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Kazuo Ishiguro and Transgenerational Cosmopolitanism

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Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro was infuriated in his essay that appeared in the *Financial Times* in 2016. In the essay written immediately after the result of the Brexit referendum set off the political earthquake across the globe, Ishiguro wrote without hesitation that he was "angry towards those who voted Leave." Brexit would, Ishiguro argued, be a wrong decision because it would probably bring about the collapse of the pan-European ideal of the EU as "a much-envied region of liberal democracies living in near-borderless friendship." But he was not angry merely because of the imminent crisis of the near-borderless friendship in Europe and the political mayhem caused by the then prime minister David Cameron, but also because the referendum outcome suggested that more than half of the British population no longer cared deeply about a fundamental attitude that Britain had nourished for the last seventy years towards people from outside. Ishiguro wrote that "[t]he Britain I know — and deeply love — is a decent, fair-minded place, readily compassionate to outsiders in need." Decency, fair-mindedness, and compassion were, Ishiguro suggested, being replaced by hatred, discrimination, and xenophobia on the rampage through Britain. In the essay Ishiguro displayed a hint of desperation by appealing to British people for their "essentially decent heart" and urged them to rethink about the consequences of the country's decision: "we need

to have some faith in the people of Britain [. . .] I still retain that faith." But what really is puzzling about the essay is his claim that Britain is readily compassionate to outsiders in need. A history of the migration to Britain in the twentieth century clearly demonstrates otherwise: a series of Commonwealth Immigrants Acts, the 1971 Immigration Act, and the 1981 Nationality Act considerably restricted immigrants' entry to Britain (Mason 26–28). Although it is universally acknowledged that Britain is, and has been, "a country of immigration" and for the last several decades well known for its multiculturalism, it also contains "hostility" and "multicultural racism" against immigrants in general and ethnic minorities in particular (Panayi 23). It is a little far-fetched to claim as he did, therefore, that Britain has been a country compassionate to outsiders in need. The reality of contemporary Britain is sharply at odds with that of the very Britain Ishiguro evoked in his essay. But if so, where did his peculiar image of compassionate Britain come from?

Ishiguro's faith in the overall generosity and fair-mindedness of British people can be traced apparently to his own childhood in England. He described himself in the same essay as "a 61-year-old man of Japanese birth who has lived here [in England] from the age of five; who has observed and experienced this society from the perspective of a small, visibly foreign child who was for years the only such child in his school or his wider community." The only foreign child notwithstanding (but where were his sisters?), he has never said in any interviews that he had ever encountered racism and hostility in England in his childhood. On the contrary, he often recalls that he was "the focus of attention" at school and in the community where nobody had ever seen any Japanese child before and that he "turned into a performer," quickly becoming popular among other pupils (Morrison 35). For Ishiguro, Guildford — a southern middle-class residential suburb where he grew up — symbolised Britain where the citizens were ready to

show their compassion and munificence to strangers like him, and the fact that he nostalgically associated his racism-free idyllic childhood in Guildford with his idealised view of Britain at large made him shocked to find that Britain as he had known it was rapidly transforming itself into a racist and exclusive country that dared to stop the free movement of people between the Continent and the UK. It is scarcely surprising that Leavers' victory over Remainers, by no matter how narrow a margin, vexed him so much.

It is worth recalling, though, that far back in 1960 Ishiguro's family — his parents, young Kazuo and his elder sister — did *not* necessarily come to Britain for economic need. His father Shizuo used to be a researcher at the Nagasaki Meteorological Observatory and then was invited to work for the National Institute of Oceanography in England, thereby belonging in the world of professional elites. Ishiguro's experience as the son of a visiting scientific researcher must have been quite different from the experiences of those whom he called outsiders in need, that is, economic migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Britain. This brief background history about Ishiguro's family indicates that Ishiguro wrote the essay in question not so much from the perspective of a migrant as from the perspective of an observer (see his locution "who has observed") with a privileged upper-middle-class background who innocently enjoyed the magnanimity of the English. An observer in England from the start, he has been distinct from a majority of other migrants in terms of economic and social status. Ishiguro has been, first and foremost, an observer taking his distance both from the British in general and from migrants to Britain, his distance being writ large in the stance he takes as an outsider extolling the "essentially decent heart" of Britain associated with his nostalgia-infused memories of his childhood in the English suburb. While never ceasing to show a feeling of nostalgia for the magnanimity of British people, he chooses to remain detached from Britain as an outsider. Then how can we explain this stance

of Ishiguro's? From what perspective does he say what he says? One of the conceptional candidates with which to explain this sense of detachment would presumably derive from a much larger and global context of elite migration: cosmopolitanism.

