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Kazuo Ishiguro published his first novel, *A Pale View of Hills*[1] (hereafter referred to as *PV*), in 1982. The story is based on the memory of Etsuko Ogata, a widow living in England. She describes one summer she spent with her friend, Sachiko, and Sachiko's daughter, Mariko, in Nagasaki shortly after experiencing the atom bombing. Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* (hereafter referred to as *AFW*), was published in 1986. This story is set in Japan, and the protagonist narrates his life between the years of 1948 and 1950. Ishiguro mixed memories from five years of life in Japan with the information he gained as he grew up in England to encapsulate and reproduce his imaginary "Japan" in these two novels.

In interviews, Ishiguro has discussed how he favors Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Monogatari* (hereafter referred to as *TM*) and *Sanma No Aji* (hereafter referred to as *SA*). He has also stated that Mikio Naruse is his favorite movie director. Ishiguro has noted that Japanese films from the 50's (including the works of Ozu and Naruse) called to mind memories of his old house in Nagasaki. He describes an impact the movies had on him; the images in the films blended together harmoniously with his own memories. This resulted in Ishiguro being able to create *his* Japan.[2] Ishiguro has never specifically named which Naruse film(s) he found striking, but several of Naruse's films cite *The Sound of the Mountain*[3] (hereafter referred to as *SM*) as an influence, a story originally written by Yasunari Kawabata.

Sonaka (2004) explored some similarities and differences between the stories *PV* and *SM*, suggesting that Ishiguro was able to create the story by referring to "Japanese movies and Kawabata's *The Sound of the Mountain*."[4] Additionally, Sonaka discusses in his book, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, the Kawabata stories that were specifically mentioned by Ishiguro in interviews. These titles include *Snow Country* and *Izuno Odoriko*, which are all Nobel Prize winning or nominated novels; however, Sonaka assures that *SM* must have contributed somehow when Ishiguro was outlining *PV*.[5] As Sonaka says, in comparison to Kawabata's other novels, *SM* is not widely known overseas. Few international scholars refer to *SM* when discussing the works of Ishiguro.

Sakaguchi also discusses some similarities between the two novels, noting that the descriptions of homes, houses, trains, and offices in Tokyo are almost identical to those that are seen in Ozu's movies. The affectionate father-in-law/daughter-in-law

relationship between Etsuko and Ogata and the stagnant husband/wife relationship of Etsuko and Jiro are similar to relationships between the same characters (father/daughter-in-law/wife/son) in *SM*.[6] Accordingly, Sakaguchi introduces *SM* as the "source book" for Ishiguro's first novel.[7]

I

It is possible that Ishiguro chose the names of his characters solely from Ozu and Naruse's movies and Kawabata's novels because they are some of the most common names in Japan. Sakaguchi notes that in *PV* Ishiguro borrows the name of the young wife, Etsuko, and the name of the father-in-law, Ogata, from *TM*.[8] Other characters such as Mariko, Kikuko, Noriko, Setsuko, Shuichi, Ichiro, and Chishu are all names of actors, actresses, and music producers that worked on *TM* and *SM*. Ozu uses similar names in his films such as Shukichi Hirayama, the protagonist in *TM*, and Shuhei Hirayama, the protagonist in *SA*. Only one word (Kanji character) is different between the two names. This small difference aside, the names of the sons in *TM* and *SA* are exactly the same (use the same Kanji characters) as Koichi Hirayama. This is a technique particularly characteristic of Ozu. Similarly, Ishiguro seems to have adopted and implemented the same names.

