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Resurfacing Symptomatic Reading: Contrapuntal Memory and Postcolonial Method in *The Remains of the Day*

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This essay on The Remains of the Day *and modes of reading takes as its starting point the novel's historical setting of July 1956, which coincides with the beginning of the Suez crisis. Although the crisis never explicitly registers in the narrative, various moments of imperial affirmation and anxiety suggest that it may have the status of a symptom. I read with and against this supposition. In the essay's first section, I show how the repression of imperial crisis in Stevens's narrative is entangled with his memories of fascist appeasement and complicity. Prompted by the text's pervasive and self-conscious interest in Freudian figures of memory—its untimeliness and displacements—the second part argues that* The Remains of the Day *incorporates the symptom as an aesthetic and historical strategy in order to itself theorize a postcolonial symptomatology. The novel thus helps us complicate the proposition that symptomatic reading is something critics do to texts and suggests, in its allegory of symptomatic reading, the contours of a postcolonial interpretive method.*

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, Edward Said, symptomatic reading, contrapuntal reading, contrapuntal memory, screen memory, postcritical reading

The title of the English writer Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel, *The Remains of the Day*, evokes the twilight of the British Empire on which, for a time, the sun famously never set. But by 1956, when the novel opens, Britain's imperial fortunes have suffered a reversal. War in Europe and its demands on Britain's resources have hastened Indian independence in 1947 and Britain's withdrawal from Mandate Palestine in 1948; British exhaustion has emboldened Egypt's revolution in 1952 and Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal four years later, threatening Britain's passage to its colonies and protectorates via the Mediterranean and Red Seas—a diplomatic and political watershed that confirms the decline of Britain's global dominance.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the narrator, an aging English butler—"Stevens" to his employers and social betters, "Mr. Stevens" to the household staff he manages—embarks on a solitary driving tour of England's bucolic West Country. The journey

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takes place in July 1956, the first month of the Suez crisis, yet Stevens's solitary musings never expressly register the crisis. Instead, he entertains unreliable reflections on his long service at Darlington Hall, a great English house. Or, rather, a once great English house; purchased by an American Anglophile after the death of Stevens's longtime employer, Darlington Hall is now largely swathed in dustsheets. Stevens's memories are of the 1920s and 1930s, when he oversaw a staff of seventeen and served Lord Darlington, a "true old English gentleman," whose aristocratic concern with interwar diplomacy and affairs of state leads to his vigorous promotion of fascist appeasement and, in turn, his postwar political disgrace.[1] Alongside these recollections, Stevens narrates a series of encounters with the English rural landscape characterized by modes of seeing and description that rehearse familiar tropes of the colonial gaze.

The Suez crisis would thus seem to have the status of what Edward Said, observing the representational elision, by and large, of the colonies in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century English literature, describes as this literature's "resisting or avoiding [of the] other setting"—that is, the colonial setting.[2] In this essay, I read both with and against this supposition. In the first section, I show how the repression or denial of imperial crisis in Stevens's narrative is entangled with his memories of fascist appeasement and complicity. A contrapuntal reading that, in Said's terms, would restore the repressed colonial scene to consciousness in this case entails a form of contrapuntal memory attentive to the relationship between fascism and imperialism. Prompted by the text's pervasive and self-conscious interest in Freudian figures of memory—its untimeliness and displacements—the second part of the essay argues that *The Remains of the Day* incorporates the symptom as an aesthetic and historical strategy in order to itself theorize a postcolonial symptomatology. The novel thus helps us complicate the proposition that symptomatic reading is something critics do to texts and suggests, in its allegory of symptomatic reading, the contours of a postcolonial interpretive method.

Screening the "Other Setting"

It is with respect to the lost milieu of Darlington Hall's glory days in the 1920s and 1930s that Stevens is able to declare to his new employer—who urges the motoring trip upon him with the remark, "you fellows, you're always locked up in these big houses helping out, how do you ever get to see around this beautiful country of yours?"—that "it has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (4). Yet as Stevens sets off from Darlington Hall, his initial sense of the landscape's familiarity gives way to disorientation upon soon finding himself to have "gone beyond all previous boundaries" (23–24). In likening the sensations that accompany this passage to what a person might experience "setting sail in a ship, when one finally loses sight of the land," and in conveying his "alarm" at the thought of "speeding off . . . into a wilderness," Stevens's account echoes some of the characteristic moods and figures of explorers' tales of setting off for distant lands (24). What follows deepens these resonances, for in an effort to quell his anxiety Stevens must stop "to take stock, as it were," reestablishing his orientation to the landscape by surveying it from the crest of a steep hill (24). The purpose of this strenuous climb, however, is also to partake of a particular aesthetic pleasure travel affords: the taking-in of a glorious view, one that in the opinion of a passerby cannot be bettered "anywhere in the whole of England" (25). The achievement of the summit affords Stevens a vista that he describes in terms hewing to a series of recognizable images of England at its most picturesque: "field upon field rolling off into the far distance," "bordered by hedges and trees," and lightly interrupted by "dots in some of the distant fields which I assumed to be sheep." This picture of untouched natural beauty is framed and finished by the barest hint of a peaceable, benevolent human presence: "to my right, almost on the horizon, I thought I could see the square tower of a church" (26).[3]

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[1] Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 223. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

[2] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993] (New York: Vintage, 1994), 96. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

Stevens's encounter with this landscape is seemingly a scene of affirmation, inciting him to observe, "with some confidence," that "the English landscape at its finest . . . possesses a quality that the landscape of other nations, however more superficially dramatic, inevitably fail to possess" (28). Such confidence, Timothy Mitchell has taught us, is a characteristic of the regime of representation that imagines and renders the world as "an exhibit set for an observer in its midst."[4] But while this mode of seeing and its "remarkable claim to certainty or truth" asserts a "political decidedness" in the nineteenth-century imperial milieu Mitchell assesses, Stevens's version of this gaze is complicated by the loss of political confidence that attends the imperial crisis of 1956.[5] There is an implicit irony in Stevens's perspective from above, or his ascendance, at this moment of imperial decline. In light of this historical frame, we might read Stevens's observation that "we call this land of ours *Great* Britain . . . [and] the landscape of our country alone would justify the use of this lofty adjective" as an anxious assertion of how an England "alone," denuded of her empire, might continue to lay claim to a "greatness" that, historically, has never simply entailed moral and aesthetic estimations but also territorial ambitions (28).

These anxious invocations of national and imperial greatness might seem to invite a symptomatic reading that would identify the narrative's repression of Suez and imperial crisis.[6] However, this is hardly the whole of it. Stevens's recursive and equivocal narration allows the reader eventually to discern what Stevens himself concedes only reluctantly: that his devoted service at Darlington Hall was on behalf of an employer whose tireless pursuit of a political rapprochement between Britain and Nazi Germany allied him with Germany's ambassador to Britain, Joachim von Ribbentrop and, for a time, with Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. There are, then, two vexed histories at work in or at the edges of Stevens's consciousness, and conscience, both of which he holds at bay to varying degrees: that of imperial crisis and Britain's postwar decline and that of fascist appeasement and his own passivity, even complicity, with Darlington's political designs.