Indeed, so many scholars have been interested in his cosmopolitanism until today (see, for example, Aso 3, 17; Robbins 437; Sim 139; Stanton 23; Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style* 109–130; Waugh 19–20). They attempt in their own way to correlate Ishiguro's works of fiction with contemporary cosmopolitanism widely discussed in the contexts of philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism. The range of their examinations of Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism varies from a brief reference to "cosmopolitan fraternity" (Waugh 20) in *The Unconsoled* (1995) to reading Ryder, the protagonist of the novel, as a metaphor for Britain's ambivalent attitude towards the EU (Stanton 4), though *The Unconsoled* depicts "a multiplicity or diversity of belongings" (Stanton 2). For Bruce Robbins, *The Unconsoled*, apparently anti-cosmopolitan in terms of its focus on family relationships, is actually a novel which is critical of our common sense that family should be prioritised over work and that nation should be privileged over foreign countries and which hence advocates cosmopolitanism (437).

When We Were Orphans (2000), published five years after *The Unconsoled*, "explores," argues Wai-chew Sim, "what transcultural or transnational fellow feeling might entail" between characters of different nationals, Japanese and British (139). Erika Aso regards Ishiguro as a cosmopolitan writer, for Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), challenging Japanese and Nagasaki myths, calls into question concepts such as home, nation, and belonging, thereby stressing the meaninglessness of wars (3, 17). Rebecca L. Walkowitz, in her book *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation* (2006), addresses the cosmopolitan styles of some representative modernist writers and more recent ones including Ishiguro and Salman

Rushdie. According to Walkowitz, Ishiguro's oeuvre is cosmopolitan as it deals with the migration of characters across borders, describing the interrelationship of private (daily-life) and public (international) issues (111). Walkowitz acutely observes, furthermore, that what she calls "critical cosmopolitanism" operates in Ishiguro's works, especially in his early novels, where a critical doubt is constantly being cast on absolute allegiance to any particular causes, and readers as well as the protagonists are necessarily confronted with treasonous self-reflection on their allegiance (109–110). All these previous studies on Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism are largely focussed on the cosmopolitan *aspects* of his novels. What concerns me here is something deeper: what *assumption* works in his cosmopolitan novels? If that assumption really is cosmopolitan, where and in what way has it been shaped in his particular case?

The present paper is going to revisit and explore Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism by placing it in two different contexts: firstly, in the context of the ongoing literary discussions of contemporary cosmopolitanism; secondly, in the biographical context of Ishiguro's family history. Ishiguro's cosmopolitan stance evidently echoes Salman Rushdie's and Zadie Smith's cosmopolitan mongrelisation, but it is simultaneously leaning on Caryl Phillips's and Colm Tóibín's in-betweenness — I have in mind Phillips' *The Final Passage* (1985) and *A Distant Shore* (2003) and Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009). Moreover, Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism involves a particular sense of detachment and distance from any specific cultures at hand. Rebecca Suter has recently claimed in *Two-World Literature: Kazuo Ishiguro's Early Novels* (2020) that in his early novels Ishiguro constantly provides two-world visions, which cannot be reduced to any single dominant worldview and which "transcend the limitations of the kind of 'one-world thinking'" (126). While admitting that Ishiguro is a cosmopolitan writer, Suter places more of an emphasis on his "double perspective" (126).

In my view, his "double perspective" as well as his cosmopolitan stance has been formed in part by his childhood experience as an outsider in Britain and partly by his ancestors' (his grandfather's and his father's) experiences of living in the early twentieth-century cosmopolitan and multicultural Shanghai. My argument hereafter is largely predicated on what Mica Nava calls "transgenerational cosmopolitanism" (135). Nava's autobiographical account in the last chapter of *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (2007) about her childhood and her family history — she was "the only 'foreigner' in [her] class at the small progressive primary school" in England (Nava 145) — refers to multiple shades of races and nationalities in her family: hence, she argues that visceral cosmopolitanism runs in her family. Ishiguro's family is not so varied in race (his grandparents and parents were Japanese, his wife Scottish, and his daughter Scottish-Japanese) as Nava's is, and unlike Nava's family whose "inclusive dispositions" have been transmitted across generations (135), Ishiguro's family tends to be more detached towards the culture(s) at hand. Nonetheless, as we will see, a similar kind of transgenerational cosmopolitanism runs in Ishiguro's family too.

This paper examines a few representative texts on contemporary cosmopolitanism in order to see how the concept is relevant to Ishiguro and his fictions, *When We Were Orphans* in particular, and then looks into the historical circumstances of Shanghai in the early twentieth century and several English novels set in Shanghai of the same period to reveal their common identity-related characteristics. Also, drawing on Kyoko Hirai's biography of Ishiguro's family, *Kazuo Ishiguro's Nagasaki* (2018), we are to take a glimpse into their intercultural experiences in cosmopolitan Shanghai. My contention will be then that Ishiguro's cosmopolitan worldview has not just been shaped by his distinct childhood experience as a privileged outsider in England but also formed and transmitted to him

through three generations by his ancestors who experienced first-hand the bustle of predominantly cosmopolitan Shanghai in the early twentieth century.