Sakaguchi assumes that Ishiguro had not read *SM* due to his use of the name "Suichi." He argues that translator Seidensticker used "Shuichi", a more common name in Japan. Conversely, "Suichi" is rare.[9] Sonaka, on the other hand, claims that Shingo's son in *SM* and the protagonist's friend's son's names in *PV* are both "Suichi" but are translated (in Kanji) as "Shuichi." Additionally, Suichi can be pronounced as either "Su-ichi" or "Suu-ichi". Despite these slight differences, it is important to note that Ishiguro uses Ogata's names with characters like the father, mother, son, and wife.[10]

Was it really Ishiguro's intention for "Suichi" to be read as "Su-ichi"? It seems more likely that Ishiguro would have wanted to pronounce it "Shuichi," the more common way. For example, Mrs. Fujiwara's son's name (in *PV*) is "Suichi," but it is transcribed as "Shuichi" in the Japanese translation. In *AFW*, however, the Japanese translation adopts "Su-ichi." These discrepancies may be a result of the *translator's* interpretation of the work rather than reflective of a decision made by Ishiguro. *PV* and *AFW* were translated by different individuals, which would account for some slight differences. In Ozu's films, Ozu used the same name many times. Ishiguro might have judged that using the same name (Suichi) in his first and second novels would not have been a problem. A translator, however, may have thought differently, and thus avoided repeated use of the same name. Su-ichi is a rare name, and it seems unlikely that

Ishiguro would make such an effort to choose a name so uncommon.

Ishiguro has never discussed *SM* in interviews; however, there are some similarities between *PV* and *SM*. If we assume that Ishiguro was lacking information to construct a novel based on Japan and instead had to rely on imagination and memories, it is easy to conclude that he would have used *SM* as a reference book.

While it may seem futile to dissect an issue like the pronunciation of the name "Suichi," further expansion on this point might help us to better understand Ishiguro's creative process.

In T. Leggett's novel *Shinshido and Bushido*, he writes about an experiment he conducted with British people. He asked a group of individuals to think of famous people from a given country (to be called out at random). Then, he noted of the response rates among participants and the circumstances surrounding the responses. The results regarding Japan were as follows:

> When it came time for Japan's turn, most of the participants faltered. Some older people suggested "General Tojo," but most individuals couldn't come up with a single name. The intellectuals knew Suzuki Daisetsu. Younger generations had an interest in Judo, so some knew Kano Jigoro.
>
> Some participants guessed and said, "Hokusai" or "Hiroshige," but the two names were often mixed together to produce the result "Hokushige" or "Hirosai." Many were familiar with Haiku translated by Arthur Waley; however, they couldn't recall the name of the author. ...when it comes to Japanese names, most were very difficult to remember.
>
> Japanese names seem to be troubling for the British. In Puccini's play *Madam Butterfly*, Japanese characters were given the names "Butterfly" and "Copper Pheasant." During the same time period, another writer created an opera where the names of the two main characters (Japanese) were "Tokyo" and "Osaka." It is obvious that the author opened a map and selected their names.[11]

This cases show how Japanese names present difficulties for British people. We can deduce from this experiment that Japanese names are difficult for British to remember. We can therefore also imagine that this same difficulty was experienced by Ishiguro when struggling to choose names for his characters. Thus, he eventually turned to Japanese novels and films as inspiration.

II

Yasunari Kawabata's *SM* was translated by Edward G. Seidensticker in 1971. In an interview, Ishiguro stated:

> I have read Natsume Soseki's *Wagahai Ha Neko De Aru*, Junichiro Tanizaki's *Sasame Yuki*, Yasunari Kawabata's *Yukiguni*, and Masuji Ibuse's *Kuroi Ame* through translations. I only read two of Yukio Mishima's novels, *Gogo No Eiko* and *Ai no Kawaki*.... I read *Yukiguni* as an English translation, but it was too faint and poetic for me. It was too difficult to comprehend, and was even boring. Rather, I enjoyed stories like *Izuno Odoriko*.[12]

Ishiguro describes Kawabata's *Yukiguni* as "too faint," "too poetic," "too difficult to comprehend," and "boring." However, if we take a closer look at this remark, "boring" is the only truly negative comment. "Too faint," "too poetic," and "too difficult to comprehend" may have struck Ishiguro as very attractive qualities.