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[3] Of course, the topographical and perspectival position of a surveying view from above, which is here being ironized, is crucial to practices of imperial visuality and representation. For instance, in her classic account, Mary-Louise Pratt identifies what she calls "the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene," in which a traveler's narrative insists on the landscape's aesthetic and painterly qualities but also derives from the apparently "passive experience . . . of seeing" a dynamic that allows the viewer "if not to possess, at least to evaluate this scene." *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2e (New York: Routledge, 2007), 198, 200–01.

[4] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* [1988] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 9.

[5] Ibid., 12, 13.

[6] Ryan Trimm pays particular attention to the tropes of the colonial gaze that I have only briefly sketched here, in order to formulate an argument about the novel's critical reflections on English nationalism in the postwar period. Philip Whyte seems to read symptomatically when he notes of the novel's allusion to Suez "the discrepancy . . . between the magnitude and gravity of the monumental happenings thus evoked from afar and the manner in which they impinge so little on the events which, within the novel's actual economy, shape the life and feelings of the central protagonist." But Whyte is

What temporal relationship between these histories is established by the rhythm of his recollections? Stevens's tentative attempt to recount—and thus account for—the events of some twenty years earlier suggest that this reckoning with the past is both deferred and belated. Although deferral is an act of postponing the present into the future, and belatedness the quality of having arrived too late, both are temporal displacements. Indeed, Stevens's narration is saturated with these forms of untimeliness. The first lines of the novel indicate an anticipatory mood about the journey: "It seems increasingly likely that I really will undertake the expedition that has been preoccupying my imagination now for some days. An expedition, I should say, which I will undertake alone, in the comfort of Mr. Farraday's Ford; an expedition which, as I foresee it, will take me through much of the finest countryside of England to the West Country, and may keep me away from Darlington Hall for as much as five or six days" (3). Likelihood, foresight, and the future tense are characteristics of this passage. But the unremitting communiqué of almost every page is that Stevens is immersed in thoughts of the past, signaled by such phrases as "In fact, as I recall," "recalling the time," "in fact, I remember," "for when I look back," "I find myself going over in my mind again," and a host of variations on statements of this sort. All of these draw attention to Stevens's faculty of memory at work yet—as the insistently revisionary emphasis of some of these phrases suggests—his powers of recall prove tendentious.

The untimeliness of Stevens's engagement with the past, and his equivocal rendition of that past, are seemingly explained by the failures of judgment that Stevens must confront. The most egregious of these are the political incuriosity and passivity

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suspicious of what he describes as "an overabundance of symbolic weight" to this single allusion and orients his reading elsewhere, focusing on the "materiality" of the manor house, the "thick description" of which he imagines "counteract[s] this imbalance." Similarly, James Lang affirms the text's postcolonial status based on the reference to Suez yet writes: "colonial politics and issues affect Ishiguro's novel only marginally." Neither Whyte nor Lang reads the scant attention to Suez as significant for its very paucity. John P. McCombe and Susie O'Brien identify what O'Brien calls the novel's "postcolonial politics" primarily in what they consider its representation of the transition of imperial power from Britain to postwar America. Ryan Trimm, "Telling Positions: Country, Countryside, and Narration in *The Remains of the* Day," *Papers on Language and Literature* 45.2 (Spring 2009): 180–211; John P. McCombe, "The End of (Anthony) Eden: Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Midcentury Anglo-American Tensions," *Twentieth Century Literature* 48.1 (Spring 2002): 77–99; Philip Whyte, "The Treatment of Background in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*," in *Commonwealth* 30.1 (Autumn 2007): 75, 76, 77; James Lang, "Public Memory, Private History: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*," in *Clio* 29.2 (Winter 2000): 152; Susie O'Brien, "Serving a New World Order: Postcolonial Politics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.4 (Winter 1996): 788.

he adopts in the face of his employer's activities and his willing execution of his employer's request that two Jewish maids at Darlington Hall be let go from service. His account of the dismissal of the two women emerges gradually, and his first allusion to it is couched in severe words about the "salacious nonsense" of Darlington's purported anti-Semitism:

> Such claims can only arise from complete ignorance of the sort of gentleman his lordship was. Lord Darlington came to abhor anti-Semitism; I heard him express his disgust on several separate occasions when confronted with anti-Semitic sentiments. And the allegation that his lordship never allowed Jewish people to enter the house or any Jewish staff to be employed is utterly unfounded—except, perhaps, in respect to one very minor episode in the thirties which has been blown up out of all proportion. (137)

Stevens's concession that that there may be a nub of fact to these views appears at the very end of his thoughts—literally an afterthought separated grammatically and temporally from the rest by a dash. These minimizing remarks appear in the shortest of the novel's sections, so that the narrative form echoes the containment Stevens hopes to enact on the significance of the episode itself. It is only in the novel's next section that Stevens dilates on this "minor episode," opening with the words: "I feel I should perhaps return a moment to the question of his lordship's attitude to Jewish persons, since this whole issue of anti-Semitism, I realize, has become a rather sensitive one these days" (145). He thus circles back to the topic with an oblique reference to the genocide of the Jews, conceding that what could once be taken as insignificant may seem otherwise in hindsight. We might read Stevens's delayed but doubled recounting of this incident as an ambivalent attempt to come to terms with the past and with the question of what, if any, "regret or shame" he should feel "on my own account" (201).

However, there is more to the matter of these memories' timing than their belatedness, for they emerge in temporal coincidence with the crisis of empire of July 1956. In fact, for all the apparent reluctance and equivocation of Stevens's account of the fascist sympathies and antisemitism at Darlington Hall in the 1930s, these memories prove to be a welcome distraction from the present. "But I see I have become somewhat lost in these old memories" muses Stevens at the end of the analepsis that returns him for the second time to the dismissal of the Jewish staff. "This had never been my intention, but then it is probably no bad thing if in doing so I have at least avoided becoming unduly preoccupied with the events of this evening" (159). What is it about the present that incites thoughts of the past?

The evening in question includes the novel's single most explicit discussion of empire, in which Stevens, mistaken for a gentleman by his hosts in the small village of Moscombe and unwilling to disabuse them—finds himself in the middle of a political debate between a socialist doctor and a bluff liberal, Harry Smith, who believes in the dignity of the common Englishman on behalf of whose rights "we fought Hitler" (186). Stevens's repeated attempts to extricate himself with protestations of his exhaustion are unsuccessful until, "seizing what seemed a suitable moment," he rises from the table (192). Here, too, Stevens's sense of timing fails him, for before he can make his escape he is confronted with one last entreaty from Harry Smith, who would have wished to solicit his opinion—on decolonization:

> Mr Harry Smith leaned across his wife and said to Dr Carlisle: "I was hoping the gentleman would have a few words to say about your ideas on the Empire, Doctor." Then turning to me, he went on: "Our doctor here's for all kinds of little countries going independent. I don't have the learning to prove him wrong, though I know he is. But I'd have been interested to hear what the likes of yourself would have to say to him on the subject, sir." (192)

It is the question's belatedness that spares Stevens from having to articulate a position on this timely issue and, back in the safety of his own room, his memories of Darlington Hall in the politically fraught 1930s displace the discomfort of the evening for a time. It may be, then, that the seeming untimeliness of Stevens's memories is nothing of the sort, for the belatedness of memory in this instance serves a function—it defers the demands of the here and now.

