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A Study of the Irony in *A Pale View of Hills*

《远山淡影》中的反讽解读

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A Study of the Irony in *A Pale View of Hills*

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摘 要

英国作家石黑一雄（1954-）是 2017 年诺贝尔文学奖获得者，在世界范围内拥有巨大影响力。《远山淡影》是石黑一雄出版于 1982 年的小说处女作。凭借这部小说，石黑一雄获得了温尼弗雷德·霍尔比纪念奖。《远山淡影》以第一人称叙事的方式展开，叙述者悦子以回忆过去的方式将自己遭受的战争创伤和对女儿的负罪感假托到一对虚构的母女身上，以疗愈内心的创伤和摆脱内心的煎熬。从表面上看，《远山淡影》的语言措辞平实简练，小说中主要人物的性格也显得冷静克制，然而通过细读文本读者能够发现，平实简练的语言组合实际上表现出了深刻复杂的思想内涵，人物形象表面上的冷静克制却恰恰反映出主人公内心情感的刻意压制和掩饰。可以说，无论是从语言、文本结构还是审美效果来看，小说中存在大量的反讽。反讽是《远山淡影》突出的风格特征，是我们理解这部作品的重要视角。

本论文借助 D·C 米克和韦恩·布斯等人的反讽理论，具体分析《远山淡影》中呈现出的三种反讽类型，以深化对作品的认识，挖掘这部小说的艺术价值。

论文由引言、四个章节和结论六个部分组成。

引言部分简要介绍石黑一雄和《远山淡影》的主要内容，对《远山淡影》进行国内外相关研究的文献综述，并简要介绍了本文的研究意义。

第一章是本论文的理论框架，介绍反讽的起源和发展历程、反讽的不同定义和反讽的类型划分。

第二章介绍言语反讽的定义并分析言语反讽在《远山淡影》中的具体运用。言语反讽主要表现为通过语言层面上的表面意义与实际意义的不一致达到反讽的效果。小说中的言语反讽集中体现在悦子等人在语言上的低调陈述和独白上的表里不一，以及文本在其它描述性语言中存在的表面意义与实际意义的反差。言语反讽的运用使得主要人物的性格表现得更为立体化也更为复杂，形象呈现更加丰满生动。

第三章引入情景反讽的概念并结合文本分析情景反讽在《远山淡影》中的体现。《远山淡影》中的情景反讽主要体现在小说的情节安排和部分场景的描述上，表现为事态的发展与人的愿望之间构成反差和事态发展与读者预想构成反差两种类型。情景反讽的运用提供了更广阔地展示小说中女主人公悦子在现实

生活中经历的困境、创伤和自我救赎的努力，使小说的情节更富有戏剧性，也使得小说人物形象展现得更为真实和饱满。

第四章分析《远山淡影》中的结构反讽。《远山淡影》中典型的第一人称不可靠叙述从整体上挑战甚至颠覆了主人公悦子的回忆以及她的自我形象塑造，为读者对小说的解读提供了巨大空间和可能性。结构反讽的运用表现了小说作者对悦子所代表的现代人的物质和精神上的生存状态的关注和反思。

论文最后是结论部分。《远山淡影》是石黑一雄的处女作，其中的反讽运用，拓展了小说的书写空间，深化了小说的主题。《远山淡影》的反讽书写是石黑一雄写作风格的重要体现，对石黑一雄之后的作品创作产生了重要影响。

关键词：石黑一雄；《远山淡影》；言语反讽；情景反讽；结构反讽

Abstract

British writer Kazuo Ishiguro (1954-), winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017, is a prominent writer who has great influence throughout the world.

A Pale View of Hills (1982) is the first novel written by Kazuo Ishiguro. The novel won the 1982 Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize. It is written in the first-person point of view. The narrator Etsuko transfers her trauma of war and her sense of guilt to her daughter to a pair of fictional mother and daughter in order to heal her own trauma and get rid of her inner suffering. On the surface, the language of *A Pale View of Hills* is plain and concise, and the image of the major character is calm and restrained. However, a careful reading will help us to find that the novel's plain and concise language combination shows profound and complex ideological connotation, and the calm and restraint tone of the heroine actually reflects the deliberate suppression and disguise of her inner feelings, which is exactly the embodiment of the use of irony. Irony is therefore one of the remarkable features of *A Pale View of Hills* and is also an important perspective for us to explore the meanings and themes of the novel.

With reference to the irony theory of D.C. Muecke and Wayne Booth, this thesis aims to analyze the three different types of irony in *A Pale View of Hills* and explore the artistic effect and literary value of this novel.

The thesis consists of six parts, which are the introduction, four chapters and the conclusion.

The introduction part first briefly introduces Kazuo Ishiguro and the main plot of *A Pale View of Hills*, then makes a literature review of *A Pale View of Hills*, and introduces the research significance and overall structure of this thesis in the end.

The first chapter introduces the origin and development of irony, the definition of irony and the classification of irony, which seem to be diversified and complicated.

The second chapter gives a definition of verbal irony and analyzes the application of it in *A Pale View of Hills*. In the novel, verbal irony is mainly manifested through the opposition between the literal meaning of the text and the

actual meaning. This chapter mainly analyzes the characters' languages and other descriptive languages in the novel to explore the use of verbal irony. The use of verbal irony makes the character of the protagonist more three-dimensional, and the character image more vivid.

The third chapter analyzes the use of situational irony in *A Pale View of Hills*. Situational irony includes two major types, one is the contrast between the development of the situation and the desire of the person, and the other is the contrast between the development of the situation and the expectations of the reader. Situational irony is mainly reflected in the plot development and situations of the novel. The use of situational irony makes the plot of the novel more dramatic, making the character of the novel more realistic and the theme of the novel more profound.

The fourth chapter analyzes the structural irony caused by the unreliable narration of *A Pale View of Hills*. The acknowledgment or recognition of an unreliable narrator may be exactly what the author or text intended to negate. *A Pale View of Hills* has adopted a typical first-person point of view. The chapter explores the narrative effect of the novel with reference to Booth's rhetoric narration theory. The use of structural irony has greatly expanded the narrative space of the novel, highlighted the complex attitudes and feelings of the novelist toward the character in the novel and people's real life.

The last part is Conclusion. *A Pale View of Hills* is the debut of Kazuo Ishiguro. The use of irony expands the writing space of the novel and embodies the attitude of Kazuo Ishiguro to the characters in the novel and the social environment in which it is located. The use of irony in *A Pale View of Hills* is a remarkable feature of this novel as well as of Kazuo Ishiguro's writing style, which has had an important impact on the creation of his later works.

Key Words: Kazuo Ishiguro; *A Pale View of Hills*; verbal irony; situational irony; structural irony

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Introduction

0.1 Kazuo Ishiguro and *A Pale View of Hills*

Kazuo Ishiguro (1954-), one of the most important Anglo-Japanese novelists in contemporary British literature, wins the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2017. The Swedish Academy describes him in its citation as a writer “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2017-Press Release”. Nobel Prize. Retrieved 5 October 2017). Due to his Japanese background, Kazuo Ishiguro is named as one of the “Three Immigrant Giants” together with Salman Rushdie (1947-) and V S. Naipaul (1932 - 2018) .

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan in 1954. When he was five years old, he moved to the United Kingdom with his family because his father was invited to work in UK. From then on, Ishiguro did not return to Japan until 1989. Therefore, Ishiguro has received a typical English education since childhood, and this is the reason why he can write with the most standard and elegant English later. From 1974 to 1978, he studied at the University of Kent where he gained a degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and Philosophy. After graduation, Ishiguro once spent a year writing fiction and began his studies at the University of East Anglia where he studied with the famous British novelists Malcolm Bradbury (1932 - 2000) and Angela Carter (1940 - 1992) . He gained his master degree of Arts in Creative Writing in 1980.