This is a review Ishiguro wrote for Kawabata's *Snow Country* (1935-7) and *A Thousand Cranes* (1949-52):

> Kawabata was a writer who quite deliberately aspired to a 'classical' tradition of Japanese prose writing pre-dating the influence of European realism – a tradition which placed value on lyricism, mood and reflection rather than on plot and character. Read either of these novels for a tangible, developing plotline – adopt a 'what –happens next?' attitude – and one is bound to reach the end with the feeling one has missed the point. Kawabata needs to be read slowly, the atmospheres savored, the characters' words pondered for nuances.[13]

Many of the points that Ishiguro relates to Kawabata's pieces could also be applied to Ishiguro's work. It is intriguing that Ishiguro seems to be unaware of this similarity. In general, people typically do not recognize their habits until they are pointed out by others. In an interview, Ishiguro discusses a scene where Etsuko is talking to her friend's daughter, Mariko, by the river. Etsuko commands that Mariko to go to America, but during the conversation Ishiguro switches vocabulary from "you" to "we" ("if you don't like it over there, we can always come back" (PV 173)), as if Etsuko had become mixed up emotionally, and commanded her own daughter, Keiko: "It just slips out: she's now talking about herself. She's no longer bothering to put it in the third person."[14]

The reader is reminded that Etsuko had a similar experience with her daughter Keiko when taking her to England. It seems as though Ishiguro may not be thoroughly satisfied with this scene, claiming he wanted to add more murkiness. Ishiguro "intended with that scene for the reader finally to realize, with a sense of inevitability, 'Of course, yes, she finally said it.'"[15] Fortunately, Ishiguro seemed relieved to explain that "a lot of people quite enjoy being baffled. You feel you have to read the book again,

which is a different sort of effect."[16] This remark is reminiscent of Ishiguro's review of *Snow Country.*

III

Ishiguro admits to being influenced by Western authors like Dickens, Bronte, Hemingway, Dostoevsky, and Kafka, but he denies the influence of Japanese literature. It is impossible to confirm a specifically Japanese writing style in his work; however, Ishiguro admits his enjoyment of Japanese movies, and describes Japanese texts he has read as English translations. As a result, while he does not expressly declare its influence, themes present in Japanese media may be observed throughout his works. Any influences are likely subconscious. Yasunari Kawabata's *SM,* in particular, is clearly reflected in Ishiguro's work.

*SM*s protagonist is 62 year old Shingo Ogata, a man feeling that his memory is blurring. One night he hears the "mountain roar" and believes the sound to be a premonition of "death."

> The sound stopped, and he was suddenly afraid. A chill passed over him, as if he had been notified that death was approaching. He wanted to question himself, calmly and deliberately, to ask whether it had been the sound of the wind, the sound of the sea, or a sound in his ears. But he had heard not such sounds, he was sure. He had heard the mountain. (SM 8)

Kinya Tsuruta notes regarding this passage, "as we proceed in reading, we realize that the fear Shingo has does not arise from the 'death' we fear in general, but rather it rises from a deep repentance of his life. There is a large hollow that lies beneath Shingo's life, and he fears that he may die without fulfilling its emptiness. The emptiness is attributed to his sister-in-law, who died young."[17]

Shingo had been in love with a beautiful young woman. He married the woman's sister, Yasuko. However, as we can assume from passages like, "Yasuko was no beauty. In their younger years she had looked older than he, and she had disliked being seen in public with him"(SM 5), she never succeeded in fulfilling Shingo's emptiness. In Shinshu, where he spent time with his admirable sister-in-law in his youth, is a house he has not returned to for several decades. The only thing that temporarily fulfills Shingo is the timeless world he has been replaying in his mind since the death of his sister-in-law. The world he creates in his mind is a metaphor of another world. It is a kind of lost paradise; a timeless and uncanny other side (Hades). This ambiguous paradise/Hades dichotomy assaults Shingo very suddenly. At first, he experiences it as

the sound of the mountain.[18]

PV's story begins in England, where Etsuko Ogata is living after marrying an Englishman. Her daughter from her second marriage, Niki, visits her house from London. On the second day of Niki's visit, they talk about Keiko's funeral. For Etsuko, Keiko's death reminds her of one summer in Nagasaki where she spent time with a mother and daughter, Sachiko and Mariko.