Recollecting and remembering are channels for attention and, in Stevens's case, the means of diverting his attention from the present to the past. The question of attention and its distribution is thus just as important as the arrangement of Stevens's recollections.[7] Along with the profusion of terms indicating recall, Stevens continually finds himself in a state of preoccupation. The word *preoccupied* (or *preoccupying* and *preoccupy*) appears more than a dozen times, including in the novel's first sentence as well as in the passage I discussed previously, in which Stevens resists "becoming unduly preoccupied with the events" of his uncomfortable evening in Moscombe. He repeatedly uses the word to describe states of mental absorption, though even here there are bathetic shifts of register that suggest his inability to discriminate between greater or lesser degrees of importance. In the context of Stevens's actual occupation—that of a butler—his susceptibility to preoccupation ironizes his labors. Although he takes professional pride in his ability to manage and apportion his own and others' labor to best effect, noting of his prized staff plan that "the ability to draw up a good staff plan is the cornerstone of any decent butler's skills," the discrepancies of scale and value between the various objects of his attention suggest his mismanagement, in an ethical and historical sense, of the energies that fuel the work of memory (5).[8]

But Stevens's propensity to preoccupation is not just ironic. It is also a mechanism of psychic defense. In several instances, Stevens invokes "preoccupation" to describe, variously, a state of distraction in which one's attention is not in readiness; a form of misplaced or excessive attention; and a frame of mind in which one has been diverted away from a more pressing object of attention. In fact, while the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that, most recently, *preoccupation* designates the state of being engrossed in something or occupied with a matter that dominates or takes precedence, it also notes older variants in meaning: in the late nineteenth century, the term described "mental prepossession leading to a particular disposition or tendency," or "the occupation of a place in advance." Earlier still (and now obsolete), it is a rhetorical term: "a figure of speech in which objections are anticipated and prevented; anticipation, prolepsis."[9] Attention thus also functions to displace and rearrange significance, and, like belated or deferred memory, it has a temporal structure that anticipates in order to preempt, predispose, and prevent. In other words, it has a conscious or unconscious strategic dimension.

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[7] On attention in Ishiguro, among other modernist writers, see Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *On Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia, 2006), to which I am indebted. Her observation that "conditions of national and transnational affiliation depend on narrative patterns of attentiveness, relevance, perception and recognition" speaks directly to my observations here as to how Stevens's (mal)distribution of attention precludes his recognition of the historical and geopolitical connections between fascist appeasement in the 1930s and imperial crisis in the 1950s (6).

[8] For sustained reflections on scale and value in Ishiguro, see Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature," in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 40.3 (Summer 2007): 216–39.

Such strategic rearrangements and redirections of a subject's attention to memory, and particularly to the displacement of one memory by another, describe the dynamic of Freudian screen memory. That is, an apparent memory expressed as a visual image or scene, which in fact points toward a quite different memory not available to consciousness—one that is both displaced and disguised by but also preserved and encoded in the recollected image. On my reading, the novel in fact stages an instance of screen memory and its symptoms. We find it in the novel's final analeptic episode, as Stevens whiles away a morning, awaiting his much-anticipated meeting with Darlington Hall's housekeeper during the 1930s, whose unrequited and unspoken romance with Stevens constitutes the novel's failed love plot:

> One memory in particular has preoccupied me all morning—or, rather, a fragment of a memory, a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the years. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlour; I was not actually facing the door, but standing with my person half turned towards it, transfixed by indecision as to whether or not I should knock; for at that moment, as I recall, I had been struck by the conviction that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying. As I say, this moment has remained firmly embedded in my mind, as has the memory of the peculiar sensation I felt rising within me as I stood there like that. (212)

Here, memory—a particular memory—is explicitly the object of his "preoccupation." Despite the intensity of his attention and the vividness of the picture, however, the recollection of the scene is fraught with difficulty. The difficulty concerns the placement of this memory fragment in its proper time and context, and in accounting for the source and character of the "peculiar sensation" that attends it. Stevens continues:

> However, I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstances which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor. It occurs to me that elsewhere in attempting to gather such recollections, I may well have asserted that this memory derived from the minutes immediately after Miss Kenton's receiving news of her aunt's death; that is to say, the occasion when, having left her to be alone with her grief, I realized out in the corridor that I had not offered her my condolences. But now, having thought further,

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[9] Etymologically, it derives from the Latin *praeoccupat*, which in its English verb form survives until the eighteenth century and similarly means "to take possession of (the mind) in advance; to prepossess; to influence, bias, prejudice," also "to usurp," or "to meet in advance; anticipate; forestall, pre-empt."

> I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton's aunt—the evening, in fact, when the young Mr Cardinal turned up at Darlington Hall rather unexpectedly. (212)

Stevens realizes that the evening in question is the one on which Miss Kenton informs him of her plans to marry. He now recalls that on that evening, too, he stands poised before her door, struck by indecision as to whether he should knock, and conscious of Miss Kenton's grief, not at her aunt's death but at his own seeming indifference to her engagement. It is this pattern of (mis)remembering that approximates what Freud terms a *Deckerrinerung*, or cover memory, but whose usual English translation is "screen memory."

The symptom of a screen memory, Freud explains, is the seeming reversal of the expected "relation between the psychical significance of an experience and its retention in the memory," according to which "whatever seems important on account of its immediate or directly subsequent effects is recollected; whatever is judged to be inessential is forgotten."[10] In the case of a screen memory, however, the subject instead remembers something inessential or fragmentary, which analysis will reveal to be a memory that has "associatively *displaced*" the essential experience, whose affective power motivates remembrance on the one hand but resistance on the other.[11] According to Stevens, he remembers a moment apparently out of time, insisting that it has "remained firmly embedded in my mind," even as he concedes that he may have long misidentified its connection to the death of Miss Kenton's aunt. Moreover, he registers the presence of an affect whose connection to the scene in question is apparently inexplicable or unnamable. The suggestion of a screen memory at work is heightened by the literal screening off—or, as per the German *Deckerinnerung*, covering over—imposed by the door that stands between him and Miss Kenton. It seems, then, that Miss Kenton's announcement of her engagement is the painful memory Stevens covers over with the "substituted memory" of an earlier event (Miss Kenton's grief at her aunt's death), connected to the later one by what Freud terms "symbolic or similar links."[12]

As Stevens reassembles the memory of that evening, however, his account admits the presence of *another* closed door at which he gazes, behind which, screened from his view, matters of great import are taking place. It is there that he is hurrying, in fact, when he pauses outside Miss Kenton's closed door for a moment on the night of her engagement. This other door leads to the drawing room where, it is implied, Darlington is meeting secretly with the British prime minister and foreign minister, and with the German ambassador to Britain, von Ribbentrop, in pursuit of closer ties between Britain and Nazi Germany:

> I took up my usual position beneath the arch, and for the next hour or so, until, that is, the gentlemen finally departed, no event occurred which obliged me to move from my spot.

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[10] Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories" [1899], in *Collected Papers*, Vol 5., ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic, 1959), 47.

[11] Ibid., 51–52.

[12] Ibid., 52, 62.