Kazuo Ishiguro’s writing career formally began in 1982, when his first novel *A Pale View of Hills* was published. Up to now, Kazuo Ishiguro has written seven novels, one collection of short stories and four screenplays. After *A Pale View of Hills*, Kazuo Ishiguro successively published *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), *The Remains of the Day* (1989), *The Unconsoled* (1995), *When We were Orphans* (2000), *Never Let Me Go* (2005), and *The Buried Giant* (2015), etc. His collection of short stories entitled *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* was published in 2009.

In addition, Ishiguro is also a screen playwright. His four original screenplays are *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* (1984), *The Gourmet* (1987), *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003), and *The White Countess* (2005). Generally, every work of Kazuo Ishiguro is finely crafted, which won him numerous prizes and praises, and has been translated into many foreign languages.

Ishiguro's first novel *A Pale View of Hills*, with its special Japanese background and unique narrative skills has attracted the public's attention and obtained the Royal Society of Winifred Holtby Prize in 1982. In 1983, Ishiguro was selected on the best young British novelist list of *The Granta*, which is the most famous literature magazine in Britain. Ishiguro's second book *An Artist of the Floating World*, also set its background in Japan, was published in 1986 and acquired the Whitbread Book of the Year Awards, which was issued by the UK and Ireland Library Association, and became a Booker nominator later. His third book, *The Remains of the Day*, won the Booker Prize and has been adapted to a movie in 1993, which was nominated for eight Academy Awards and made Ishiguro a well-known international writer. His fourth book, *The Unconsoled*, won the Cheltenham Prize for Literature and Art because of its post-modern elements; the fifth book, *When We were Orphans*, was written in the style of a detective story and was shortlisted for the 2000 Man Booker Prize. His sixth book, *Never Let Me Go*, was about human cloning and was shortlisted for the 2005 Booker Prize. His latest book, *The Buried Giant*, is a fantasy novel and was nominated for the 2016 World Fantasy Award for Best Novel, and the 2016 Mythopoeic Award for Adult Literature. It was also placed sixth in the 2016 Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel.

Kazuo Ishiguro's writing is quite different from that of most contemporary immigrant writers. Since Kazuo Ishiguro receives education mainly in the English circumstance, his cultural values are more like the British instead of the Japanese, though there are still more or less Japanese elements in his writing. Ishiguro once says that his impression on Japan is mainly from the Japanese movies and the talks among his family members. He has always possessed "a strong emotional tie" (Shaffer, 2008: 53) to Japan, so the Japanese flavor would be put into several of his works as well. Looking at Ishiguro's oeuvre, a series of clear and coherent themes

emerge. Barry Lewis of Sunderland University has carried out a critical study of Ishiguro's work and noted that "notions of identity and how an individual sustains a sense of self as historical circumstances cast a new light on events is something he returns to time and again. It links to the sense of how memory might be used as a tool to keep your dignity and maintain a sense of self." (Lewis, 2000: 106) As for his novels, Ishiguro says he does not read books of other writers much, but he admits his writing is very much inspired by Dostoyevsky who is a master of the narrative technique and psychological description. As for the evaluation and identity of himself, Ishiguro prefers to be named as an international writer instead of an immigrant writer, because his writing does not incline to impose the condition of a specific nation or country but explores the inner side of human beings as a whole to connect readers under different cultural backgrounds. Thus, his works address mostly universal themes such as history, memory and mortality, which provide groundbreaking explorations of diverse areas ranging from post-human and minor literature to ethics, science fiction and even musical imagination.

A Pale View of Hills is composed of 11 chapters. The main story is set in the past, specifically in the postwar of the Second World War in Nagasaki, Japan, but is narrated mainly in the present tense by the protagonist Etsuko in the first-person point of view. Thus, the novel can be read in two layers, one is the protagonist's present life and the other is the protagonist's recollection of the past. About the present life, we know that Etsuko is a twice-married Japanese widow who lives now alone in southern England. Etsuko's elder daughter Keiko commits suicide recently, and her second daughter Niki returns home to console her mother. Just during this visit from Niki, Etsuko reflects on her own life as a young woman in Japan, and how she left that country to live in England. From Etsuko's description, we know something about her marriages. She once married a Japanese husband named Jiro and they had a daughter Keiko, but a few years later Etsuko divorces Jiro and marries a British man who brings her to England. Keiko comes to England with her mother and lives with the new father. Later, Etsuko and her new husband have a daughter Niki. In England, Keiko becomes increasingly solitary and antisocial and finally she commits suicide. In Etsuko's recollection, she tells her daughter Niki that she has a friend named

Sachiko in Japan. Sachiko has a daughter with the name of Mariko, a girl whom Etsuko's memory paints as exceptionally solitary and antisocial. Sachiko plans to take Mariko to America with an American soldier Frank. Unfortunately, Sachiko's wish is never fulfilled and her relationship with her daughter becomes worse and worse. Clearly, Sachiko's story bears striking similarities to Etsuko's. On the whole, the story centers on Etsuko's gentle meditation on past pain and nostalgia, making use of fantasy and displacement to subtly and indirectly reveal the sadness and guilt of herself after losing her first-born daughter, her two husbands and her homeland.

0.2 Literature Review

Kazuo Ishiguro has been widely recognized as an excellent writer since the 1980s and the study of his works has been carried out a lot. However, as the first novel of Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* is more or less neglected by the critics, compared with Ishiguro's later novels, such as, *The Remains of the Day* or *When We were Orphans*.

0.2.1 Studies Abroad

The study of Kazuo Ishiguro and his works can be divided into three aspects, that is, research monographs, literature reviews and critical articles. British critics Barry Lewis's *Kazuo Ishiguro* (2000) and Wai-chew Sim's *Kazuo Ishiguro* (2009) are typical examples of research monographs on Ishiguro. Barry Lewis's monograph was published in 2000, which mainly introduces the creation and life of Ishiguro and the evaluation of his published novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*, and the expectation of his new book entitled *When We were Orphans*. Wai-chew Sim's monograph was published about ten years later than Barry Lewis's. Therefore it has more comprehensive contents which cover Kazuo Ishiguro's dual cultural background, and then take an overview of his six novels. These two monographs study Ishiguro mainly from the perspectives of his identity as an international writer, culture, and post-colonialism.

Brian W. Shaffer's *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* in 1998 and Brian W. Shaffer

and Cynthia F. Wong's *Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro* in 2008 are the typical literature review collections of Ishiguro. *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (1998) contains some British writers' criticism and interviews with Ishiguro which helps the readers have an overall understanding of Ishiguro and his major works. *Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro* (2008) has much more detailed criticism and interviews which study Ishiguro from the perspectives of narratology, psychoanalytic criticism, and the theme of memory.

As for the study of *A Pale View of Hills*, researches are mainly categorized into three perspectives, which are the theme, narration strategy, and cross-cultural studies.