> I was standing at the windows looking out into the darkness when I heard Niki say behind me; "What are you thinking about now, Mother?" She was sitting across the sofa, a paperback book on her knee. "I was thinking about someone I knew once. A woman I knew once." (PV 10)

The "one summer" mentioned is linked to the death of Keiko, Etsuko's daughter, who hung herself in Manchester. This scene can be interpreted as a premonition of "death" for Etsuko. Analogous to Shingo, Etsuko has a void in her heart that was once filled by her beloved daughter, Keiko. Etsuko is often guilt-ridden, and when she thinks about Keiko's death her mind returns to that "one summer" she spent with Sachiko and Mariko. Just like Shingo, Etsuko's recollection of her days spent in Nagasaki is viewed as a kind of lost paradise while also being a timeless and uncanny memory. This ambiguous paradise/Hades concept suddenly assaults Etsuko, much in the same way a similar experience came to Shingo. At first, is the concept revealed in dream form; a little girl playing on a swing.

Both Shingo and Etsuko have emptiness in their hearts that has been created by the loss of a loved one. Memories come back to them whenever they encounter related objects or experiences. These include incidents like hearing specific sounds, having dreams, looking at plants in the garden, etc. Both protagonists seem to have adopted the same mentality, "from the past to the present, dream to real world, ...child to adult, independent to dependent, death to life."[19] Tsuruta called this "growth." In the novel form of *SM,* the sound of the mountain, a premonition of death, ends with the sound of dishes being washed in the kitchen; a symbol of transfiguration (dream to reality). In the movie version of *SM,* Kikuko calls Shingo out into the park and tells him she has decided to divorce Shuichi. At the end of the story, Shingo looks up into the sky and says, "You can stretch out," while gazing at a distant expanse of green. Kikuko then explains, "They paid a great deal of attention to the vista. It looks even farther off than it is." Shingo seems to be confused by this and asks, "What's a vista?" Kikuko smiles and answers, "A line of vision." In these final scenes of both the novel and movie, we can confirm a general motif in the story: there are progressions from past to present and

from dream to reality.

PV is the story of Etsuko spending five days with her daughter Niki in April. On the first day it is cold and drizzly. On the second, rainy day, they discuss Keiko's death. The third day begins with the aforementioned dream of a little girl playing on a swing.

Etsuko tells Niki of her dream experience from the previous evening and its repetition that morning. She then confesses that she has had the same dream multiple times over the past few months. Until this point in the story, the two women had remained inside the house, but they decide to go out that afternoon. While having tea at a cafe, Etsuko sees a little girl playing in the park. The little girl climbs onto a swing and calls out to her mother. On the fourth day of the story, the rain is still drizzling. Niki asks her mother if she can change rooms. Niki claims she can't sleep in her current room because it's too quiet. Based on this request, we can guess that Niki is hearing a "sound" from Keiko's room. Neither Etsuko nor Niki directly mention it, but it seems that they are both admitting the existence of Keiko's ghost. On the fifth day, Niki is ready to leave for London and the rain has finally stopped. Etsuko wakes up early in the morning and stands in front of Keiko's room. She thinks she hears sound and movement from within, so she opens the door. Everything is as it was; left untouched after Keiko left the room for Manchester. Etsuko begins to feel cold and leaves the room.

Ishiguro stated that he used special effects in his novels and that their use "is calculated, very much something I have prepared."[20] With this in mind, it is easy to see how Ishiguro may have implied something by using the effects of "rain" and "sound." These may be signs of Etsuko exonerating herself from the death premonitions, and additionally could be a metaphor for "growth." At the end of the story, when Niki steps out of the house and opens the gate, Etsuko tells her, "perhaps I should sell the house now" (PV 183). Etsuko has been living alone in the large house, a symbol of her emptiness and her past. Keiko's room haunts her, which is a sign that Etsuko has still not moved on from her death. The dream of the little girl playing on a swing is closely associated with the child murders that happened during her memorable summer in Nagasaki; Keiko hung herself in the apartment in Manchester. Both situations are premonitions of "death." Etsuko's decision to sell the house shows her secession from Keiko's death, and implies she is finally waking up from a long nightmare to face reality. This motif is similar to themes in *SM*.