Contemporary Cosmopolitanism and Novels on Mongrelisation

One of the most frequently cited philosophical explorations of contemporary cosmopolitanism is Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism demands attempts to understand different points of view from one's own. Stressing, over and over again, that people do not always reach an agreement or consensus on issues (44, 57, 71, 78, 85), Appiah asserts nonetheless that difference is by default the very assumption from which cosmopolitans start to think. This argument is shared by Stuart Hall, a well-known cultural theorist, who writes that "the traces of difference [. . .] make its life important" (30), and in a similar vein David A. Hollinger declares that "[f]or cosmopolitans, the diversity of humankind is a fact" (231). By far more important is, however, the fact that *despite* difference and diversity people are able to "live together" (71) and "live in harmony" (78), according to Appiah. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, editors of *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* (2002), formulate two fundamental cosmopolitan questions as follows: "Can we ever live peacefully with one another? What do we share, collectively, as human beings?" ("Introduction" 1). The cosmopolitans' endorsement of different points of view and diversity of human beings is not exclusively found in philosophical arguments but in literary criticism as well. Bianca Leggett points to some positive aspect of the contemporary cosmopolitan British fiction which "depicts the 'multiplicity' of connections beyond the nation" (20), by means of which she conjectures that "the possibility of better

worlds," "greater openness, understanding and generosity to both one's immediate community and the world beyond it" would possibly be realised (25). The openness and generosity are exactly what Ishiguro firmly believes lies in the heart of the British.

The cultural relevance of contemporary literature to cosmopolitanism as a worldview is an argument taken up by Appiah, too, who makes an optimistic remark on the feasibility of cross-cultural dialogues between artists and audience through literature and the arts in general. To assume difference in views as a default requires the recognition of "human variety" (Appiah 104), and to recognise the human variety would be a crucial step towards what he calls "[c]onversations across boundaries of identity" (85) or "cross-cultural conversations" (97). One of the best ways of exploring cross-cultural conversations comes, Appiah proposes, through our "imaginative engagement" with a work of art or literature which "speaks from some place other than [our] own" (85). The cross-cultural dialogues initiated by artists moving across national boundaries have very much "enriched and altered the cultural repertories of many people" (Vertovec and Cohen, "Introduction" 3–4).

The cross-cultural conversations by way of our imaginative engagement with migrant literature have undeniably enriched the cultural repertories of Britain. A selective overview of the recent history of British migrant fictions, some of which are generally categorised as post-colonial literature, from the second half of the twentieth century to the twenty-first century proves it is the case. The novels of Buchi Emecheta, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Hanif Kureishi, Andrea Levy, Caryl Phillips, Monica Ali, Nadeem Aslam, and Zadie Smith, among others, describe the communities as well as the private lives of migrants in Britain from their perspectives. Let us look at a few examples. Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens* (1974) and V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*

(1987) explore how the migrants attempt to acclimatise themselves to England in the middle decades of the twentieth century, presumably reflecting the authors' own experiences. There are also rather tragic novels like Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985), both of which depict how the protagonists' migration to England in the mid-twentieth century led to the loss of a member of their families — Etsuko, a Japanese woman, loses her eldest daughter to suicide, and Leila, from an island from the West Indies, brings her husband and their small child to England, yet the husband leaves her for someone else, possibly a white English woman. The overall tragic tone of these migrant novels was substituted, though not entirely, by the provoking yet festive mood of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), a novel which represented a significant turning point in the history of contemporary British migrant fictions. In *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), a collection of Rushdie's literary essays, which cosmopolitans frequently refer to (Appiah 112; Held 58; Waldron qtd. in Hall 26), Rushdie offers the famous proclamation that *The Satanic Verses*, the publication of which resulted in Khomeini's issuing the fatwa against him, "is a migrant's-eye view of the world" and "celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling [. . .] rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. [. . .] It is a love-song to our mongrel selves" (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 394, italics in original). Hybridity, mixture, and mongrelisation permeate contemporary Britain, which in turn makes it possible for us to get more imaginatively engaged with what Appiah calls cross-cultural conversations with works of fiction than ever before, although mixed responses to Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* betrayed sheer difficulty with which for people with different religions to engage in such fruitful dialogues.

