them and keeping them within the confines of the program “guardians,” and those in the midst of having their vital organs removed “donors.” Benign terms mask the horrific reality, allowing Kathy to ignore those realities as she discusses her past with her narratee. Kathy utilizes the language of the program to construct a softer world within the terrifying real world and to define herself as part of this softer world, not a pawn in harsh reality. She wishes to include her narratee in this world created through language, staving off the future for both of them.

Also like Stevens and Ono, Kathy forgets bits of her narrative and has trouble remembering specifics, “never quite sure of the accuracy of her own narration” (Currie 94). By speaking to a narratee who has no knowledge of her past and who can only draw conclusions from what she reveals, Kathy gives herself the opportunity to forget what she does not wish to remember. She has particular difficulty recalling details of events or situations that were especially painful. After describing an instance in which Tommy was bullied in the first chapter, Kathy admits, “This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong” (*Never* 13). This forgetfulness points to her affection for Tommy, but it also recalls her guilt. While other students were taking advantage of Tommy’s naïveté to bully him, Kathy and several other students watched without intervening: “And

although we hadn't had anything to do with this latest plan to rile Tommy, we *had* taken our ringside seats, and we were starting to feel guilty" (10 emphasis original). Kathy's guilt over this situation with Tommy mirrors her guilt over not intervening as her fellow clones are murdered. Later in the narration, Kathy mentions an imaginary game she played with Ruth and a few other students, calling themselves the "secret guard" and pretending, ironically, to guard a particular guardian against an imagined kidnapping (49). However, as the narrator attempts to describe it for her narratee, she cannot recall how long the game lasted (49). Her trouble recalling the length of time reflects the resulting difficulties between Kathy and Ruth during the course of the game, difficulties that grew and changed as they grew older, eventually leading to their loss of contact as adults. Perhaps most tellingly, when Kathy considers how much she and the other students were aware of their future, she finds it "hard now to remember just what we knew back then" (69). Though she acknowledges that the students did know in some sense what would happen to them in adulthood, she expresses uncertainty about what exactly the students understood at various times in childhood. If she and the other students actually understood that they would one day be murdered for their vital organs, Kathy must admit that she did nothing to fight this eventuality, that she is guilty of standing by and allowing the atrocities to happen.

Finally, after avoiding the issue through most of her description of her time at Hailsham, Kathy tells her narratee just what she has carefully hidden. She does not explain directly, but instead narrates a conversation in which Miss Lucy informs the students what will happen to them. She explains that they have "been told and not told,"

much as Kathy has told and not told her narratee about her knowledge and her shame (Black 792). Miss Lucy then goes on to explicate what the students have always known without ever fully understanding: “You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do” (*Never* 81). Kathy explains that, while this impacted the students in some way, they felt that they had always known these things in some sense (82). Similarly, Kathy’s narratee, being a clone, already knows that Kathy herself is a clone, that she will one day donate her organs for non-clones, and that she will die as a result. Yet Kathy feels the need first to avoid this fact, then to finally and carefully reveal it. Up until this point, the students have not been fully aware of the implications of their future as donors. When Miss Lucy explains, she places on them the responsibility of this knowledge. She reveals the abuses that will be enacted on them by the system, and in doing so, she offers them the opportunity to resist their fate. However, as is revealed in the rest of the narrative, none of them attempt to resist. The students follow their prescribed futures, moving on from Hailsham, becoming carers, then donors. Leona Toker, among many other critics, points to this as “one of the most puzzling aspects of the novel,” explaining that “Hailsham graduates do not rebel or even try to flee” (“Reader” 166). Kathy informs her narratee of Miss Lucy’s speech as part of her confession. Her secret is not that she is a clone, but that she knew her future and did nothing to avoid it. Her knowledge and her refusal to act in light of this knowledge make her guilty, and it is this she desires to confess to her narratee.