Memory in *A Pale View of Hills* is a theme which has been frequently studied by the critics. With reference to Maurice Blanchot's definition of self-dispossession, Cynthia Wong analyzes the major characters in *A Pale View of Hills* and points out that "they remember in order to forget; they reconstruct the past in an effort to obliterate it" (Shaffer and Wong, 2008: 128). She thinks that remembering the pain of the past helps Etsuko alleviate her horror, sorrow and guilt of Keiko's death. Brian Shaffer analyzes Etsuko's experiences from the perspective of psychology and emphasizes the suppression of Etsuko's memory in his work *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (Shaffer, 1998:32) which was echoed by Ken Eckert in "Evasion and the Unsaid in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*" (Eckert, 2012: 77-92). The second theme much explored by critics is Etsuko's maternal identity and cultural displacement. In *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspective* (1988), Sean Matthews and Justine Baillie explore Etsuko's maternal identity and find out her maternal responsibility for her daughter's death from the perspective of feminist theory. (Matthews and Baillie, 1988: 158-192) Barry Lewis summarizes the displacements in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro, which include geographical dislocation, cognitive dislocation, psychological dislocation and family dislocation, etc. (Lewis, 2000: 159-186)

There are also many critics who focus on the narrative skills of the novel. Cynthia Wong discusses the narration gap and blind spots in Etsuko's memories. (Shaffer and Wong, 2008: 149-158) Gregory Mason puts forward in his interview with Ishiguro that the narrator is unreliable to some extent so that the reader should

find out the meaning behind the unreliable narration. Francois Gallix also discusses the significance of the unreliability of the narrator. He mentions that “the deep reasons why they all have to be unreliable narrators, in the end they just have to be unreliable in order to face themselves”. (Shaffer and Wong, 2008: 139-152) Don Swain figures out that Ishiguro’s technique of using narrative gaps and spaces contributes to the presentation of self-deception (169-178). Ben Howard discusses the “balanced syntax and precise diction” (182) of Ishiguro’s elegant style represented by “civil” speech (184).

Some critics carry out cross-cultural studies in relation to other works. Wai-Chew Sim points out that this novel is a rewriting of Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* by using critique in the novel’s resolution of the propensities of metropolitan cultural consumption. And he compares *A Pale View of Hills* with Ishiguro’s short story *A Family Supper*, and finds out that the former “adopts a bathetic strategy targeting the essentialist assumptions that readers bring to their encounters within texts” (Wai-chew Sim, 2009: 42). Brian Shaffer makes a cursory reference to *Madama Butterfly* and James Joyce’s “Eveline” from *Dubliners* as a potential inter-text of *A Pale View of Hills* (Shaffer, 1998:54).

0.2.2 Studies at Home

Compared with the researches abroad, academic studies of *A Pale View of Hills* in China began relatively late, but after the Chinese version of Ishiguro’s novels came to the market, the related academic researches flourish and some excellent research appear. Studies at Home are mainly from the following perspectives:

The first perspective is the narrative studies of the novel. Lin Zhen writes about the unreliable narration and readers’ interpretations in her paper “Unreliable Narration in *A Pale View of Hills*, and its Influences on Readers’ Interpretations”. Tian Lifang combines stylistics and narratology in her MA thesis “An Analysis of the Unreliable Homodiegetic Narration in *A Pale View of Hills*”, which gives a new perspective to see the novel’s features of narration. Huang Li examines the meaning of the unreliable narration of Etsuko in her MA thesis “Finding the Self in Memory: On the Unreliable Narration in *A Pale View of Hills*”. Huang emphasizes the therapeutic

function of unreliable narration.

The second perspective is about the theme of the novel. Critics explore themes of this novel from different aspects, such as memory, trauma, self-deception and self-identity. Yu-Cheng Lee examines the forms and meanings of Etsuko's memories in his article "Reinventing the Past in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*".

The third type concentrates on the cross-cultural studies of the novel. Bu Zhaoxia makes a research on the protagonist's sense of guilt from the cross-cultural perspective in her paper "Escaping from the Sense of Guilt: On the Cross-Cultural Insights in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*". In the paper "The Divisive Self in 'Distant Shadow' and Local Ethnic Identity", Chen Jinxing holds that the uncertainty in the novel comes from Etsuko's self-division.

In conclusion, the studies at home and abroad of *A Pale View of Hills* both develop further and further. Comparatively speaking, the foreign studies are more comprehensive and profound, covering different levels and wide ranges of field, while domestic studies are still at the beginning stage with limited perspectives and achievements.

0.3 Significance of the Study

Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the most important Anglo-Japanese novelists in contemporary British literature world and he is also hailed as a great ironist. However, the systematic study of Kazuo Ishiguro's art of irony, including the study of irony in *A Pale View of Hills*, the first work to bring him literary fame, is still insufficient both at home and abroad. This thesis explores Kazuo Ishiguro's irony presentation embedded in *A Pale View of Hills*, and the functions and effects that ironies contribute to the whole work.

The interpretation of irony is both challenging and rewarding. Through exploring the characters from the perspective of irony, this thesis aims to study *A Pale View of Hills* from the perspective of writing skills, and explore the application of irony in the novel which is a remarkable feature of the work, with the hope of providing an additional way to further our understanding of the work.

Chapter One Irony: A Theoretical Framework

1.1. The Development of the Concept of Irony

Irony is a historical concept, and it never ceases to develop and change. During its evolution of more than two thousand years, irony has been explored and expanded by numerous scholars from the perspective of rhetoric, literary criticism, linguistic pragmatics and other fields. In order to have a more specific understanding of the concept of irony, we need to have a general understanding of its history. Irony is much studied both in China and abroad. As a philosophic value, it remains vigorous throughout the history from ancient Greece to the postmodern period.

The earliest type of irony is called traditional irony (or classical irony) which was originated in ancient Greece specifically referring to the character who feigns ignorance to beat his smart rival in drama. In Plato's masterpiece *Republic*, it is also one of Socrates' skilled strategies, which appeared as "eironeia" to mock his rivals in dialogues or debates. His student, Aristotle, further explained it as the antonym of "alazoneia", which means to pretend pretentiously. Soon, the origin of the word "eironeia" gradually transformed to "ironia" in Latin and "irony" in English in 1502, coming into widespread use from the 18th century. In literary history, most classical literary works are characteristic of ironic spirit, and irony gradually becomes an indispensable writing skill for men of letters. Traditional irony or rhetorical irony keeps playing a dominant role from ancient Greece to the 18th century.

Until the end of 18th century, the boundary of irony broadens from the rhetorical to literature, which mainly attributes to the flourish of German Romantic Movement. As the forerunner to the European intellectual field, German's development of philosophy and aesthesis stimulate people to rethink about irony's connotation. Friedrich Schlegel is the representative among those thinkers, who elevates the position of irony to a philosophical level. He acclaims that the base of irony is deeply rooted in philosophy and the presentation of irony also shows the running of logic. According to German's Romantics, irony is no longer a rhetoric but a way of thinking

about the world. It becomes a poetic manner of dealing with the contradictions between spirit and material, subject and object, infinity and limitation of human beings, etc. When it comes to the literary field, it mainly refers to the author's attitude toward the complex social environment so as to grasp the wholeness of the complicated world. In a word, romantic irony can be further summarized into two points: the first is the way of understanding the world in thinking level, and the second is the position and attitude of authors' literary creation. German aesthetics and literary critics F. Schlegel, A. W Schlegel brothers and K. Zogel have introduced irony into a way of literary creation and a principle of criticism, thus paving the base of modern literary irony theory, and laying the foundation of literary irony in Western literary criticism. The establishment of literary irony theory greatly broadens the thinking and vision of literary criticism, so that many difficult literary phenomena and literary disagreements in the field of literary criticism have gained a new interpretation within the framework of literary irony theory.