Rushdie's idea of migrants' mongrelisation had a powerful impact on

subsequent novels such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*, both published in 2000. *White Teeth* is a novel brimmed with racially and culturally mongrel characters. One of the main protagonists of *White Teeth*, Irie, has both English and Jamaican roots, and her unnamed daughter, referred to at the end of the novel, is more of a mongrel, fathered in blood by either of the Bangladeshi twins, Millat or Magid, and raised by Irie and her Jewish lover Joshua, who himself is "a cross-pollination between a lapsed-Catholic horticulturalist feminist [his mother] and an intellectual Jew [his father]" (Smith 309). Irie's daughter is thus the embodiment of the most mongrel self in the novel: a mixture of black, white, and brown with Jamaican, English, and Bangladeshi roots, interlaced by a Jewish tradition. Mongrelisation is also one of the significant motifs in Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*, but it is not so openly endorsed as in Smith's *White Teeth*. In the rest of this section, let us focus on *When We Were Orphans* and how it deals with cosmopolitan mongrelisation.

When Christopher Banks as a child asks Uncle Philip, a young colleague of his father's, for advice on his own English identity in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century, Uncle Philip gives him advice like this:

> Well, it's true, out here [in Shanghai], you're growing up with a lot of different sorts around you. Chinese, French, Germans, Americans, what have you. It'd be no wonder if you grew up a bit of mongrel. [. . .] But that's no bad thing. You know what I think, Puffin? I think it would be no bad thing if boys like you *all* grew up with a bit of everything. We might all treat each other a good deal better then. Be less of these wars for one thing. [. . .] More a mixture. So why not become a mongrel? It's healthy. (*WWWO* 76, italics in original)

There is no doubt that Uncle Philip's discourse endorses mongrelisation. However, the reader here is expected to be extra-cautious about the way in which mongrelisation is innocently proclaimed. Uncle Philip as a character proves highly dubious, for he turns out to be a traitor for Christopher, helping the latter's mother to be taken as a concubine by a Chinese warlord. In the scene above Christopher is not convinced enough by that argument of Uncle Philip's about mongrelisation, for he has been given another piece of advice on his English identity by Akira, his Japanese friend — that his not being an Englishman enough causes silence between his English parents. In the same scene Uncle Philip comes around to Akira's view by saying that "People need to feel they belong. To a nation, to a race." (*WWWO* 76–77). Thus, Uncle Philip ends up offering Christopher two mutually exclusive ideas: cosmopolitan mongrelisation and racial nationalism. These ideas are never allowed in the novel to be reconciled with each other.

The implications of cosmopolitan mongrelisation and racial nationalism in the novel are worthy of a more thorough examination. The irony of the novel is that while the main characters are extremely obsessed with their own national identities, their childhood is totally immersed in the multicultural cosmopolitanism of Shanghai in the early twentieth century. Christopher and Akira strive to construct their identities on the basis of their nations, but cannot help feeling that they never belong to their nations, Britain and Japan, respectively. Akira, a typical Japanese boy of that period, proudly celebrates his Japanese blood, but when he returns to his hometown Nagasaki he is "mercilessly ostracised for his 'foreignness'" by his Japanese schoolmates, his teachers, and even his relatives. His "manners, his attitudes, his speech, a hundred other things had marked him out as *different*" (*WWWO* 89, italics added). So back in Shanghai Akira declares to his English friend that he will never want to go back to Japan

(*WWWO* 99).

Christopher Banks is a more complicated case than Akira, for the former always pretends that he succeeded in mixing well with boys at school in England to which he as an orphan had been taken back after his parents' successive disappearances in Shanghai. His pretension concerning the accuracy of his childhood memory is subtly belied by his encounters with two of his old schoolfriends saying to him that he used to be "such an odd bird" (*WWWO* 5) and a "miserable loner" (*WWWO* 183) at school. Christopher gets quickly frustrated at these allegations and says to himself (and to the reader) that "my own memory is that I blended perfectly into English school life" (*WWWO* 7). But elsewhere he divulges the fact that he became "the butt of some harmless banter" (*WWWO* 79) among English boys in Shanghai in Akira's absence, and yet here too he is very careful to add that those English boys were "all essentially decent sorts intending no real malice" (*WWWO* 79). Christopher's defence of the English boys and the way he uses the phrase *essentially decent sorts* ring a bell and send one back to Ishiguro's statement in his essay in the *Financial Times* — that Britain has an "essentially decent heart." It is noteworthy that both Christopher Banks and Kazuo Ishiguro emphasise the essential decency of the British, correlating it with their own nostalgia-infused childhood memories. But *When We Were Orphans* and Britain after Brexit imply that their image of England or Britain is entirely predicated on strong wishful thinking on their part, on their desire for what England or Britain should be like at least for them.