However, her knowledge of her future donations is not the only thing that causes Kathy guilt. Just as she feels guilty for not intervening while Tommy was bullied, Kathy feels guilty for watching as her fellow clones fall to the exploitative system and for being part of that exploitative system as a carer. This part of her confession is complicated by the fact that her narratee may also be a carer and thus also part of the organization of oppression. Carers try to keep their donors from becoming “agitated,” from thinking about the full reality of their situation (3). Certainly, caring for one another provides what little companionship and warmth they are allowed, given their place at the margins of society. As Lydia R. Cooper argues, reprieve from the “autonomy-denying system” lies in “fraternity,” in compassionate bonds with others (109). However, by being a carer, even a good carer, Kathy becomes like the guardians at Hailsham who show kindness but never seek to interfere or obstruct the system. The guardians, through sheltering the children from the realities of their future, seek to protect them from those realities. As Miss Emily explains, “we gave you your childhoods” (*Never* 268). Yet, the guardians refuse the children the one thing they most needed—to be saved from the system. By protecting them from reality, the guardians, with the exception of Miss Lucy, deny the students the knowledge that might cause them to act against the system and possibly save themselves from methodical murder. Similarly, Kathy comforts her donors, helping them stay calm and accept what the system is doing to them, assuaging the indignation that could lead to action. Critic Liani Lochner points out the “question [that is] never explicitly addressed: why do they never try to escape?” (228) From the time they go to the Cottages, the students have the opportunity: “We all knew no would stop us if we

wandered off” (*Never* 118). Yet none of them attempt to do so, in part because of the care offered to them by the carers. Kathy’s guilt for assisting in the murder of her fellow clones shows most vividly in the final pages of her narration, just after Tommy’s death: “That was the only time...that I started to imagine just a little fantasy” (287). Standing in an area of open country, Kathy imagines Tommy coming across a field but does not let her imagination take her beyond this image. She does not consider a future with Tommy; instead, she simply fantasizes that he is alive, that he was not murdered, that she did not play a role in his death. Yet, after imagining this, she drives “off to wherever it was I was supposed to be” (288), returning to her role as a carer and her place in the program. By providing kindness and support, the carers soothe any sense of injustice, any aspirations of escape from the system, becoming part of the constraint. Kathy is most ashamed of taking part in this organization, of being a carer and thus assisting in the murder of her fellow clones.

The further acquiescence to the system through becoming carers inhabits much of Kathy’s narration, though she is careful not to overtly accept blame, as doing so would also place blame on her narratee. She describes becoming a carer as part of “the natural course to follow” from the Cottages, a farm-like compound where Kathy, Ruth, Tommy, and other students from various schools live during their teen years (197). Her choice of the word “natural” stands in stark contrast to the fact the students are not natural beings, having been genetically engineered; strictly speaking, nothing is natural for them. The older clones at the Cottages, whom the students call “veterans,” show a particular aversion to discussing becoming carers. Kathy notes an “odd attitude to students who’d

recently left” (132). The veterans do not mention the clones that have left to become carers, nor do they discuss their “courses,” their carer training. The subject of carers becomes taboo among the clones living at the Cottages, perhaps due to the underlying knowledge that being a carer means being part of the system. When Kathy discusses the life of a carer, she speaks of the demoralizing effect of watching donors complete, though she does not attribute this effect to her involvement in these deaths (207). When she describes other carers and their reactions to donors’ deaths, she describes herself: “No wonder they end up feeling frustrated and blaming themselves” (208). As part of the exploitative system, Kathy knows she is enabling murder, but she refuses to examine her own frustrations and shame. She cannot even admit these feelings to Tommy and Ruth when she becomes their carer, and she continues to use euphemisms for clones, surgeries, and deaths. After Ruth gives Tommy and Kathy Madame’s address and asks them to go to her and request a deferral, she and Kathy discuss the possibility. However, they use a code term: “becoming Tommy’s carer” (235). This idea comes to embody not only actually becoming Tommy’s carer but also seeking a deferral. However, even as Kathy attempts to obtain more time before Tommy’s death, she becomes the person who comforts him as he nears his demise, joining the organization that is using his body and discarding him. Just before his fourth and final donation, Tommy decides he should have a carer other than Kathy (281), perhaps because he does not want the woman he loves to be part of the system that demands his death. When she recalls his death, she articulates it as “Tommy completing,” attributing the action to Tommy despite his lack of agency over it (287). Even as she mourns him, she does not acknowledge her role in the system that

murdered him. However, her narratee, as part of the cloning program, knows the truth of what she describes, despite her attempts to hide.