Then, irony comes to its new stage of development with the prosperity of New Criticism, which is one of the most influential literary criticisms in the 20th century. New Criticism takes the literary work as the core of literary criticism and initiates a series of methods to put into effective practices. Irony plays an important role in New Criticism, especially as an important element of poetry. In 1947, Clith Brooks introduced irony in his article "Paradox Language," in which irony is regarded as one of the two companions of paradox and the other one is surprise. In 1949, Brooks gave irony a clearer definition of "the context of the distortion of a clear statement." He is also concerned with the context, holding the view that skillful arrangements of context can produce intrigue. In his articles, Brooks specifically analyzes some famous poems by great poets. Through close reading, Brooks not only takes irony as a traditional language rhetoric skill, paying attention to the relationship between the superficial and deep meaning, but also emphasizes the variety of meaning interpretations.

When it comes to the middle of the 20th century, irony shows comprehensive and deepening features in development. On the one hand, irony continues to inherit the traditional rhetorical meaning, which is represented by influential rhetoric

research of D. C. Muecke and Wayne Booth. On the other hand, with the rise of postmodernism, irony became one of the important features of postmodern culture, favored by many scholars. Due to the reinvigoration of rhetoric, irony is no longer confined to the language level; it also becomes the style of the whole literary text. It is particularly important to mention two scholars here. The first one is D. C. Muecke and his work *On Irony*. In this book, Muecke conducts a more comprehensive exposition and theoretical analysis of irony theory, and tries to prove that irony is not only a literary phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. In addition, Muecke distinguishes irony and non-irony works, and puts forward several factors to grasp the irony better, such as “ignorance” or “self-confidence and ignorance,” “the contrast between fact and appearance,” “comedy”, and “aesthetic factors.” Muecke also focuses on several typical types such as verbal irony, situational irony, romantic irony and overall irony. It is fair to say that Muecke is a true master of irony theory and his theory has great significance as the guidance of literary irony. Another scholar who scrutinizes irony is Wayne Booth. In his book *The Rhetoric of Irony*, irony is analyzed through two divisions as being stable and unstable. In another book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, he combines irony and narratology to interpret the text from narrative perspective. Booth argues that it is often impossible to find reliable narrators in modern novels. The narrator’s objection to the surface meaning is exactly what the author really wants to affirm, thus forming the opposition between the surface meaning of the text and the actual meaning. In this way of triggering irony, Booth’s theory guides us to form a better understanding of literary irony. In addition, the Chinese scholar Zhao Yiheng thinks that Booth “put the irony on the ontological position, that irony is the essence of the world: ‘irony exists not only in people’s view but in things itself.’ Therefore, irony is the law of world running” (Zhao, 2011:14).

1.2. The Definition of Irony

The above mentioned introduction would help clarify the historical evolution of irony theory. But there is still a very fundamental problem unsolved, that is how to define the term of irony. It proves to be a very hard work to do since actually there

are many different definitions and categorizations of irony which sometimes will lead to misunderstandings or confusions. Based on the above mentioned references, the concept of irony in this study is defined as follows: First, irony is a rhetoric device at language level, which is the most basic manifestation of the function of irony. As a different form of expression, irony mainly juxtaposes the surface meaning and deep meaning. Compared with other rhetorical methods, irony is more exclusionary than other rhetoric devices, which is basically in the convergence. It is also a variant of metaphor, manifested as a deconstruction and digestion through contradictions and conflicts. From the narrative perspective, irony is manifested as an unreliable narrative. Professor Shen Dan mentioned in her paper entitled with “What is ‘unreliable narrative’?” that Wayne Booth argues in the rhetorical sense that unreliable narratives are differences between the narrator and the implied author, so as to result in ironic effects, accompanied by mockery, satire, and denial of expression; Second, irony is also a way and attitude of understanding the world. Apart from the early Romanticism’s contribution to introducing irony to philosophical level, Danish famous existentialist pioneer Kierkegaard further makes a conceptual analysis and investigates the deep meaning of living in his work *Om Begrebet Ironi*. Here, irony is no longer a simple rhetorical manner, but the author’s attitude and thought toward the world, a trigger of doubt to produce tension of literature. The overall irony, the fate of irony, romantic irony and so on is all representative that irony is a way to understand the world and the form of attitude. (Abrams, 2004: 167) This definition of irony is much more concerned about the cultural significance of human existence embodied in the text. What should be noted is that with the continuous development of various theories, the concept of irony has been re-interpreted and enriched to great degree. When it comes to the modern ages, in the era of rapid development of science and technology, the world is still full of contradictions and absurdity. Irony is an effective literary expression to reflect people’s ways of survival in such a world.

As a matter of fact, until now, “irony not only takes very different forms but also, conceptually speaking, is still developing” (Muecke, 1970:10). Thus, it is difficult to give a universal definition of irony, but it is still of great value to define irony.

In his *The Dry Mock: Study of Irony in Drama*, Thompson defines irony as: “A discrepancy or incongruity between expression and meaning, appearance and reality, or expectation and events. What we notice and call irony is a striking discrepancy. One is artfully arranged to draw attention to it, or which, through occurring by chance, compels our attention to it” (Thompson, 1948:10). While Muecke writes about irony in his book *The Compass of Irony* (1983) as “Ways of speaking, writing, acting, behaving, and painting, etc., in which the real or intended meaning presented or evoked is intentionally quite other than, and incompatible with, the ostensible or pretended meaning” (Muecke, 1969:53). Cleanth Brooks and Robert Warren define irony as follows: “Irony always involves a discrepancy between what is said literally and what the statement actually means. On the surface the ironical statement says one thing, but it means something rather different” (Swearingen, C Jan. 1991:343). What Brooks and Robert’s definition emphasizes is the contrast of reality and appearance. From the perspective of the observer, Thomas Mann defines that irony is “an all-embracing crystal-clear and serene glance, which is the very glance art itself, that is to say: a glance of the utmost freedom and calm and of an objectivity untroubled by any moralism” (Muecke, 1980:219).

Some important dictionaries and encyclopedia also give their serious definitions of irony. *The Oxford English Dictionary*(1989) defines irony from two different perspectives, one is “A figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used; usually taking the form of sarcasm or ridicule in which laudatory expression are used to imply condemnation or contempt”; the other is “a condition of affairs or events of a character opposite to what was, or might naturally be, expected; a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things”(Simpson and Weiner, 1989: 565). In *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*(2002), irony is defined as follows: the use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning; an expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning; A literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect; Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs; an occurrence, a result or a circumstance notable for incongruity”

(Soukhanov, 2002:3833-3834)

The numerous definitions of irony show that the connotation of irony is rich and it is difficult to make a clear-cut definition of it. Just as D. C. Mucke humorously put it, “Should anyone ever discover in himself the need for reduce another mental and syntactic confusion, few things will be found as efficacious as asking him to write down on the spot a definition of irony.”(Mucke, 1970: 8)

1.3. The Classification of Irony

Due to the wide application of irony, many scholars have tried to give different kinds of classification of irony. For instance, Booth identifies quite a number of types of irony: tragic irony, comic irony, stable irony, unstable irony, dramatic irony, situational irony, verbal irony, rhetorical irony, etc. Kreuz and Roberts distinguish four types of irony: Socratic irony, dramatic irony, irony of fate and verbal irony. In conclusion, based on different criteria, irony takes various forms. Different terms have been used by scholars to categorize different forms of irony.

In this thesis, the present author tends to borrow the categorization of irony into three groups including verbal irony, situational irony and structural irony since they are more widely accepted and are generally understood as irony more frequently employed in the literary works.