Christopher's acute sense of failure to belong to England is revealed when he returns to Shanghai as a renowned detective and confesses to a Japanese soldier that "[a]ll these years I've lived in England, I've never really felt at home there. The International Settlement. That will always be my home" (*WWWO* 256). The Japanese soldier, apparently grown-up

Akira, says to him in turn that Shanghai is "like my home village" (*WWWO* 255). However, for them both, the International Settlement is to be a "fragile" place (*WWWO* 256). Christopher ultimately loses his "home village" of the Shanghai International Settlement and then adopts London as his "home" instead at the end of the novel (*WWWO* 313). This means that neither England nor Japan as a country gives them the true feeling of belonging they seek for in their childhood. Torn between their comfort associated with the multicultural conditions of cosmopolitan Shanghai and their childhood obsession with their nationalistic belongings, Akira and Christopher in their adulthood attempt to regain the former. The first half of *When We Were Orphans* provides Akira and Christopher with a cosmopolitan space in which the two kids live in harmony together (although, as we will see, there is a nationalistic rivalry between them), while its second half offers a completely disastrous situation where cosmopolitan Shanghai is irredeemably shattered by different countries at war with one another. While *When We Were Orphans* deals with both cosmopolitan mongrelisation and racial nationalism, these ideologies as such fail to prosper in the novel, a stark contrast to Smith's *White Teeth*, where mongrelisation is hilariously welcomed as reflecting the reality of contemporary Britain. Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism veers away from racial and cultural mongrelisation to in-betweenness or lack of a solid sense of belonging.

Shanghai's Cosmopolitanism and Shanghai-based English Novels

Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century when Christopher and Akira grew up was semi-colonised by European countries, the US, and Japan. Wai-chew Sim makes a perspicacious observation that the rivalry relationship between the two children, Christopher and Akira, represents

the "geopolitical jostling for power and influence" between Britain and Japan in Shanghai, casting a shadow on the narrative of *When We Were Orphans* in which these boys — one English and the other Japanese — sneak into a Chinese servant's room in Akira's house in order to steal a bottle, an act which amounts, Sim reads, to their invasion not only of the servant's privacy but also of China's political space. From this imperialistic implication of this small episode Sim directs our attention to "multinational cooperation and collaboration" between Britain and Japan, partially reflected in the two pieces of advice given to Christopher regarding his own identity by Uncle Philip (English) and Akira (Japanese) (Sim 71).

These contradictory representations of Shanghai of the early twentieth century both as the imperialistic victim of the Powers and as the multiculturally thriving cosmopolitan city are observed by Isabella Jackson in *Shaping Modern Shanghai* (2018). Jackson delineates the history of the semi-colonialised modern Shanghai, referring to the large Western-style brick buildings constructed along the Bund as "the transnational colonial presence in Shanghai and China more widely" (2). But she also notes that the "diversity of the International Settlement was celebrated" by the Shanghai Municipal Council "as evidence of the desirably cosmopolitan community" (7). While "not all nationals in Shanghai were equally able to access its cosmopolitanism," Jackson reminds her readers that Shanghai in those days was nonetheless a "truly global city" (35). As a matter of fact, Shanghai in the first half of the twentieth century embraced "more than fifty national groups" (Kong 293). Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom claims that even present-day Shanghai is reconstructing its own past as "a cosmopolitan hub" (120).

There are contradictory views about the extent to which these multifarious Shanghai-landers might have culturally and racially merged into one another. Yasuko Enomoto, for instance, maintains that, for all

Shanghai's cosmopolitan atmosphere, people from different countries were living more rather than less enclosed within their own communities (Enomoto 18–19). The reluctance with which they blended with different nationals from different countries in Shanghai is observed by Edgar Snow in *Far Easter Front*: "But in Shanghai no racial merging could be witnessed. It can be said to have been a slightly strange phenomenon. Here [in the International Settlement] the British have remained British for generations and the Americans are 'one hundred percent' American" (Snow 125, retranslated from the Japanese translation). However, Jianhui Liu, a Chinese researcher, offers a completely different perspective about Shanghai by arguing that "due to the interpenetration between the four spaces [i.e. the old British settlement, the French concession, the Chinese area, and the old American settlement] one could see the crossing and merging of different cultures, rarely detected in other cities, which produced a very cosmopolitan 'chaos'" in Shanghai (Liu 27, my translation). According to Liu, Shanghai used to be a place embodying "freedom," where "people did not belong to any particular country" (Liu 30, my translation).