> Nevertheless, that hour I spent standing there has stayed very vividly in my mind throughout the years. At first, my mood was—I do not mind admitting it—somewhat downcast. But then as I continued to stand there, a curious thing began to take place; that is to say, a deep feeling of triumph started to well up within me. I cannot remember to what extent I analyzed this feeling at the time, but today, looking back on it, it does not seem so difficult to account for. I had, after all, just come through an extremely trying evening. . . . And there across the hall, behind the very doors upon which my gaze was then resting, within the very room where I had just executed my duties, the most powerful gentlemen of Europe were conferring over the fate of our continent. (227)

The fragmentary remembrance of standing outside Miss Kenton's door, which Stevens, with difficulty, reattaches to the painful memory of her engagement is, in this reading, itself a screen memory that displaces the other, now more psychically difficult event of that day. Stevens has restored one memory to its proper place, but cannot discern the "symbolic or similar links" that connect the upstairs/downstairs and political/personal dramas of that selfsame evening. The "peculiar sensation" that Stevens cannot identify or explain when he recalls standing before Miss Kenton's door would thus correspond to the "deep feeling of triumph" Stevens experiences as he stands watch over the doors to Darlington's meeting.[13] Unanalyzed "at the time," Stevens's memory of triumph at his proximity to power now sits uneasily alongside the memory of the political ends for which that power exercises itself. It is on that same evening that the "young Mr Cardinal" (whose arrival punctuates his memory of standing before Miss Kenton's door) challenges Stevens's willingness to "just let all this go on before you . . . and never think to look at it for what it is" (212). The screening-off of Stevens's sight by these closed doors invokes this political and moral blindness, even as Stevens's preoccupation with this "vivid" image of the past enables his historical blindness in the present.

I am suggesting, then, that the dynamics of displacement and association characteristic of a screen memory may illuminate the (missed) connections between Stevens's belated reckoning with fascist appeasement and his own political quietism in the 1930s on the one hand, and, on the other, the current crisis of empire that threatens the structures of national and imperial feeling he cannot quite dislodge. Such a reading entails treating screen memory as a historical trope (rather than as a psychic strategy for contending with personal memories, as Freud initially theorized). Such a repurposing has been very appealing to cultural critics—indeed, Freud himself subsequently suggested screen memory's social and collective implications[14]—and it has been a favored figure among scholars of cultural memory to describe the dynamics of political and ideological contestations over what is remembered and commemorated.[15] In particular, critics have repeatedly turned to the structure of screen memory to describe a peculiar or suspect asymmetry in the mnemonic and commemorative energies afforded to apparently distinct histories; colonial and postcolonial histories as well as American slavery, they allege, have been subordinated to the memory of European fascism and antisemitism.[16] Most recently, scholars have sought to trace and restore connections between these historical narratives, unfurling their metonymic and associative dimensions rather than diagnosing where they might screen or block one another.[17] Such projects depend in part on establishing an archive with which to demonstrate the entanglement of supposedly distinct histories, and we can think of Ishiguro's novel as belonging to a body of literary, cinematic, and philosophical works

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[13] By extension, we might read Stevens's failed romance with Miss Kenton as part of this metonymic chain—a screen for a screen, romantic regret pointing to political shame. Such a view dovetails with Renata Salecl's caution against reading for depth vis-à-vis the novel's romance plot, and her argument that although the novel "impl[ies] that there is something suppressed or hidden behind this ideological machinery—passions of the individuals engaged in rituals, their secret 'true' loves," it is in fact "useless to search in Stevens for some hidden love that could not come out because of the rigid ritual he engaged himself in—all of his love is in the rituals." Renata Salecl, "I Can't Love You Unless I Give You Up," *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, eds. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Zizek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 180, 185.

[14] In his 1907 additions to the chapter on "Childhood Memories and Screen Memories" in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), he observed that screen memory has a collective as well as

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individual dimension, offering "a remarkable analogy with the childhood memories that a nation preserves in its store of legends and myths." Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901/1907), in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VI, trans. Alan Tyson, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), 48.

[15] Media theorist Marita Sturken's analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, was an influential early example of such a reading. Sturken employed the term *screen memory* both to describe elements of Maya Lin's design for the memorial (its reflective walls), as well as to characterize the dynamics of the political struggles over whose experiences of that conflict the memorial ought to recognize and commemorate. Marita Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Representations* 35 (Summer 1991): 118–42.

[16] In an influential reading of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, the film theorist Miriam Hansen suggested that the primacy of the Holocaust in American cultural discourse might function as a screen memory, blocking and displacing violent histories closer to home. A number of others have echoed and elaborated this caution (see, for instance, Dominick LaCapra on Albert Camus's writings on the Holocaust and on Algeria, and Andreas Huyssen on the Holocaust as a "universal trope" of transnational memory culture). Miriam Bratu Hansen, "*Schindler's List* Is Not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22.2 (Winter 1996): 292–312; Dominick LaCapra, "Rereading Camus's *The Fall* after Auschwitz and with Algeria," *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998): 73–94; Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14. But while Hansen and these other scholars' reflections on screen memory preserve the Freudian dynamics of the concept, some critics have forgone Freud's emphasis on displacement and association to argue instead for outright substitution in what Michael Rothberg has described as a form of zero-sum logic. As illustrative of this tendency, see, for instance, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* [1999] (New York: Mariner, 2000) and Walter Benn Michaels, "Plots Against America: Neoliberalism and Antiracism," *American Literary History* 18.2 (2006). Michael Rothberg has offered incisive analyses both of the pitfalls of what he calls "competitive memory" and the extent to which such a perspective ignores the associative and metonymic dynamics of Freudian screen memory in favor of a metaphorical relation of substitution. Michael Rothberg, "Against Zero-Sum Logic: A Response to Walter Benn Michaels," *American Literary History* 18.2 (2006): 303–11, and Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1–16. Relatedly, Neil Levy shows how the complex rhetorical and memorial status of the Holocaust in the politics of Australian cultural memory demands an alternative conceptual vocabulary, though, unlike Rothberg, without differentiating between displacement and substitution. Neil Levy, " 'No Sensible Comparison?' The Place of the Holocaust in Australia's History Wars," *History and Memory* 19.1 (Spring/Summer 2007): 124–56.

[17] See especially Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Debarati Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

that not only attend to the relationship of European fascism and Europe's overseas empire but that anticipated the current scholarly emphasis on understanding memory as "multidirectional" (Rothberg), "transferential" (Schwab), "connective" (Hirsch), "palimpsestic" (Silverman), and as "memory-in-complicity" (Sanyal).

Each of these terms or concept-metaphors proposes a figure for understanding the formation and workings of cultural memory as it draws together and cuts across historical narratives often treated as clearly separable. However, these figures also denote corresponding strategies of reading. What these strategies share, in my view, is an implicit commitment to the mode of reading that Edward Said termed "contrapuntal." As Said develops it in *Culture and Imperialism*, a "contrapuntal perspective" designates an intellectual stance that draws together and relates—Said's favored term is "connects"—"experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and place of development" (32).[18] As a strategy of reading or interpretation, it depends upon a paired movement; the recognition, first, of silences, asymmetries, displacements, and omissions in the cultural archive, imposed by "metropolitan history" or the "dominating discourse (51). And, second, the restoration of those elided narratives, effected by "extending our reading . . . to include what was once forcibly excluded" (67), in order to show how "knotted," "overlapping," and "interconnected" these experiences have been all along (32).