1.3.1 Verbal Irony

Verbal Irony is one of the major and most common types of irony. “Verbal irony is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed.”(Abrams, 2004:135) To a large extent, as long as there is a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, the statement can be regarded as a verbal irony. It is a correction to the meaning of explicit expression under context pressure. From the perspective of the ironist, verbal irony is mainly used as a rhetorical device or a satirical weapon.

According to the definition in *The Oxford English Dictionary*(1989), verbal irony is “a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is opposite to that

expressed by the words used; usually taking the form of sarcasm or ridicule in which laudatory expressions are used to imply condemnation or contempt” (Simpson, 1989: 565). Based on this definition, we can grasp the essence of verbal irony from two aspects: Firstly, the meaning of the intention of verbal irony is contrary to what is said. Secondly, it implies the different meanings of the content. In other words, it can be called verbal irony if the words said is different from what it really means.

The influence of verbal irony is often reflected in the language level. Combined with the specific context, it will form contradictions or inconsistencies between form and meaning. In the novel, verbal irony often refers to the opposition between the literal meaning of the text and the actual meaning conveyed by it; the difference between the surface meaning and the meaning beyond the line leads to the inconsistency between the literal meaning and the actual invisibility of the author’s true intention.

As one of the most common and pervasive kinds of irony in literary works, verbal irony is usually reflected in the following aspects: the text’s descriptive language, the character’s self-disparaging language and the characters’ dialogue. Irony of the text’s descriptive language refers to the fact that there exists a different meaning beyond the narrator’s narration. It is often used in the works whose narrator is the third person to create a sense of distance, thus making up the connotation of ironic narrative. Irony of the character’s self-disparaging language refers to the fact that what the character says is quite contrary to his actual situation and the writer’s intention. The appearance and the truth form a kind of binary opposition, thus achieving an ironic effect: The irony of the characters’ dialogue is marked by a deliberate contrast between utterance and intended meaning, by way of which the writer breaks the bonds of language and brings readers into a world beyond the language’s literal sense.

1.3.2 Situational Irony

Situational irony is also known as irony situation. It comes mainly from the event or the situation itself. It usually involves the difference between the expected and the actual results. From the perspective of ironic observers, situational irony is

often comedy, tragedy or philosophy. Therefore, dramatic irony, tragic irony and Socratic irony are considered subtypes of situational irony.

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*(1989), situational irony is defined as “a condition of affairs or events of a character opposite to what was, or might naturally be expected; a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things”(Simpson, 1989:543).

When irony enters the context, situational irony is achieved. Situational irony is achieved through plot development. In E.M Forster’s novel, the plot is seen as “the author’s dramatic manipulation of the events of his tale for the maximum artistic effect.” Foster also defined the plot as “casual arrangement of the events” (Foster, 1985: 172). For situational irony, events or situations are mostly contrary to the direction that the characters in the novel or the readers of the novel have expected. In D. C. Muecke’s view, situational irony is closely related to events. When it comes to situational irony, it is more likely to be viewed by the observer’s point of view and separated from the external observation of the text. Therefore, compared with verbal irony, situational irony brings philosophical meaning for the readers to interpret. In the novel, situational irony is often reflected in the contrast of opposites. This situation is different from the author’s special arrangement of plot development.

1.3.3 Structural Irony

Structural irony refers to the meaning of the alternating or reversed meaning of the work. It takes advantage of a naive protagonist or an unreliable narrator whose flaws are easily recognized by the audience. The irony of the structure is that the audience can perceive the fact that the hero or narrator’s view of the world is inconsistent with the real situation. Works involving structural irony often contain an internal feature that creates or promotes differences throughout the work. Structurally satirical subtypes include cosmic irony and romantic irony.

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M. H. Abrams gives us detailed definition of structural irony:

...the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature

that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work. One common literary device of this sort is the invention of a naive hero, or else a naive narrator or spokesman, whose invincible simplicity or obtuseness leads him to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs which the knowing reader---who penetrates to, and shares, the implied point of view of the authorial presence behind the naive persona---just as persistently is called on to alter and correct... (Abrams and Hartman, 2009:135-136)

In structural irony, the author and the reader share the truth while the naive narrator knows nothing about it. In other words, structural irony relies on the knowledge of the author's ironic intention. The key of this ironic strategy is the creation of a simple and obtuse hero or heroine, and common knowledge of truth on behalf of the reader and the author. The use of structural irony is common in literature. One example of the naive spokesman is Swift's well-meaning but insanely rational and morally obtuse economist who writes the "Modest Proposal" (1729) to convert the excess children of the poverty-stricken Irish into a financial and gastronomical asset. Other oppressed examples are Swift's stubbornly credulous Gulliver and the self-deceiving and paranoid monologist in Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (1842), and the insane editor, Kinbote, in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962).

Structural irony is the pervasive irony created by a structural feature such as a naive protagonist whose viewpoint is consistently wrong, shared by neither the author nor the reader (Booth, 1974: 79). A major technique for sustaining structural irony is the use of a naïve protagonist or unreliable narrator who continually interprets events and intentions in ways that the signals are mistaken.

This thesis will deal with the above mentioned three kinds of irony: verbal irony, situational irony and structural irony. Detailed definitions of these three kinds of irony will be given respectively in Chapter Two, Chapter Three and Chapter Four. In the following part, the thesis would like to analyze the embodiment of different types of ironies in *A Pale View of Hills* with the reference of the classification of verbal irony, situational irony and structural irony here.

Chapter Two Verbal Irony in *A Pale View of Hills*

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Kazuo Ishiguro has frequently resorted to the rhetoric device of irony, which helps to depict the characters, reveal the theme and express the attitude of the author. This chapter aims to explore the verbal irony in the characterization of *A Pale Views of Hills* and the description of the scene. In this novel, verbal irony is mainly reflected in understatement, the protagonist's monologues, and some descriptive words which function to explain and drive the plot.

2.1 Verbal Irony in Understatement

Understatement is a device employed in verbal irony to achieve the ironic effect. Narrator in understatement purposely understates things of great importance or solemnity as ones quite contrary to the description. Understatement often appears “in situations that call for a strong emotional response; enthusiasm is damped down and disaster made light of” (Muecke, 1980:80). In general, understatement always refers to its contrary meaning. Brooks and Warren once defined understatement as a large or small gap between the actual spoken and the probable spoken. Just as the term indicates, understatement describes things in a light tone with triviality, which helps readers to realize its severity. Understatement is to describe things as not as good, or worse than they actually are, so as to achieve an ironic effect.

In the novel, there are many conversations which are the embodiment of understatement. The first one appears when Etsuko and Niki talked about the reason why Niki does not attend the funeral ceremony of Keiko,

“Did you expect me to be there?” she asked. “At the funeral, I mean.”

“No, I suppose not. I didn't really think you'd come.”

“It did upset me, hearing about her. I almost came.”

“I never expected you to come.”

“People didn't know what was wrong with me,” she said. “I didn't tell anybody. I

suppose I was embarrassed. They wouldn't understand really, they wouldn't understand how I felt about it. Sisters are supposed to be people you're close to, aren't they. You may not like them much but you're still close to them. That's just not how it was though. I don't even remember what she looked like now."