The last point — Shanghai-landers did not belong by and large to any particular country in the International Settlement — may reverberate with the sense of being an exile acutely felt by the protagonist of a novel set in Shanghai of that same period. Christopher New's *Shanghai* (1985) depicts a middle-class English man, who lands in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century as a customs inspector and then climbs up the ladder of success, becoming eventually a member of the Shanghai Municipal Council. In spite of his well-regarded social status John Denton the protagonist constantly feels he is a stranger in Shanghai. His Jewish friend's tale about "elvers," glass eels, which swim away from where they were hatched across the Pacific to unknown areas of the sea where "they mate, they live, they lay their eggs and then they die" (New 237), metaphorically sums up

Denton's own life. He perennially feels himself "in between" in whatever place he is: "he belonged neither to the world of the *taipans* nor to the world of the Chinese. Like the city itself, neither one thing nor the other" (New 455). His particular sense of not belonging to any specific world is repeated elsewhere in the novel: "If ever he went back there [his home country England], he'd be an exile; it would be foreign to him — more foreign even than when he last returned. And yet he was an exile in Shanghai too" (New 589).

The foreignness one feels towards one's home country is a sort of feeling shared by Christopher Banks in *When We Were Orphans*. For Christopher, born and bred until he was ten in Shanghai, England remains "a foreign land" (*WWWO* 28), although he "returns" to it as an orphan after the disappearances of his parents in Shanghai. England is also "strange" and "inconceivable" for a young English boy, Jim, protagonist of J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984), temporally orphaned in Shanghai in the midst of WWII (Ballard 13). The sense of in-betweenness or no-belongingness can be found in a more recent mid-war Shanghai-based novel, Keiko Itoh's *My Shanghai, 1942–1946: A Novel* (2016). The novel consists of diary entries written by the protagonist, a Japanese woman arriving in the wartime Shanghai, and the story itself is based on the memories of Shanghai passed down to the author by her own mother. The novel depicts the remains of "cosmopolitan Shanghai" in the 1940s (Itoh 90), although it has been invaded by Japanese soldiers, leading to the protagonist Eiko's "torn allegiances" between Japan and Britain (Itoh 160). Eiko was born and brought up in England and after marrying her Japanese husband moved to Shanghai in the midst of the War. Her "international background" enables her to write her secret diary in English (Itoh 195) and to observe Japan's defeat with "a sense of detachment" (Itoh 316). All these novels explore the sense of in-betweenness or no-belongingness associated with their cultural identity in

cosmopolitan Shanghai of the early twentieth century.

Although "cosmopolitan" Shanghai vanished in 1945, the sense of in-betweenness this city evoked in people living there in the early twentieth century — although all the examples above are from works of fiction — is a sense shared even now in the present-day smaller, more globalised and more migrant world by cultural "orphans" who lost their homes a long while ago which continue being alive only in their childhood memories. Appiah, to whom we have referred earlier as one of the eminent contemporary cosmopolitans, makes a poignant remark, however briefly, on his own personal exile: "I live long way away from the home of my earliest memories. Like many, I return there from time to time, to visit family and friends. And, again like many, when I am there I feel both that I do and that I don't belong" (Appiah 90–91).

The Ishiguros in Cosmopolitan Shanghai

In an interview Ishiguro refers to his fascination with the cosmopolitan Shanghai of the 1920s and 1930s: "I've always been fascinated with that city as it was when my family lived there — what you could call the Old Shanghai [. . .]. It was a very cosmopolitan, decadent city, a kind of prototype for the international cities we have now like New York or London" (Rothenberg). In *Kazuo Ishiguro's Nagasaki* (2018), written in Japanese, Kyoko Hirai provides a detailed account of Ishiguro's family history including the fact that his father Shizuo and his grandfather Masaaki lived in Shanghai in the first half of the twentieth century.

According to Hirai, Ishiguro's grandfather, Masaaki, was born in Shiga Prefecture in Japan in 1884. In 1905, the second year of the Russo-Japanese War, Masaaki at the age of 21 moved to Shanghai and entered Tōa Dōbun Shoin, an elite vocational school for young Japanese men, established in

Shanghai in 1901 (Hirai 30). The school was founded to promote coexistence and coprosperity between China and Japan, and there the students learned a variety of subjects including business and Chinese. Masaaki, on graduating from Tōa Dōbun Shoin, began to work for a Japanese company in China and in his late thirties was headhunted by the Shanghai branch of Toyoda Cotton Mills (related to the present Toyota Motor Corporation) and worked there up until the early 1930s (Hirai 34). Toyoda Cotton Mills imported raw material mainly from the US as well as from China and India and produced cotton thread cloth in Shanghai. Masaaki became one of the two managing directors of Toyoda Cotton Mills, apparently dealing with American businessmen (Azuma 59).