It is precisely such a shuttling movement between apparently "discrepant experience[s]," in order to reveal their historical entanglement and even mutual constitution, that characterizes recent attempts to recover a more expansive memory of events whose interconnections may have been matters of critical indifference, or have been conceived in terms of blockage, substitution, or displacement (32).[19] We can think, then, of the efforts to establish a "multidirectional" or "connective" account of the histories of European fascism and overseas colonialism as collectively engaged in a project of what we might call contrapuntal memory, thus underscoring the affiliations of such an approach with a postcolonial hermeneutics concerned with the figuration and interpretation of historical asymmetry, displacement, and entanglement.[20]

There is a significant difference, however, between Ishiguro's novel and the way I am reading it, and contrapuntal reading as Said describes and practices it in *Culture and Imperialism*. The itinerary of Said's contrapuntal method entails a symptomatic reading that identifies "what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" in the cultural archive, in order to pair and complete it with a reparative gesture that seeks "to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice" to "those other histories" that are displaced by but resistant to the dominant discourse (Said 66, 51). There are two things to note here. First, contrapuntal reading's reliance on both symptomatic and reparative interpretive practices complicates those recent critical descriptions of the affects and operations associated with suspicious or symptomatic reading, formulated by literary scholars intent on challenging the supposed overrepresentation of these practices among the methods of literary analysis. Said's description of a contrapuntal practice would seem to leave room for—indeed, to require—both of the ethical or affective postures toward the text that Eve Sedgwick describes as, variously, paranoid and reparative.[21] It's worth noting that Said in fact specifically tries to distinguish his approach from what he characterizes as the understandable sense, among like-minded critics, that "what seems most appropriate for the decolonizing scholar is . . . a hermeneutics of suspicion" (255). Indeed, Jonathan Arac goes so far as to observe that although "the *counter* in *counterpoint* is a term of opposition," "contrapuntal criticism is loving; it joins."[22] (Though surely the aggression and love that Arac identifies with oppositional and contrapuntal criticism, respectively, can no more be kept apart than Sedgwick's paranoid and reparative critical styles.) The upshot here is that although postcolonial readings of colonial literary texts are deeply vested and practiced in the hermeneutics of suspicion, contrapuntal reading suggests at least one version of a "critical hermeneutics" (I take the phrase from Heather Love) that would seem self-consciously to resist, at least in its aspirations, the contagious and monomaniacal ("mimetic" and "strong," in Sedgwick's terms) tendencies of a paranoid style.[23]

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[18] Elsewhere, Said described "the problem of connecting things to each other" as the "ethic" of the book. Edward Said, "Response—Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism: A Symposium," *Social Text* 40 (Autumn 1994): 23.

[19] Indeed, Hirsch's notion of "connective histories" has an obvious resonance with Said's understanding of the contrapuntal as the "perspective [that] is required in order to see connection[s]" (32), and to his view that seeking such connections is both a method and an ethic (see previous note). Hirsch is explicit that such a connective approach is reparative in Eve Sedgwick's sense; her readings depend on symptomatic interpretations whose implications can be theorized in connective or reparative terms. As I will discuss, such a doubled gesture also characterizes Said's contrapuntal reading.

[20] Kathryn Lachman has in fact turned to contrapuntality to describe dynamics very similar to those Rothberg and Hirsch term *multidirectional* or *connective*, both in the work of the novelist Assia Djebar but also in Said's own writings on Israel-Palestine. Kathryn Lachman, "The Allure of Counterpoint: History and Reconciliation in the Writings of Edward Said and Assia Djebar," *Research in African Literatures* 41.4 (Winter 2010): 162–86. Though not focused on memory per se, for related reflections see Aamir R. Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 25.1 (Autumn 1998): 95–25, and Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 18–32.

But, second, although Said's account of contrapuntal reading productively complicates some of these descriptions, Ishiguro's treatment of the postcolonial symptom draws our attention to questions about the different interpretive methods that characterize reading for the symptom in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature (that is, colonial literature), as Said does, and in Ishiguro's postcolonial text. I unfold both of these points at length in the second part of this essay. To lay the ground for this discussion, it remains to say a little more about the status of the symptom in *The Remains of the Day*.

Stevens's narrative, I have suggested, exemplifies a defective worldliness that cannot recognize the entanglement of European fascism and imperialism, and the shared forms of attachment and shame that attend them. But while the limits of

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[21] Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51.

[22] Jonathan Arac, "Criticism Between Opposition and Counterpoint," in *boundary 2* 25.2 (Summer 1998): 57. On the instability of the separation between paranoid and reparative, see Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," 128–29, but also cf. 141; on Sedgwick's productive ambivalence see Heather Love, "Truth and Consequences: Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52.2 (Spring 2010): 235–41. It is interesting to consider, though too far afield for me to pursue here, the extent to which Said's avowedly reparative orientation in *Culture and Imperialism* responds to and modifies what might be more aptly characterized as the paranoid ethos of *Orientalism*.

[23] Heather Love, "Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," *New Literary History* 41.2 (Spring 2010): 382.

Stevens's knowledge and his profound narrative unreliability function to dramatize and heighten the reader's distance from him, I am not implying (nor, I should think, is Ishiguro) that we read *The Remains of the Day* simply to make the character of Stevens an object of opprobrium for his historical blindness. Equally, my close reading of how the structure of screen memory manifests in the novel is not a symptomatic reading, in the sense of revealing that which the text does not know.[24] Rather, I am proposing that the novel thematizes and theorizes the logic of Freudian screen memory, representing it formally in order, first, to reflect on it as a historical symptom (or, better, trope) and, second, to stage the problem of the symptom and how to read it. We might say, then, that the novel offers an allegory of symptomatic reading. Ishiguro shows how Stevens remains blind to screened memories, even as the novel makes available to the reader—screens for us—the recognition that such blindness is at work on the narrator's part. This is a case where the English translation of *Deckerinnerung* opens up a meaning the original does not offer. "Screen memory" suggests an ambiguity, for although a screen can veil something from sight or screen it off, so that it is behind something else, the phrase is not limited to the figures of depth and dimensionality embedded in the German *Deckerinnerung*, or "cover memory"—a screen, of course, is also a surface off of which we read. As such, the novel's form both invites a reading that restores the relation of the historical scenes of fascism and imperialism in a contrapuntal fashion and also demands a reading that acknowledges and accounts for the text's screening or resurfacing of the symptom. It is to this latter question that the essay now turns.

Resurfacing Symptomatic Reading

My argument for the novel's self-conscious relationship to symptomatic reading emerges in part from the complexities that correspond to what I earlier described as the elision of the Suez crisis in Stevens's narrative. Of course, this provokes a question as to how the reader is able to date his journey in the first place. The novel is organized into eight parts, all but one of which bears a title page specifying a segment of Stevens's journey, the time of day, and the place, for instance, "Day One • Evening Salisbury."