"Yes, it's quite a time since you saw her"

"I just remember her as someone who used to make me miserable. That's what I remember about her. But I was sad though, when I heard." (Ishiguro, 1983:3)

The loss of the daughter or the loss of the sister should be a heart-broken event, but the above lines seem to be a very common conversation between the mother and the daughter who seem to talk about something very common in their life. It seems like they did not care too much about the death of Keiko. Niki just uses words like "upset", "embarrassed", "sad" etc. to express her feeling towards the death of her half-sister Keiko while the mother Etsuko repeated the sentence like "I never expected you to come" to try to relax and reduce the uneasiness of Niki. We seem to see a pair of ruthless mother and daughter. Etsuko and Niki both try to escape from the terrible atmosphere of Keiko's suicide; they want to take it easy. However, the more excuses they find, the more they cannot get rid of their sense of guilt to Keiko. In one word, on the surface neither Etsuko nor Niki is much preoccupied with thoughts of Keiko, who some months ago hanged herself in her rented room in Manchester, while on a deeper level there is little else that concerns them, Keiko's death "hovering over" them whenever they talk.

In chapter 1, there is a conversation between Sachiko and Etsuko, which also clearly produce the ironic effect of understatement,

"Yes, of course. So there's no need to get embarrassed, is there?" She laughed and passed me my teacup. "I'm sorry, Etsuko, I don't mean to tease you. As a matter of fact, I did have something to ask you. A little favour." Sachiko began to pour tea into her own cup, and as she did so, a more serious air seemed to enter her manner. Then she put down the teapot and looked at me. "You see, Etsuko, certain arrangements I made have not gone as planned. As a result, I find myself in need of money. Not a great deal, you understand Just a small amount." (Ishiguro, 1982:20)

This passage clearly shows that Sachiko is in a difficult situation and needs help

urgently. In the following part, the reader knows that she hopes that Etsuko will tell Mrs. Fujiwara to let her work in Mrs. Fujiwara's noodle restaurant, but in this conversation she does not seem to worry so much about her own poor conditions. It seems like a trivial, little thing; in fact, this is her only urgent solution. From the information conveyed, it can be perceived that Sachiko is a very strong woman with strong motivation of self-respect. It is clear that Sachiko's life is very difficult, and it is urgent for her to find a job to make money. But, ironically, the way that she asks for help and the words she says give an impression that she does not care about the trouble she faces, and it seems like that she is talking about other people's affairs instead of her own. Sachiko actually is taking a self-protection approach and fearing being hurt again. The understatement here is a very helpful way for us to understand the contradictory dispositions of these people. It is just because they are in extremely difficult situations that they try to hide their anxiety and fear and behave as if these are only some trifles in life.

2.2. Verbal Irony in Monologues and Specific Words

The verbal irony is presented in the novel's monologues. In this novel, Kazuo Ishiguro breaks chronological order and space limitation. Prose writing runs through the novel even in the descriptions of some cruel scenes. Verbal irony is also present in the protagonist's monologues---poetic and romantic memory suddenly ensuing the harsh environment descriptions. Kazuo Ishiguro tells the tragic story in an indifferent tone, bringing about the ironic contrast between the tone of language and the nature of these events.

“You look so astonished, Etsuko,” she said. ‘No, he’d left nothing. He’d gone yesterday morning, that’s all they knew. To tell you the truth, I half expected this.” “This is nothing flew to me, Etsuko. Back in Tokyo — that’s where I first met him, you see — back in Tokyo, it was just the same thing. Oh no, this is nothing new to me. I’ve learnt to expect such things.” “Don’t look so shocked, Etsuko. After Tokyo, Nagasaki seems a tame little town. If he’s still in Nagasaki, I’ll find him tonight. He may change his hotel, but he won’t have changed his habits.” (Ishiguro, 1982:68)

Sachiko pinned his hopes of going to the United States on an American alcoholic.

From the mouth of Mariko, we knew that he was a bastard. However, Sachiko had always had hope for him. Once, the American drunk and lied to her that they would go to the United States together, but one day Sachiko went to the bar to find him where she saw him and the bar girl mixed up. After this, she seemed to be completely disappointed. She told Etsuko how she could pin her hopes on a drunkard. However, it didn't take long for her to tell Etsuko that she was going to the United States and The Americans would be trustworthy... This seems to make the readers feel incredible. Sachiko puts her hopes on a hopeless person and gives him and his daughter's fate and future in the hands of such people, the interest of the mother is in the first place to concern instead of the daughter's. The reader seems to understand at this time that, the narrator is deliberately deceiving herself. It can be seen that she is deceiving herself and has been knitting a beautiful dream for herself. But this dream has broken again and again, and the dream of going to the United States has been far away. Here, readers could possibly find that people who have been leaving Japan for a long time, and who are going to the United States, are Sachiko herself, not her daughter Mariko. She has been vocally accentuating her daughter's interests and her daughter's future. These are all pretexts. Sachiko is trying to leave Japan as soon as possible, instead of her daughter. Because of the ravages of the war, Sachiko wanted to stay away from the trauma of war as soon as possible, so leaving Japan became a hope of living. Of course, it is also helpless to pin your hopes on a person who cannot rely on it at all. When she knew that Frank had once again left without saying goodbye, Sachiko did not have a fierce emotional reaction. Instead, she calmly faced all of these things. When she began to tell the story, it seems that this has nothing to do with her. It is simply telling others stories. This seemingly insignificant and eloquent way reflects the fact that Sachiko's heart is actually desperate, but he has no complicated mentality.

In the novel, Sachiko's husband was described by her as "very strict and very patriotic"; never "the most considerate of men," (Ishiguro, 1982:110) he forbade Sachiko to learn English, even forcing her to throw away her English books. "very strict and very patriotic" should not absolutely mean not to allow learning English, even throwing away the English books. If that is reasonable, then how ironic it is!

Love is not neglect, or abuse. What Sachiko does to Mariko is absolutely not what she calls for the “welfare” (Ishiguro, 1982:80) of Mariko, and it is just abuse. Nothing is more ironic when parents’ abusing children puts on the camouflage of love. Sachiko’s abuse of Mariko takes many forms. For example, she allows her daughter to remain out of school, justifying it because of “one thing or another, and our moving around so much” (45); allows her to fight freely with other children; strikes her and leaves her unattended for long stretches of time even at night during a period of mysterious child murders. Sachiko is only too happy to leave her daughter with Etsuko, at that time a virtual stranger, for an entire day, rationalizing her negligence by arguing, in effect, that past neglect excuses present neglect: “Mariko should be capable of being left on her own by now” (73). As Peter Wain observes, Sachiko’s “relationship with her daughter is at best negligent and possibly even murderous” (Wain, 1998:20). The pregnant Etsuko attempts to mitigate this abuse by volunteering to take care of Mariko and by helping to search for her when she is missing by arranging for a job for Sachiko and even by volunteering personal funds to alleviate Sachiko’s, and hence Mariko’s, material deprivation. The most disturbing of all of Sachiko’s forms of neglect, however, is when she leaves Mariko unattended for hours in order to fraternize with Frank, an American soldier whom Sachiko befriends and who promises to remove her from her squalid and constraining circumstances. Sachiko abandons her daughter in order to carry on with a man in a bar, a man who, earlier, “disappeared and spent all of Sachiko’s money, drank it all in three days” (Ishiguro, 1982:87). Although Sachiko repeatedly insists that “what is of utmost importance to me is my daughter’s welfare” and “I’m not some young saloon girl with no regard for decency” (86) she nevertheless continually and troublingly changes her mind as to whether it is in her daughter’s best interest to remain in Japan or to make the move to America, leaving Etsuko and the reader suspicious of her true motivations. The image of a good mother that she has defined herself will gradually be doubted by the readers.

2.3 The Function of Verbal Irony in the Novel

Etsuko, the protagonist of *A Pale View of Hills*, is just a woman that we cannot believe in her so easily. Etsuko's appearance always points to the different and opposite reality. In short, her external and inner discordant unity constitutes the essence of her ironical survival.