His son Shizuo — Ishiguro's father — was born in Japan in 1920 and spent his first seven years in Shanghai, and thereafter moved with his mother and sisters to Nagasaki leaving their father behind and returning occasionally to Shanghai on his school holidays. Kazuo Ishiguro Papers, archived at the Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas, Austen, contain some of Shizuo's letters for Kazuo. In one of them Shizuo wrote that their house in Shanghai was located on "Youeng Road" (ie. Yu Yuen Road) near Jessfield Park lying to the west of the International Settlement (see Kazuo Ishiguro Papers, "Dear Kazuo"). Itoh's *Shanghai* describes the factories of Toyoda Cotton Mills located to the north of Jessfield Park (81). Shizuo recalled nostalgically how often he as a young child would go to Jessfield Park where he sat on a stone horse, whose texture he remembered even now. Shizuo also recalled in the letter that his father Masaaki had wanted him to enrol in the British public school nearby, but that the growing political instability in Shanghai in the mid-1920s thwarted his plan. In the conversation with Hirai, Shizuo recollected some of his childhood memories about Shanghai. For example, the house they lived in was so huge that it accommodated a military unit of about twenty English

soldiers from Lincolnshire, who guarded the International Settlement (Hirai 32). Shizuo told his son another episode from the last days of his childhood in Shanghai: before leaving Shanghai he was taken by Masaaki with a gun to meet a Chinese servant of theirs dying from cancer (Hunnewell 50). After the conversation with Shizuo in the late 1990s Ishiguro himself wrote down his memos meticulously and even drew a rough plan of the house in Shanghai — its first floor renovated in traditional Japanese style with *tatamis* and *fusumas* fitted in — on sheets of paper (Kazuo Ishiguro Papers, "Notes: SHANGHAI After Photographs Conversation with DADDY (Shizuo) 4th May '97").

In an interview by a Japanese essayist, Ishiguro emphasises that his father "was raised in the international community of Shanghai" (Agawa 145). He gives another interviewer a caricatural view of his father: "My father wasn't typically Japanese at all because he grew up in Shanghai. He had a Chinese characteristic, which was that when something bad happened, he smiled" (Hunnewell 27). Shizuo's career showed the trajectory of his international career movement: he did his research in the US in the 1950s and moved to Britain in 1960. Shizuo's experience of doing his research abroad might well have paved the way for his decision to move to England with his family. It is possible to make a further conjecture that Shizuo's childhood experience of cosmopolitan Shanghai and his being raised among the English, the American, the Chinese, and many other nationals provided him with many opportunities of gaining intimate familiarity with foreign cultures as such and at the same time taking his distance from them. Ishiguro often refers to the fact that when they came to England in 1960 his parents would hardly adopt English customs at all: "I grew up in this rather odd way where inside my home I had these Japanese parents who wanted to keep Japanese values" (Wachtel 23). Indeed, he says he learned from his father "how to deal with one's life, how to view one's life

with detachment" as well as how "to see something familiar from a little way away. To see it with a slightly cold look, as if one came from another planet" (Fukuoka 28, my translation). Looking back on his childhood days Ishiguro reminisces "a certain kind of distance" he felt towards his surroundings (Wachtel 23): "I wasn't brought up not to respect English customs, but there was this distance" (Morrison 35). Ishiguro links this particular sense of distance to the fact that he eventually became a writer:

> It has to do with my being raised looking at Britain through the eyes of my Japanese parents, with my being raised at a little distance from the society. I regarded what all my friends think either good or evil as just English natives' customs. It meant that I observed Britain with detachment. I suppose it helped my becoming a writer. (Ōno 210–11, my translation)

He speculates that the detachment with which his family looked to their surroundings came from the circumstances in which his family came to Britain; that is to say, they intended to *stay* in England only temporarily: "We have never as such emigrated to England. We didn't actually land in England in 1960 saying, now this is going to be our home, so let's adopt these customs; we were just *visiting*" (Wachtel 23, italics added).

Barbara Ohno recognises in the Ishiguros a sense of freedom from any cultural expectations they must have had back in Japan (138). Rachel Cooke remarks on so strange an impression she had when she met Ishiguro for the first time for her interview: "Kazuo Ishiguro might well be the most peculiar writer I've ever interviewed. [. . .] It is as if he has just beamed down from another planet and must explain everything to you — the Earthling — as if it were news." His parents', particularly Shizuo's, detached attitude towards foreign customs and cultures may have been

shaped far back in his childhood in Shanghai, where the cosmopolitan atmosphere — where multifarious cultures coexisted with people intermingling with, but culturally independent from, each other — allowed the Ishiguros to see them in their deep-set detached manner.