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[24] Current debates about literary method and the status of symptomatic or suspicious reading have made it clear that critics hold competing views of symptomatic reading and the posture it entails toward texts and the work of interpreting them. Many of the accounts expressing skepticism of or exhaustion with symptomatic reading draw, explicitly or otherwise, on Fredric Jameson's formulation of the political unconscious of the text. It is therefore in this sense that I use the term, both because I take up these recent critiques on their own terms and because, as I will discuss, Said's contrapuntal readings track closely with Jameson's understanding of "interpretation proper" as that which recovers a text's "underside or *impensé* or *non-dit*"—what, ideologically, it "fails to realize" or "seeks . . . to repress." As others have warned, however, it is reductive to treat symptomatic reading as synonymous with Jameson's account in *The Political Unconscious*, thereby ignoring important differences between Jameson's understanding of symptomatic readings and Althusser's approach to reading Marx, from which Jameson adopts the term. Timothy Bewes, stressing what he describes as Althusser's "generous" mode of reading, makes the point especially forcefully, arguing that "the names Althusser and Jameson, then, stand in the current critical conversation for two different versions of symptomatic reading predicated upon two different relations to the symptom. . . . The first requires that we approach literary texts not as objects but as readings. . . . The opposite tendency is to turn a reading (a text) into an object." Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* [1981] (London: Routledge, 2002), 45, 34; Timothy Bewes, "Reading with the Grain: A New World in Literary Criticism," *Differences* 21.3 (2010): 8.

Only the title page of the first section, which reads "Prologue • July 1956 Darlington Hall," deviates from this organization: it identifies a part of the book, rather than a time span within the novel's narration, and it specifies a date that locates the novel's action as historically coincident with the crisis of empire. The date's hermeneutic interest is partly a consequence of its uncertain origins, its ambivalent enunciation. The appearance of a date indexing Suez on a title page labeled "Prologue" sets it in a presumably extra-diegetic space. As the only element of the text outside the ambit of Stevens's narrative, this self-conscious reference implies an author, whose "discreet" inclusion of the date prospectively corrects or reframes Stevens's narrative, anticipating its profound unreliability. It is as though the novel's form signals to the reader, over Stevens's head, as it were, what Stevens cannot see or refuses to know.

The uncertain character of this reference complicates a reading of Suez as the novel's repressed "other setting." To illustrate why this is so, let me turn again to *Culture and Imperialism*—this time to Said's seminal reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, in which he makes the case for the repression of the colonial scene and the corresponding necessity of a contrapuntal reading particularly forcefully. Austen, Said famously suggests, indicates that the world of Mansfield Park depends on the extraction of profit from Sir Thomas Bertram's colonial holdings in Antigua, yet suppresses, by and large, any representation of the Antiguan plantation and what transpires there. Sir Thomas is absent from Mansfield Park but "is never seen as *present* in Antigua"; as such, Antigua and the master's trip there serve only to facilitate, in both narrative and economic terms, the events at Mansfield Park that are the novel's focus (Said 90). The "hidden or allusive" imperial context of *Mansfield Park*, Said argues, is characteristic of canonical nineteenth-century texts, which we find "in the main as resisting or avoiding the other setting, which their formal inclusiveness, historical honesty, and prophetic suggestiveness cannot completely hide" (94, 96). It is from this representational imbalance that Said derives the contours of his reading, arguing that it is "precisely because Austen is so summary in one context, so provocatively rich in the other . . . [that] we are able to move in on the novel, reveal and accentuate the interdependence scarcely mentioned on its brilliant pages" (96).

Said's description of "mov[ing] in on the novel" is startling because it announces a purposeful, even aggressive, bent to his interpretive method. Such a "strong" interpretation, together with attentiveness to the asymmetry between the barely manifest and its potentially abundant significance, are the cornerstones of a symptomatic method which, in Fredric Jameson's description, entails pursuing those elements that have "remained unrealized in the surface of the text, which have failed to become manifest in the logic of the narrative, and which we can therefore read as what the text represses."[25] Said's approach to Austen's text would thus seem to construe "critical activity as . . . wresting truths from the hidden depths of resisting texts" and to announce its "confidence in the value of exposure."[26] True, when Said concludes that the artlessness with which characters mention the Antiguan plantation, if they mention it at all, "reveals [Austen] herself to be *assuming* (just as Fanny assumes, in both senses of the word) the importance of an empire to the situation at home," he is presupposing that author and character, text and narration, share the same limits of knowledge and of critical and imaginative capacity. In fact, critics have challenged Said's reading on precisely this score, charging that his excessively forceful symptomatic reading overlooks potential nuances and ironies generated by the non-coincidence of text and narrative.[27]

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[25] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 33.

[26] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108.1 (Fall 2009): 14; Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), xvi.

In contrast, I am arguing that *The Remains of the Day* (which draws self-consciously on the tradition of the English manor house novel of which *Mansfield Park* is an example[28]) resists such a conflation, not only because of its narrator's unreliability but also because the suggestive appearance of July 1956 at the edge of the novel's diegesis complicates a symptomatic reading intent on unearthing the "latent," "buried," "absent," or "silenced" aspects of the text.[29] But if the novel confounds the suspicious interpretive mode that Rita Felski has characterized as "digging down," it equally resists the attempt to draw a neat distinction between such an approach and one that would conversely attend to the text's surface, understood (in Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best's words) "to mean what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts; what is neither hidden nor hiding . . . what insists on being looked *at* rather than what we must train ourselves to see *through*."[30] Instead, if we recall the novel's staging of screen memory as that which

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27 Susan Fraiman questions what she terms Said's "collapsing of author into character," contending that as a consequence he misses Austen's "critique of the moral blight underlying Mansfield's beauty" and, by extension, Austen's skepticism about the "ethical basis for its authority both at home, and by implication, overseas." David Bartine and Eileen Maguire observe that Said's contrapuntal reading practice hews to a classical harmonic/tonal understanding of counterpoint, rather than the forms of atonal counterpoint associated with modern music that might throw into relief Austen's own fidelity to dissonances Said does not perceive: "Contrary to Said's reading which finds Austen establishing and sanctioning at the outset of the novel what she considers to be a form of harmony in which the imperial/paternal order is assumed to be positive . . . it is our contention that many clues provided by Austen tell us that the harmony Said finds the novel issuing from and returning to is a false harmony that cannot fully hide the dissonance that resists it." And George Boulukos—who questions on historical grounds Said's interpretation of the silence that follows Fanny's mention of the Antiguan estate as indicative of the novel's repression of the imperial context—takes issue not with Said's excessive suspicion, as Fraiman and Bartine and Maguire do, but with the hastiness of the recuperative move that equates "silence to complicity and speech to resistance." Said's interpretive commitments, Boulukos argues, are "to an ideal of interpretation as breaking the silences of the past, dependent on the model of the 'colonial unconscious.' " It's this dimension of contrapuntal reading, which calls for reading canonical works in such a way as "to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" that suggests its reparative aspirations (Said 66). Susan Fraiman, "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 21.4 (Summer 1995): 812, 810; David Bartine and Eileen Maguire, "Contrapuntal Critical Readings of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park:* Resolving Edward Said's Paradox," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 11.1 (Fall 2009): 41; see also their companion piece, David Bartine and Eileen Maguire, "Contrapuntal Critical Reading and Invitations to Invention," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 11.2 (Spring 2010): 38–71; and George E. Boulukos, "The Politics of Silence: 'Mansfield Park' and the Amelioration of Slavery," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 39.3 (Summer 2006): 361.