Etsuko clearly says that "she has no great wish to dwell on Keiko" (Ishiguro, 1983:10) and subsequently Sachiko's story is presented to the readers. Sachiko's story is not really irrelevant with Keiko and Keiko's death is not just the "circumstances" around Etsuko's remembering Sachiko but also the reason for Etsuko's recalling of the past. Etsuko actually feels guilty for Keiko's death, as Shaffer correctly points out that "Etsuko fears that [her] neglect [of Keiko] precipitated [Keiko's] suicide" (Shaffer, 1998:21). The recalling of the past is Etsuko's psychological journey to deal with the failures in her life, about how she brought Keiko to England and her neglect of Keiko. However, these failures are related to the "hidden" area, in Etsuko's heart that the self-deceptive Etsuko wants to protect and avoid to "spell out". Thus, the self-deceptive Etsuko employs the "self-covering" policy by projecting her mistakes into the non-narrator character, Sachiko. Sachiko's defending of her choice of leaving Japan also illustrates Etsuko's projection on Sachiko. Sachiko defends that Mariko's welfare is of "the utmost importance" to her, which "comes first" (Ishiguro, 1983:44) and has been given "the most careful consideration" (Ishiguro, 1983: 86). This mirrors the Etsuko's defending that "[my] motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept to Keiko's interests very much at heart"(Ishiguro, 1983:91). What's more, corresponding to Sachiko's admission of her selfishness by rhetorically asking that "[do] you think I imagine for one moment that I'm a good mother to her" (Ishiguro, 1983:171), Etsuko eventually uncovers her self-deceptive excuses by admitting to herself that "I knew all along. I knew all along she wouldn't be happy over here. But I decided to bring her just the same" (Ishiguro, 1983:176).

Etsuko's narration is actually about her own, Sachiko is Etsuko's projection. Etsuko deceives herself by projecting her own guilt, her guilt of selfishly bringing Keiko to England regardless of Keiko's welfare, onto the non-character—Sachiko. This point can be confirmed from Ishiguro's explanation that Sachiko's story is a "highly Etsuko-ed version" and whether Sachiko "existed as a real person or not, the

meanings imputed in her life are obviously relevant to Etsuko's own life" (Shaffer, 1998: 5). It is further explained by Brian W. Shaffer as that "Sachiko and Mariko function less as 'real' individuals than as individuals onto whom Etsuko can project her own guilt for neglecting and abusing Keiko" (Shaffer, 1998:21).

To conclude, Etsuko is an irresponsible mother yet always pretending innocent. Etsuko is selfish, but has a strong sense of shame meanwhile. These two contradictory characteristics just result in the ironical survival of her.

Chapter Three Situational Irony in *A Pale View of Hills*

This chapter will analyze the situational irony in *A Pale View of Hills* from two angles; one is from the contrast between characters' expectations and the actual situation; and the other is from the outcome of events departing from readers' expectation.

3.1 Contrast between Characters' Expectation and Actual Situation

Situational irony mainly reflects the way of thinking between human intentions and the opposite result. In the novel, it happens when the reader or author has realized the situation at the time or in the future, but the characters in the novel are completely ignorant. Finally, the development or actual situation of the incident proves to be completely different from the expectations of the characters, thus forming a special concern for the fate of the characters.

The novel begins with a conflict between the characters' expectation and their actual situation. At the beginning of the novel, after Keiko's death, neither Etsuko nor Niki appears to be much preoccupied with thoughts of Keiko, who some months ago hanged herself in her rented room in Manchester, while on a deeper level there are few people who pay their concern to them. In their innermost, Keiko's death hovers over them whenever they have a talk. Etsuko and Niki expect to get rid of their sense of guilt. However, the stronger they think like this, the heavier their spirit burden will be.

That summer, what happens to Ogata-San, Etsuko's father-in-law is also a conflict between his expectation and the actual situation. Like Etsuko, Ogata-San attempts to rationalize his wartime activities by relying upon a "foggy memory" to help him explain his professional conducts prior to and during the war. While somewhat peripheral in *A Pale View of Hills*, Ogata-San's obsession is taken up more fully in Ishiguro's second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World*, in the character of the novel's protagonist, Masuji Ono. Cynthia F. Wong writes that Ono's story in the later novel "is less a reflection of his glory days as an artist in Imperial Japan than a

rationalizing account of his own participation in world affairs,” (Wong, 2008:145) which also serves as an apt description of Ogata-San’s story. Ogata-San’s visit with Jiro and Etsuko that summer, his “first visit since moving away from Nagasaki earlier that year” (Ishiguro, 1982:28), follows a written attack on Ogata’s wartime professional activities by an ex-friend of Jiro’s and ex-student of Ogata’s, Shigeo Matsuda, who has become a communist. Ogata wishes Jiro to respond to Shigeo’s offending article on his behalf, on the grounds that it constitutes an “attack on the family name” (126). Clearly, the self-absorbed Jiro has no interest in taking up this cause, leaving Ogata to confront the author of the article alone. Specifically, Ogata is accused of helping to lead Japan in “a misguided direction, an evil direction” into war and of “sacking and imprisoning” five teachers with opposing views in April of 1938. Ogata, by contrast, views himself as having made a “contribution” (150) to his nation, and defends his activities as rooted in a “deep” concern “for the country” and in a desire to see that “correct values” are “preserved and handed on”(Ishiguro, 1982:147). In this way, Ogata anticipates not only Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* but Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, both of whom rationalize past “professional” failures through the defense mechanisms of repression and projection rather than own up to personal failure or poor judgment.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, the protagonist, expects to justify her selfishness and irresponsibility by making up a non-existent woman called Sachiko and projecting her guilt into this woman. During the process of reading, readers can clearly identify the true nature of Etsuko, while Etsuko does not realize that her lies have been discerned. In the novel, Etsuko says that “she has no great wish to dwell on Keiko” (11) . However, what follows is her recollection of her friendship with a woman named Sachiko in Japan. Sachiko and her daughter Mariko’s story is actually Etsuko and Keiko’s experience. Keiko’s death is not just the “circumstances” around Etsuko actually feels guilty for Keiko’s death; the recalling of the past is Etsuko’s psychological journey to deal with the failures in her life, about how she brought Keiko to England and how her neglect of Keiko may lead to the latter’s trouble in life.

3.2 Outcome of Events Departing from Readers' Expectation

Situational irony can also be reflected in the outcome of events departing from the readers' expectation, which is achieved by readers' observation and interpretation. Plot development could be in accordance with certain expected logic, but sometimes it's completely out of readers' expectation. According to D. C. Muecke, although situational irony reveals the fact behind the appearance, it does not convey any meaning: the fact is that it exposes a matter of affairs, not an opinion; that fact can be given meaning by the observer. Here, the so-called observer is the reader of the novel rather than the author. These unexpected turns present the true intention of irony, which lead to the tension of narration. In the last part of the novel, the author mainly deals with people's different postwar life, which is quite a turn on readers' expectation.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, the most unexpected thing is that Sachiko and Mariko are non-existent characters and they are the make-up functioning as Etsuko's projection of her guilt. Readers may firstly think Etsuko and Sachiko are two women, but in the end of the novel, they suddenly find they are wrong and Etsuko and Sachiko are actually one person. This most unexpected outcome appears in the following ways. Different from Etsuko's nice treatment of Mariko and her consistent concern of Mariko's benefits showed in her pervious conversations with Sachiko, Etsuko's first reaction when seeing the child is questioning her "[what] are you doing here" and "what's the matter with you" (Ishiguro, 1983:172). Then, Etsuko angrily blames Mariko for her calling the "new farther" a pig and keeps making such promises as "Everything will turn out well, I promise". "In any case, if you don't like it over there, we can always come back" (Ishiguro, 1982:75), and "Yes, I promise. If you don't like it over there, we'll come straight back" (75). The emphasis of "I" and "we" illustrates that Etsuko is acting as if she is addressing to her own daughter. This reveals clearly that Etsuko's recollection of Mariko and Sachiko is actually about her own experience, and Sachiko is actually Etsuko's projection. Etsuko deceives herself by projecting her own guilt onto Sachiko.