Ⅳ

While story development between the two tales is similar, character dispositions and relationships also seem to be congruous. In the movie version of *SM*, Satoko,

granddaughter of Shingo, first appears at the entrance of Shingo's house with short trimmed hair. She wears a knee-length cotton skirt and a blank expression. In *PV*, "Mariko was dressed in a simple cotton dress which ended at her knees, and her short trimmed hair made her face look boyish. She looked up, not smiling to where I stood at the top of the muddy slope" (PV 16). The appearance and dispositions of these two characters are almost identical. Sonaka also compares Satoko in the *SM* novel to Mariko in *PV*, stating they look almost the same and that Ishiguro seems to duplicate character dispositions.[21] Moreover, the stories' violent characters are very similar. In *SM*, Satoko tries to grab a little girl wearing a beautiful kimono, which results in the girl almost being hit by a car. Mariko throws rocks at neighborhood children because they've said hurtful things. Further, the stagnant husband/wife relationships of Kikuko and Shuichi in *SM* and Etsuko and Jiro in *PV*, frictional father-and-son relationships of Shingo and Shuichi in *SM* and Jiro and Ogata in *PV*, and affectionate father-and-daughter-in-law relationships in both *SM* and *PV* are all similar.

Ishiguro said in an interview that he wanted to write a story based on Etsuko and Ogata in *PV*, but the idea faded away.[22] Let's take a closer look at how the father-and-daughter-in-law relationships in *SM* are reflected in *PV*.

Many people familiar with Japanese might have felt awkwardly about father-and-daughter-in-law relationships after reading *PV*. This discomfort is illustrated in a scene where Etsuko hears the "hideous" noise of a violin; the sound of Ogata playing Etsuko's violin without her permission. The conversation is as follows:

> "Well, I'd much rather you occupied yourself with chess. Your musical recital earlier was hideous."
>
> "How disrespectful. And I thought you'd be moved, Etsuko."
>
> The violin was on the floor nearby, put back in its case. Ogata-San watched me as I began opening the case.
>
> "I noticed it up there on the shelf," he said. "I took the liberty of bringing it down. Don't look so concerned, Etsuko. I was very gentle with it."
>
> "I can't be sure. As you say, Father's like a child these days." I held up the violin and examined it. "Except small children can't reach up to high shelves." (PV56)
>
> ....
>
> "the little child is feeling guilty now." (PV 58)

If you are a native speaker of Japanese, you will immediately notice the awkwardness inherent in a daughter-in-law speaking to her father-in-law this way. There are more conversations in the novel that are considered to be unnatural, and

which highlight their psychological distance. Etsuko thinks, "it seems rather odd I always thought of him as 'Ogata-San,' even in those days when that was my own name" (PV 28). This gives the impression that Etsuko is feeling distant from her father-in-law. On the other hand, Ogata calls his daughter-in-law by her first name, which shows more intimacy. Yuji Hayashi points out that "seemingly strange ways of calling and addressing cause readers, at least in Japan, to perceive the Japan-born British author, Kazuo Ishiguro, as either lacking knowledge of the Japanese language or as prioritizing his literary purpose over the Japanese language system."[23] Why did Ishiguro write in this style?

The answer to this question can be found in *SM*. Yoshiko Enomoto states, "The affectionate relationship between a young wife and her father-in-law is a common theme of Japanese novels and films, as we see in Ozu's *Tokyo Monogatari* (*Tokyo Story*) or Kawabata's *Yama no Oto* (*The Sound of the Mountain*)."[24] In addition, in the novel version of *SM*, a feeling of abnormality in the father-and-daughter-in-law relationship is produced. For example, Shingo justifies a dream he had of Kikuko, which gives the reader the impression that Shingo has special feelings towards his daughter-in-law. Further, Kikuko's sister-in-law, Fusako, says to Shingo, "It's early for second childhood, Father,"(SM 181) because he lacks the ability to even wear a kimono properly without Kikuko's assistance. Shingo implores her to play nursery songs at his funeral when he dies. Giorgio Amitrano notes, "that's the kind of relationship they have."[25]As a matter of course, Kikuko is called by her first name from both mother-and-father-in-laws.