28 John J. Su, "Refiguring National Character: The Remains of the British Estate Novel," *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.3 (Fall 2002): 552–80.

29 "Present/absent, manifest/latent, and surface/depth" are among the conceptual pairs that Best and Marcus argue characterize symptomatic reading. Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 3-4.

30 Rita Felski, "Digging Down and Standing Back," in *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 52-84; Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 9. Felski, despite expressing reservations about Marcus and Best's turn to the figure of the surface, adopts very similar language. See Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 55 but cf. 6, 12.

both screens *from* and *for* view, it becomes clear that the screen we are supposed to be looking *at* and the screen, or cover, we are supposed to be looking *through* are inseparable. Felski, Marcus and Best, and Love have all argued that part of what distinguishes suspicious, symptomatic, or deep reading from their approach is the latter's willingness to approach the text in a spirit of receptiveness that makes space for "what the text itself is saying."[31] On my reading, *The Remains of the Day* complicate such oppositions because what the text articulates is its own profound interest in and engagement with the symptom as an aesthetic and political structure.

Ishiguro's interest in the symptom is coextensive with the work's postcolonial ethos. As Graham MacPhee has noted, the novel is awash in a mood of "post-imperial melancholy."[32] This has of course to do with Stevens's tales of tigers coolly dispatched by intrepid English butlers in the British Raj and his staunch assertion that a man in service who has served the empire can consider his life well spent. But it is also a characteristic of the period in the 1980s when the novel was written and published. In his well-known 1984 essay, "Outside the Whale," Salman Rushdie comments on the imperial nostalgia that has Thatcher's Britain in its grip. The films and TV shows of the "Raj revival," he suggests, are the most recent in that "long line of fake portraits" of the colonized world, produced to justify its domination.[33] But unlike the earlier, finer works they seek to copy, the common characteristic of these is their kitschiness. They are the aesthetic corollary of a blatantly revisionist politics and the symptoms of a "cultural psychosis," in which the past is made to compensate for a dismal present by displacing it.[34]

Rushdie's formulation of the past that displaces the present recalls the dynamics of memory and temporality I have been discussing. We might say that the novel, which was widely received as a commentary on this politics, works to ironize it. More specifically, however, I want to suggest that Ishiguro ironizes the form of attention that characterizes the dynamic of screen memory and of "pre-occupation." The novel's attentiveness to pre-occupation as a structure of preemption and displacement does not just concern the relationship of fascist appeasement in the 1930s and imperial crisis in the 1950s, but also the recollection and denial of these periods in the era of the text's publication. It is this quality that makes *The Remains of the Day* not just a post-Freudian novel but also a postcolonial one. It belongs to (and—in its attentiveness to Suez and the postwar paroxysms of empire—*knows* it belongs to) a moment of critical and historical disjuncture.

Symptomatic reading is not just something that critics do to texts, but that texts provoke, engage, and even allegorize; a work like *The Remains of the Day* generates, we might say, something like a symptomatic writing. To make a wholly obvious point but one that seems to me insufficiently acknowledged in these recent accounts of post-critical reading: why ought we to assume that the critic's and the aesthetic object's orientations or intentions—in Marcus and Best's sense of "what the text itself is saying"—diverge so profoundly or run counter to one another? Can we really so sharply disentangle the critic's practice from that of the text's or disregard the possibility that literature itself theorizes the symptom?[35] After all, the specific politics of the aesthetic that these recent studies have suggested motivate, even impel, symptomatic reading, are distributed across what they treat as the separable realms of the literary and the critical.[36] A postcolonial symptomatology, I am suggesting, is not just the province of critics but also of the texts they read *with*.[37]

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[31] Marcus and Best, "Surface Reading," 8. See also Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 12, 84; Love, "Close But Not Deep," 381, 386.

[32] Graham MacPhee, "Escape from Responsibility: Ideology and Storytelling in Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*," *College Literature* 38.1 (Winter 2011): 195.

[33] Salman Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 87, 89.

[34] Ibid., 92.

The relevance of all this to a specifically postcolonial practice of reading and interpretation is two-fold. The skeptical accounts of symptomatic or suspicious reading that I have been discussing here repeatedly underscore the centrality of these reading practices to critical work on race, gender, queer studies, and trauma. Although postcolonialism is surprisingly little mentioned, in light of how many revelatory and seminal readings in the field are virtuosic examples of just this method, postcolonial literary interpretation has certainly been enabled by and extended the richness of these methods. One need only think of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on *Jane Eyre* and *Frankenstein*, or Anne McClintock on H. Rider Haggard's sexed cartography, or Jenny Sharpe on the figure of rape in the colonial discourse of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, or the many productive postcolonial readings of early-modern texts to get a sense of the body of work I have in mind.[38] But these are all specifically readings of colonial texts—ones that seek "to interrupt," in Sharpe's words, the "long history" of colonialism's narrative by "drawing attention to the lack of coherence in colonial explanations."[39] How does a postcolonial reading practice read—or read with—those works, like *The Remains of the Day*, that self-consciously situate themselves on the postcolonial side of the colonial/postcolonial divide?[40] This is obviously a crude formulation, and I adopt it because it rephrases—now as a problem of interpretive method—the issue of the historical (dis)continuity of the colonial and the postcolonial that has so persistently attended the use and circulation of these terms.[41]

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[35] Felski takes up this question, observing that a tradition of literature that she identifies in particular with modernism "teaches readers to tread warily and read skeptically," in large part because of formal elements and devices, including metafiction, fragmentation, and unreliable narration; *The Remains of the Day* is in fact among her list of works that constitute "a virtual armada of deceptive or self-deceiving narrators who school readers to discount or delve behind obvious meaning." And yet, this tells us very little because although she notes that "rather than being innocent victims of suspicion, literary works are active instigators and perpetrators of it," she does not try to tell us why that may be the case or what it might mean, beyond indicating its connection to modernist aesthetics and to what she alludes to as the affinities between critique and "the agendas of those artists and writers estranged from, or at odds with, the mainstream of social life." Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 16, 42–43.

[36] It may be relevant to recall, as both Christopher Nealon and Ellen Rooney remind us, that Althusser's self-designated symptomatic reading of Marx is a profoundly sympathetic one. Christopher Nealon, "Reading on the Left," *Representations* 108.1 (2009): 23; Ellen Rooney, "Live Free or Describe: The Reading Effect and the Persistence of Form," *Differences* 21.3 (2010): 127.

[37] On reading with, or listening to, one's aesthetic objects in the context of these debates about method, see Nathan K. Hensley, "Curatorial Reading and Endless War," *Victorian Studies* 56.1 (2013): 59–83, and Tyler Bradway, "Critical Immodesty and Other Grammars for Aesthetic Agency," *Arcade: Literature, the Humanities, and the World,* Colloquy on "We, Reading, Now," curated by Dalglish Chew and Julie Orlemanski, http://arcade.stanford.edu/content/critical-immodesty-and-other-grammars-aesthetic-agency.

[38] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (Autumn 1985): 243–61; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–4; Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). In the early-modern context, see for instance the range of essays in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, eds. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998).

[39] Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, 8. For a methodological reflection on such strategies of reading the colonial archive, see Ato Quayson, "Postcolonial Historiography and the Problem of Local Knowledge," *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000), esp. 59–63.