While most of the clones behave as Kathy does, a few do reveal at least slight resistance. Tommy, unlike Kathy, does not placidly accept his position in the exploitative system. Kathy presents Tommy to her narratee as an anomaly among the students. By portraying him this way to an outsider, Kathy is able to assert that his behavior was uncommon and unacceptable at Hailsham. As a child, Tommy was known for throwing tantrums, for letting his emotions overwhelm his reason. As the clones grow older, this issue becomes even more significant, not only due to the emotional restraint expected in an adult, but also because the students are generally expected to suppress their emotions (Cooper 108), much as Stevens suppresses his emotion in favor of his duty. As children, Kathy and Ruth have grown accustomed to “plenty of Tommy’s tantrums” (*Never* 9). When Kathy first mentions Tommy, she describes an incident in which Tommy, not chosen for a team during a game, gets angry. Though the girls in the sports pavilion try to ignore him, the noise of his outburst leads them to observe from the window. Tommy’s unavoidable tantrums stand in stark contrast to society’s attempt to avoid his existence and the role he plays in that society. However, his anger lacks direction, resulting in his “flinging his limbs about, at the sky, at the wind, at the nearest fence post” (10). As would be expected in a child, Tommy has trouble identifying what is causing his anger. He lashes out in various directions because he cannot discern what exactly causes his emotion. Most of the students at Hailsham consider Tommy to be oblivious to social situations. Just after Tommy throws his tantrum, Kathy approaches him, but he is so

absorbed in his own emotion, he knocks her hand aside and hits her. Only after hitting Kathy does Tommy “become aware of me [Kathy], of the others, of himself, of the fact that he was there in that field, behaving the way he had been” and try to take control of his emotions (11). Ironically, Tommy seems to be the most perceptive of the children on a much deeper level. Near the end of the novel, Tommy and Kathy go to Madame’s house to ask if they can defer Tommy’s donations so that he and Kathy can have more time together before his death. However, as Miss Emily explains, this is not possible. On their return to the clinic, Tommy asks Kathy to stop the car. He gets out, and when Kathy follows him, she sees “Tommy’s figure, raging, shouting, flinging his fists and kicking out” (274), throwing a tantrum much like he did as a child. However, he now has a specific reason for his anger: his lack of agency over his own life. Kathy suggests, after they have returned to the car, that perhaps Tommy’s anger in childhood was connected to his future as a disposable organ donor: “I was thinking maybe the reason you used to get like that was because at some level you always *knew*” (275). This statement betrays Kathy’s underlying feeling that anger is the natural response to their situation and that she has acted incorrectly by not recognizing and responding to this injustice. Though Tommy first denies the validity of the claim, he eventually acknowledges that he may have always known “somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn’t” (275). This knowledge allows him to “at least voices his disapproval” (Cooper 113), if nothing more. Unlike Ruth, who speaks of donations as merely what she and the other clones are “*supposed* to be doing” (227) or Kathy, who spends eleven years as a carer, assisting in the exploitative system, Tommy at least expresses his anger at the program.

While the vast majority of the clones, including Kathy, do not show anger at the system, many of them imagine lives beyond it, particularly during their teenage years. Some of the children at Hailsham imagine different futures as members of various vocations, as something other than carers and donors. Kathy spends much of her narration describing the idea of “dream futures” and their significance to the students (142), perhaps assuming her narratee did not consider such fantasies. Kathy never describes a dream future for herself, suggesting that she never considered a life other than that of a career, and she may attribute this mindset to her narratee as well. If she assumes her narratee does not contemplate a dream future, Kathy can assure herself that these fantasies are not the norm, that there are other clones who are content to think only of being carers and donors. Ruth engages with particular zeal in these fantasies, imagining she could work in an office of “dynamic, go-ahead types” (144). Kathy acknowledges the limits of such discussions, but explains, “it was possible to forget for whole stretches of time who we really were” (142), to forget their prescribed futures and imagine different options. Kathy notes Ruth’s affinity for this sort of fantasy, which comes to a head when two of the veterans take Ruth, Kathy, and Tommy to Norfolk. On their trip, they learn about the rumors among the veterans regarding Hailsham students. One of the veterans, Chrissie, has heard about “this girl up in Wales” who was raised at Hailsham and now works in a clothing store. Ruth adds to the rumor, claiming a boy from Hailsham has taken a job as a park keeper (152). Though the three Hailsham students have never actually heard of other clones getting jobs, the idea lodges in Ruth’s imagination particularly. The three of them revisit the topic when Kathy has become Ruth’s carer.

Kathy and Tommy tell Ruth that she could have tried to be the sort of working woman that she imagined. However, Ruth reminds them that there was no avenue by which she could investigate such an idea (230). Kathy never imagines this sort of life for herself. She never pictures herself in a vocation or with any other future beyond the one she has always expected. While other students at least imagine—though never act on—the idea of a future outside the system, Kathy does not imagine herself as anything but a carer and a donor.