The sense of distance and detachment mentioned by Ishiguro, the sense which runs transgenerationally in the Ishiguros, brings us all the way back again to what cultural theorists call contemporary cosmopolitanism. Stuart Hall introduces Jeremy Waldron's definition of cosmopolitanism, which "means the ability to stand outside of having one's life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture" (Hall 26). Cosmopolitans' ability to stand outside is emphasised by David Held, a theorist of globalisation, too: cultural cosmopolitanism is "*the ability to stand outside a singular location (the location of one's birth, land, upbringing, conversion) and to mediate traditions*" (Held 58, italics in original). In his fictions Ishiguro draws on and even manipulates various geographical spaces from England and Japan to China, Eastern Europe, and America, demonstrating his cosmopolitan ability to refrain from being committed to any particular cultures and instead to make use of them for his fictions from his detached perspective, or from what Suter calls his "double perspective" (126). This ability to stand outside — an important characteristic of contemporary cosmopolitanism — has been nourished in Ishiguro in his early life with his Japanese parents but it also, it may safely be said, came from his ancestors' foreign experiences in cosmopolitan Shanghai.

In the early twentieth-century cosmopolitan Shanghai many different nationals came and lived together in the imperial context though in a somewhat strange harmony, frequently with their national interests in tension and perennially with their cultures being independent from *or* merging into one another. Shanghai as a local but at the same time a global

city reminds us of Leggett's argument that another contemporary cosmopolitan writer, Caryl Phillips, born in the Caribbean island of St Kitts and raised in England and now living in various cities across the globe, identifies himself with "his home city — Leeds — over his home country" (32). Phillips' identification with the local rather than the national correlates with Christopher's and Akira's identification with Shanghai as his "home village" (*WWWO* 256) as well as with Christopher's decision to accept London as his "home" in the end (*WWWO* 313). Also, just as Akira conceives Shanghai as "fragile" (*WWW* 256), Walkowitz claims that Caryl Phillips' "communities are made up of strangers whose affiliation is *fragile*, provisional, and often temporary" ("The Location of Literature" 541; italics added).

The fragility of Shanghai's International Settlement was evident considering its ultimate disappearance at the end of the Second World War — the disappearance presaged in Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* by the disappearances of Christopher's parents around 1910 and his subsequent departure literally from Shanghai and metaphorically from the protected and sheltered bubble of his early childhood. Despite its disappearance, cosmopolitan Shanghai and its atmosphere must have impregnated the Ishiguros. Although it "remains utopian and illusory," as Shao-Pin Luo writes, "an international hybrid space holds the only hope we have in this world, in order to live side by side, in harmony" (qtd. Sim 140). The Ishiguros' experiences of cosmopolitan Shanghai in the early twentieth century and their life in England since 1960 onwards have nourished transgenerational cosmopolitanism in them.

Conclusion

More than three decades back Ishiguro called himself "a kind of

homeless writer." In the conversation with Kenzaburo Oe, held in 1989, Ishiguro looked back on when he had become a writer: "I had no obvious social role because I wasn't a very English Englishman, and I wasn't a very Japanese Japanese either" (see Oe 58). We should note that Ishiguro spoke in the past tense. We do not know if this self-description applies to Ishiguro now. But if it did, we would be able to say that his sense of neither-Japanese-nor-English-ness, or his sense of *in-betweenness* (or we could even say his *both-ness* given what Suter regards as his double perspective), or his cultural detachment comes very much close to what cosmopolitans call the ability to *stand outside*. I have argued that Ishiguro's detached cosmopolitan view of the world derives both from the circumstances in which he was raised as an observer/outsider in England and from his father and grandfather's intercultural experiences in cosmopolitan Shanghai in the first half of the twentieth century. Transgenerational cosmopolitanism runs deep in the Ishiguros.

Furthermore, Ishiguro's transgenerational cosmopolitanism is what lies behind his anger at the racial and cultural exclusivism he believes Brexit implicates. His transgenerationally formulated cosmopolitanism is right there in his appeal to decency and fair-mindedness on the part of the British and in his urge for Britain to show compassion to outsiders in need. Ishiguro's call for compassion and decency on the part of Britain in the context of the twenty-first century is echoed by Bruce Robbins' argument for sympathy and decency that he reads into Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*. Robbins argues that "Ryder's long-suffering desire to please [strangers rather than his perhaps-family] would belong to a stretching of the human sensibility to accommodate the unaccustomed rhythms and ranges of sympathy that are demanded of us all in the oft-described age of global flows" (Robbins 435). *The Unconsoled* gives us the message, claims Robbins, that "in order to cohabit with less indecency in a world of immigrants,

refugees, and strangers, [. . .] we need a broader and more inclusive civility" (Robbins 439–40). This is what Britain ultimately decided not to do in 2016. Ishiguro's almost uncontrollable anger towards the result of the EU referendum is subtly reminiscent of Ryder's anger and frustration caused by his incessant failure to fulfil his duties, himself being harried by the importunities of people in the town he *visits*: "As I went on gazing out at the square, I found myself becoming increasingly angry. [. . .] Then my anger became mingled with a sense of despair and for a while I felt close to tears" (*Unconsoled* 413).

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