To return once more to *Culture and Imperialism*, we find Said raising a version of this issue, and what it means, or ought to mean, for interpretive practice, when he assesses the bilious response to Rushdie's "Outside the Whale" essay, which takes Rushdie's criticism as proof that the British Empire is misunderstood by its ungrateful erstwhile subjects. About this response, Said observes: "how totalizing is its form, how all-enveloping its attitudes and gestures. . . . We suddenly find ourselves transported backward in time to the late nineteenth century" (22). To reproduce the totalizing idiom of the late-nineteenth century—"*after* decolonization, *after* the massive intellectual, moral, and imaginative overhaul and deconstruction of Western representation of the non-Western world, *after* the work of Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney"—is to try collapsing the present into the past as if nothing had changed in the interim (xx). Said's critique depends on his assertion of a historical transformation and the corresponding divide it imposes—or should impose—on critical sensibilities. That divide corresponds to the end of the "age of empire," which "more or less formerly ended with the dismantling of the great colonial structures after World War Two," one marker of which was the Suez crisis (7).

But his point—and the force of his own critical practice—is to make clear that what he deems a nineteenth-century critical sensibility is no more appropriate for reading *that* period's cultural archive than it is for the present. The continued resistance of critics in the present to attend to what gaps and elisions in the cultural archive might mean, Said suggests, need not take the form of overt rejections; it consists, too, of a studied inattentiveness to empire's formal and historical saturation of works by Austen, Dickens, Conrad, and others. These interpretive habits may not be willfully disingenuous, but they are hardly innocent, not least because in his view, the traces of empire's significance in these works are readily available, even obvious, if one is receptive to them. As he emphasizes, this literature is "manifestly and unconcealedly" a part of imperial processes and "makes constant references to itself as somehow participating in Europe's overseas expansion"; thus, he can note with some incredulity of one reading of *Howard's End* that it never mentions imperialism, "which in my reading of the book, is hard to miss, much less ignore" (xiv, 15, 65).

Yet how are we to reconcile this assertion of the self-evidence of empire with the repression of the colonial scene that he argues is also characteristic of this literature? A tension emerges between his sense that these works readily communicate their entanglement with empire and the interpretive strategies with which he elucidates their meaning. The literature he reads differs in the degree of its apparent interest in and acknowledgment of empire, and his readings suggest that these differences correspond to the growing importance and centrality of the empire in British public discourse and national culture. But the difference in the extent to which various works allow the evolving significance of empire into their formal and narrative signification also produces the particular texture of Said's readings—that is, the variable interpretive force with which he reads a text in order to demonstrate its entanglement with empire, as well as the extent to which he is able to read it against the grain or reveal certain ambivalences about empire immanent to the text.

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[40] With respect to this question, I find illuminating Christopher Nealon's incisive reframing of the apparent discontents of symptomatic reading; he restates the relationship between criticism and literature as a mimetic one, observing that criticism reads "literary texts for marks of how they imagine themselves as literary" in a way that is "referential of literature's shifting position in the history of 'social effort.' " Christopher Nealon, "Reading on the Left," *Representations* 108.1 (Summer 2009): 22–50.

[41] An early touchstone, of course, is Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term Post-Colonialism," in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 84–98. See also, in the same issue, Ella Shohat, "Notes on the Post-Colonial," in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 99–113.

For instance, of Dickens's *Great Expectations,* from 1861, Said observes that Magwitch's degraded condition and the prohibition against his return from Australia depend not only on the colony's penal associations and his criminal condition but also on an imperial logic that assures his illegitimacy. He differentiates this narrative configuration from the one that prevails by the end of the nineteenth century, when "the empire is no longer merely a shadowy presence, or embodied merely in the unwelcome appearance of a fugitive convict" but constitutes instead "a central area of concern" (xvi–xvii). If Said's reading of Dickens turns on his elaboration of Magwitch's status, which is shadowy and unwelcome but nonetheless central to the plot, he is able to derive from empire's more robust appearance in Conrad, for instance, a proleptically critical quality in Conrad's exclusion of the colonized from representation and his simultaneous allowance of empire's historical contingency (25).

In contrast, if we work backward in time from Dickens, we come to Said's reading of *Mansfield Park*, which produces his most forcefully symptomatic reading. Such a method is here authorized by what Said treats as the situation of the novel, in which history and representational style collude in a way that demands a particular reading. It is no coincidence that *Mansfield Park* belongs to what he calls a "pre-imperialist" historical formation when empire's institutional forms are still developing and when it is considerably less central in national discourse. Unlike Conrad, who he argues is able to "date" imperialism, or Dickens, whose plot admits Magwitch's return from the colonial repressed, albeit as a despised figure, Austen, in Said's view, barely admits of such friction.

The slightness of empire's appearance in Austen, which corresponds to her historical situation, effectively demands a different degree of interpretive pressure from the critic in order to make visible the colonial setting. This is also the place, however, where the contrapuntal gesture appears suddenly ungainly, or rings somewhat tinnily, as Said shifts from a geographical or spatial sense of the contrapuntal, on which he otherwise insists, to a temporal and historical register. It is here that Said makes the observation, which I have discussed at some length, that "in order more accurately to read works like *Mansfield Park*, we have to see them in the main as resisting or avoiding that other setting, which their formal inclusiveness, historical honesty, and prophetic suggestiveness cannot completely hide." But while the "other setting" designates the colonial scene—that of Antigua, where Sir Thomas owns slaves and has "the power to come and go at will"—it also proves to be the scene of a temporality removed from Austen's own. This becomes clear when Said follows this point by asserting that "in time there would no longer be a dead silence when slavery was spoken of, and the subject became central to a new understanding of what Europe was" (96). This avowal, which suggests a progression from past to present, loses something of the complexity of the contrapuntal, and especially of that mode of theorizing the entanglements and displacements of not just the past and present but of multiple intersecting histories that I have been describing as a contrapuntal practice of memory.[42] Or, to put it in slightly different terms, Said's symptomatic reading of *Mansfield Park* sits uneasily alongside the attempt to fold Austen's novel into a literary history whose increasing registration of the existence of empire suggests the possibility that "in time," the symptomatic silence of the colonial will have given way.

Ali Behdad has suggested that "the critical incentive behind postcolonial anamnesia is to counter the nostalgic forgetfulness that obscures the genealogy of the science of imperialism and so allows for its return in new forms. The anamnesiac reading is therefore a 'symptomatic' reading, one that unveils what the object holds back and exposes what it represses in its consciousness."[43] In this essay, I have argued that *The Remains of the Day* offers a literary model of a contrapuntal engagement with the past without historical or interpretive closure, and an engagement with the structure of the symptom that, in its allegory of symptomatic reading, suggests the contours of both a postcolonial literary and interpretive practice.

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[42] If, as Leela Gandhi has suggested, "postcolonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath," which entails "returning to the colonial scene" in order to "disclos[e]" its elements (4), it is equally an anamnesic practice beset by its own belatedness and incompleteness—the very source of the ambivalent temporality embedded in the term *postcolonial*. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 4, 5–8.

[43] Ali Behdad, "*Une Pratique Sauvage*: Postcolonial Belatedness and Cultural Politics," *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 77.