Along with the rumors of clones getting jobs, the veterans reveal another rumor about Hailsham students—they can seek deferrals. This topic first arises on the trip to Norfolk, and Kathy devotes a great deal of her narration to discussing the idea of deferrals and the trip. Rodney and Chrissie explain that they have heard of Hailsham students delaying their donations. If a boy and girl from Hailsham could “prove they were properly in love,” their donations could “be put back by three, even four years” (153). Though the actual Hailsham students have only heard snatches of such rumors sense coming to the Cottages, Ruth assures Rodney and Chrissie that Hailsham students do in fact have this privilege (154). The topic of deferrals arises again much later, in the same conversation in which Kathy and Tommy propose that Ruth should have attempted to follow her dream of working in an office. Ruth explains that she has always known that Tommy and Kathy cared for each other and admits that she kept them apart. She asks them to “put it right”—to go to Madame and ask for a deferral of their donations (232-3). Kathy at first refuses to consider the idea. When she finally decides to inquire about deferrals, she describes in detail the conversation in which she and Tommy meet Madame

and Miss Emily again and learn that such rumors often arise but have no fact behind them. Kathy quietly absorbs this realization, while Tommy gives in to his emotion. Yet, even after this discovery, neither suggests running away. As several critics point out, Kathy is entirely silent on this possibility. If she has ever thought of it, she has never seriously considered it as an option. In fact, no clone in the novel ever suggests running away to escape the grips of the oppressive system. Kathy does not address this point, assuming her narratee has never considered this idea either. If he or she has thought of running away, Kathy's narrative makes this idea appear so ludicrous as to be excluded from her story entirely. Even Tommy, with all his emotional energy, does not suggest they run away. Kathy has become such a part of the exploitative system that running away does not even enter her mind, much less her narration.

As Kathy tells her story to her narratee, she grazes social and historical questions she does not wish to deal with herself, though these issues may prove inescapable for a perceptive audience. Like Ono and Stevens, her situation stems from the Second World War, though in an alternative history. While the characters in this novel reference the war far less than those in the two novels previously discussed, the topic does arise. As mentioned above, in a class discussion at Hailsham, the conversation drifts to the topic of prison camps used in World War Two. The students quickly turn the discussion into a joke, "with everyone shouting and mimicking touching electric fences" (78). Kathy, however, does not join in with the joke but instead watches Miss Lucy, the guardian teaching the class: "I went on watching Miss Lucy through all this and I could see, just for a second, a ghostly expression come over her face" (78). Miss Lucy then makes a

comment about how fortunate it is that the fences at Hailsham are not electric fences, that such a situation could result in “terrible accidents” (78). Miss Lucy makes the connection that Kathy cannot make herself and therefore cannot articulate for her narratee: even though they are not electrified, the fences at Hailsham are like the fences of a prison camp. The students kept inside the fences will eventually be methodically killed. Miss Lucy also knows that the science that created the process of cloning and harvesting the clones’ organs appeared just after the Second World War (262), though it is unclear whether these advances were the direct result of science used during the war. Lydia R. Cooper, in her examination of the ethical philosophy of this novel, sees a stronger connection between World War Two prison camps and the cloning program. As Cooper explains, “The worst atrocities are accomplished by ordinary people who fail to speak out against social constructs and attitudes that create inhumane behavior” (108). Comparing the cloning program to the Holocaust, Cooper recognizes the necessity of resisting the oppressive system in whatever way possible. However, Kathy never acknowledges this responsibility in her narration, and none of the other clones mentioned in the novel ever discuss or engage in any sort of resistance beyond imagining “dream futures.” Tommy may be an exception, but even he is not aware of the cause of his anger during most of the novel and therefore never points to his own actions as a kind of resistance. The strength of society’s control over the clones is evident in their complete submission. Along with the clones’ lack of resistance, the novel criticizes the larger social mindset that would allow for the creation of a docile group of people for the specific purpose of harvesting their organs. Despite the absence of information from the outside world,

Kathy's narrative asks why neither the clones nor the external society show any outrage toward the program. Though Kathy's case appears most vividly, as she is the narrator and main character of the novel, her attitude appears to be typical of the clones. Her refusal to resist, even simply by expressing anger as Tommy does or imagine a fantasy future like Ruth, is complicated by the fact that she narrates to a clone narratee, an individual just as victimized and possibly just as acquiescing as herself. Kathy has narrated to such an individual because of her need to feel justified in her submission. As she cannot envision a different life for herself, she cannot envision one for her narratee, and thus assumes her narratee agrees that she acted in the only way she could, giving in to the system and becoming a part of it. However, as her narratee never speaks, she cannot be sure that she has made her case, nor can she be sure that another clone in her position would have given in as easily as she did.