The most effective scene for describing Kikuko and Shingo's relationship is the scene known as the "sunflower." According to Amitrano, the chapter containing the scene with sunflowers was originally entitled "The Sunflower"[26] when it first came out in the magazine; however, Kawabata changed it to "The Wing of the Locust." Kawabata wanted to "shift the reader's interest from Shingo's mental plane to Satoko's brutality in the scene where she asks her mother and grandmother to cut off the wings of locusts."[27] One day, Shingo looks up at sunflowers in full bloom beside a neighbouring house. Kikuko approaches him with a market bag. They view the flowers together for some time, and Shingo notes that the flowers look like the heads of humans. Shingo then thinks, "the power of nature within them made him think of a giant symbol of masculinity"(SM 26). It is obvious that Shingo's thinking is influenced by Kikuko. Kikuko seemed interested in the way Shingo was looking at the flowers. "They were not facing each other, but were definitely appreciating the same object and seemed to be enjoying the sense of common interests."[28] They were fulfilled by "making futile comments and being kind to each other."[29]

In short, according to Amitrano, "words that were not spoken between Shingo and Kikuko were more meaningful than the words articulated."[30] In contrast, in *PV*, Ishiguro's pen allowed the characters to speak their minds directly. The story of Etsuko and Ogata did not turn out the way Ishiguro first intended, so the idea faded away. Moreover, those spoken words were a strange fit for the Japanese language system, which may have created awkwardness for Japanese readers.

V

16 years after publishing *PV*, Ishiguro admitted that he had never thought the book would sell much. When he learned that the book would be translated into other languages, he felt a minor sense of panic.[31] He had repeatedly stated that he created *his* Japan mostly from memories and Japanese movies, and that he can't speak, write, or read the language. It is only natural to think that he used outside material as sources of information to write his novels. Much of the inspiration for *PV* seems to have come from Yasunari Kawabata's *The Sound of the Mountain*. That Ishiguro needed "the source book" to write novels about Japan proves he wanted to preserve his Japanese identity, but beneath his consciousness he remained equipped with a British sensitivity.

The story of *PV* was first set in Cornwall, England, but Ishiguro later changed the setting to Nagasaki, Japan, which suggests he had special feelings for his birth place. In an interview, Ishiguro was asked how he had been able to communicate such a depth of feelings regarding Japan despite living in England throughout his childhood. He answered, "It was a precious country that existed only in my head and in my heart, I suppose. And I also realized that with every year that went by, it was getting fainter and fainter, and I think I had a great need to put it down on paper and structure it. And so I think that's what drove me to writing novels in the first place."[32] Despite his British background, the movies made by Naruse and Ozu likely worked to ignite and help reproduce Ishiguro's memories. Kawabata's *The Sound of the Mountain* was seen and read by a writer who grew up in two different cultures. Such an experience would surely have been an inspiration.

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[3] Yasunari Kawabata. *The Sound of the Mountain*. trans. Edward G. Seidensticker. Tuttle, 1971.

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[5] Sonaka, Takayuki. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Shunpusha, 2011, p.42.

[6] Sakaguchi, Akinori. "Kazuo Ishiguro ni kodamasu *Yamano Oto* (*The Sound of*

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8 Ibid., pp.190-191.

9 Ibid, p.191.

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11 Trevor Leggett. *Shinshido to bushido(Knights and Samurais).* Simul Publishing, 1973, pp.188-189.

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25 Tsuruta, Kinya. *Kawabata Yasunari Yamano Oto Kenkyu,* p.24.

26 Giorgio Amitrano. *"Yama no oto" Koware yuku kazoku (The Sound of the Mountain; Disruption of a Family).* Misuzu Shobo, 2007, p.68.

27 Ibid., p.68.

28 Ibid., p.70.

29 Ibid., p.71.

30 Ibid., p.68..

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