Kathy has accepted her societal role. While she has not fully internalized the idea that she is sub-human, she has fully taken her part in the exploitative system, helping in the murder of her fellow clones and paving the way for her own death. While she has revealed to the narratee that she is part of this organization and feels guilty as a result, she receives no answer from her silent listener. She has addressed her confession to a fellow victim whom she believes will affirm her humanity and accept her justifications, but she cannot be sure of any response at all on the part of the narratee. Thus, she comes to the end of her career as a carer, hoping she has done her job well and somehow improved the lives of her donors. Yet, in caring, she has joined the program that will kill her not long after the end of her narration. Knowing what is coming, fully aware from the age of

fifteen, Kathy does nothing to change her fate or that of her friends. Instead, she watches Ruth, Tommy, and numerous other donors die, then prepares to give in to death herself. As she submits to the system of exploitation, Kathy holds to the hope that her narratee will forgive her for never trying to change her fate.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of each novel, the narrator decides to continue on as before, still on the margins of society and still holding to his or her values as displayed at the beginning of the novel. Though each narrator brushes against a moment of anagnorisis, not one actually chooses to change. Ono still clings to his significance in pre-war Japanese culture, never quite providing recompense for his choices even as he maintains that his decisions were significant and caused significant harm. His confession to the Saitos, his revelation for his narratee about his role in Kuroda's arrest, and Matsuda's assurances that he was only an ordinary man have not lead him to apologize, make amends, or admit his ordinariness. Stevens chooses to return to serving, though now for Mr. Farraday instead of Lord Darlington, continuing to believe that such a life is all he can hope to have, that he has no power to seek another. Miss Kenton's statement of love and his realization that he has not made his own mistakes come too late, or so he feels, to bring about any change in his life. Kathy continues on as a carer, moving toward her time as a donor, still refusing to resist the role for which she was created. Even her dashed hopes of a longer life with Tommy, her experience of Tommy's anger, and knowing she was part of the system that caused his death do not compel her to run away, imagine a different future, or even show indignation. Despite all that they have described to their narratees, these narrators end their stories much as they began.

Through the narrator's relationship with the narratee, these novels reveal the need for "human fraternity" (Cooper 110), for connection to a sympathetic individual, particularly in a world of inconstant values. Each narrator possesses a deep conviction of what is "right," be it helping the poor of Japan through Imperialism, serving a fascist employer with dignity, or refusing to resist the system that will eventually take one's life. At a point in time, these values were as accepted by society as by the narrators themselves, pointing to the strong role societal views play in forming the views of the individual. However, as society reorganizes itself around new values, refocusing its view of the past in light of the present, these narrators find their views, which once seemed "self-evidently correct," have been shown over time to be incorrect (Sim 38). The passage of time, however, has not changed the narrators' values but only those of their societies. The younger generation in Japan no longer sees Imperialism as a viable option. England has become starkly aware of the problems in blindly following leaders or members of the aristocracy. The people of an alternative 1990s England can no longer imagine a world in which they are not preserving their own lives through the exploitation of clones. Thus, these novels also illustrate the malleable nature of societal values. What was once "right" has become "wrong," and those who were once applauded for their behavior are now condemned. By seeking out particular types of narratees, the narrators manifest their determination to hold to their own values even as those values complicate their attempts to find sympathetic companions.

Each narrator exists in a society that has changed its values. In Ono and Stevens's cases, this change has put them at odds with their society. Kathy's views fall in line with

her society, but following the role her society has set before her requires she become part of the system that takes advantage of her. None of these narrators are without choice, but all of them choose to follow the path laid out before them rather than consider the frightening possibilities of change. Ono takes comfort in his belief that he was significant, while Stevens finds solace in his vocation, and Kathy feels safe in her role as carer and donor. All three have had the opportunity to change, but none of them takes that opportunity. By telling their stories to imagined narratees, these narrators have attempted to relieve their guilt. However, they have also freed themselves from any accountability. No one beyond their narratee has heard their confession, and no one else can pressure them to seek new paths for their lives. While they have not received the pardon or acceptance they had hoped for through the telling of their narratives, Ono, Stevens, and Kathy have fulfilled their need to confess their mistakes without requiring themselves to change. At the end of these novels, the narratees have performed the function of revealing more clearly the narrators themselves, but that clarity does not seem to have reached the narrators. Unable to see the possibilities for change that would free them of guilt, allow them to love, or allow them to live, the narrators of *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *Never Let Me Go* cannot break the bonds of their bad consciences. All three remain entrapped with no hope of freedom. By confessing their mistakes to imagined narratees, Ono, Stevens, and Kathy have refused the opportunity for affirmation, acceptance, and absolution which they so desperately crave.

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