It also becomes evident that Etsuko is overcoming with a painful past and sense of personal failure that she attempts, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, to

repress: a phenomenon that will be treated in greater detail in the story of Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*. Indeed, Etsuko's "real" story is told exclusively by indirection. In the novel's first paragraph, for example, Etsuko admits her "selfish desire not to be reminded of the past" (9). Later, she admits that she has "no wish to ponder" again certain circumstances of her past, even though these circumstances are precisely what her narrative is all about. Like Etsuko's walk in the nearby Nakagawa district, her narrative itself reveals her "mixed emotions of sadness and pleasure" and her deep sense of loss. And just as Ogata-San at one point appears to Etsuko to be choosing a walking route so that he could deliberately avoid his old haunts in Nagasaki, Etsuko deliberately avoids mentioning Keiko's suicide to an acquaintance, Mrs. Waters, who inquires after Etsuko's elder daughter. Etsuko at one juncture puts it, "as with a wound on one's own body, it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things" (Ishiguro, 1982:54), a comment that serves nicely as a gloss on her ability to repress the "real" tale within her ostensible one. Fumio Yoshioka comments of this passage that when one scar is too fresh and too rugged to be examined scrutinizingly, its pain and heat could be conveyed by detailing another scar of the past, even though it belongs to someone else. Also like Ogata-San, Etsuko excuses her own self-deception by hiding behind the inevitable inaccuracies of memory: "It is possible that my memory of these events will have grown hazy with time," she insists, "that things did not happen in quite the way they come back to me today" (Ishiguro, 1982:41). The novel repeatedly alludes to the hidden meaning of Etsuko's narrative: just as a wound on Mariko's cheek turns out to be a smudge of mud, and just as people smile and laugh when they are sad and disappointed, things are not as they at first appear to be in Etsuko's story of another woman's sacrifice of her daughter. Indeed, her narrative itself resembles the money she at one point offers Sachiko: both are "wrapped" in a "silk scarf of a suitably discrete pattern" (71). Or like Sachiko's cottage, much of which remains "in shadow," Etsuko's real story is a dimly lit one which the reader must strain to make out of. Like Etsuko's uncommunicative relationship with Jiro, all which is important in her narrative is expressed "by the way" and tacitly: "it was never in the nature of our relationship to discuss . . . things openly" (76). In this connection, it is instructive to note that the

paleness in the novel's title alludes not to the distant hills themselves but to the faded view, dim perception, or distant memory of them.

As Ishiguro himself puts it in an interview, *A Pale View of Hills*, as with all of his novels, is concerned less with "solid facts" than with "emotional upheaval," with "how one uses memory for one's own purposes, one's own ends" (Biggsby, 1990:28). Related to Etsuko's suppression of memory is the fact that she fails to articulate the problem of Mariko's scarred upbringing. The events which are different or contrary to the readers' expectations prove to be ironies employed by the author, to reveal the real intentions, mentalities and characteristics of the heroine and other minor characters in the novel. It seems to suggest that things are not usually as they seem to be and life has different aspects for everyone.

3.3 The Function of Situational Irony in the Novel

Irony is not only a rhetoric device; it can also help to carry deeper meanings in a literary work. Irony is a common way of thinking about human nature, human existence and social environment; irony is also a way of existence. By now, it becomes a reflection of human existence rather than merely opposition between surface meaning and deep meanings. It manifests the sense of absurdity and nihilism and further enlightens readers to concern life and human thoughts in literary works. Situational Irony appears especially well in revealing the theme.

A Pale View of Hills discusses several topics and themes through the memories of the narrator, Etsuko:

The first important theme is mother-daughter relationship, which is one of the central problems that the novel refers to. Etsuko blames herself for her daughter's death. She creates/ recounts the narrative of her time in Nagasaki and the relationship between Sachiko and Mariko to alleviate her guilt and help her to come to terms with the past. Etsuko and Keiko's poor relationship is not only the important reason for Keiko's suicide, but also the cause of trauma of Etsuko, who finds and reconstructs herself in memories so as to live better at present and in the future. The dramatic irony presented in the unreliable narration of Etsuko results from the poor

mother-daughter relationship between Etsuko and Keiko, and demonstrates the importance of good mother-daughter relationship in return.

The second important theme is freedom of choice. Having freedom is good, but freedom is absolute. Enjoying freedom also means taking responsibility, and this is just an irony. Etsuko has the right to live the way she likes, but at the same time she has the obligation and responsibility to take good care of her daughter. Irony, as the soul of this novel, runs through the whole novel and forms many sharp contrasts. Among them, the contrasts between human responsibility and freedom can greatly arouse readers' sympathy and reflections.

The third and most important theme is the theme of memory. As the main character of the novel *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko is a middle-aged woman from Japan, now living in the English countryside. The novel concerns her daughter Niki (the child of Etsuko's marriage with an Englishman) and her late daughter Keiko (the child of Etsuko's first marriage with a Japanese businessman), who committed suicide. But in the story, Etsuko told to her daughter Niki another story about a young woman named Sachiko and her daughter Mariko, which the readers later find are just a reflection of Etsuko's own story with her own daughter Keiko. The present events and memory of the past (while Etsuko lived in Japan) create a tangled web of regret and guilt. Niki's visit to Etsuko is intertwined with Etsuko's reminiscence of her life in Japan. While in Nagasaki, Etsuko meets Sachiko and her daughter, who live in the unelectrified cottage near the Etsuko's apartment. The reader learns that Sachiko's husband has died in the World War II. Sachiko is proud that she comes from a distinguished family, even though the distinguishedness can only be seen in her old and delicate teapot.

Although Sachiko's American friend has betrayed her many times before, she tries once again to leave Japan and go to America with him. Her selfishness begins to surface when the reader discovers that Mariko does not go to school and that Sachiko leaves Mariko wandering in the woods at dark. Mariko has undergone traumatic experiences in Tokyo and because of that she imagines seeing a woman wanting her to take her to the woods. Even though Mariko has serious mental problems, Sachiko has no qualms about it saying that Mariko has made it up. All in all, we create in our

mind an image of a selfish and egocentric mother.

On the other hand, Etsuko does not want to talk with Niki about Keiko even though, quite ironically, Keiko is their only subject of conversation. At moments, Etsuko feels regret about having to leave Japan and she feels guilty of Keiko's death. She fancies Keiko's ghost is still in Keiko's old bedroom. Clearly, she feels a great amount of regret, but the reader is deprived of the real reason why she feels like that. Only at the end of the novel did Etsuko admit her failings and tells Niki: "But you see, Niki, I knew all along she wouldn't be happy over here. But I decided to bring her just the same" (Ishiguro, 1983:34) .

The plot is constructed in the way that the reader can notice a parallel between Etsuko and Sachiko. They are both constantly making excuses for their actions. They are both constantly reminding themselves that they have made right decisions. When Sachiko decides that she wants to leave Japan, she repeatedly tries to convince Etsuko that she has been planning her and her daughter's future wisely. Etsuko rarely comments on Sachiko's personal affairs. However, Sachiko constantly repeats: "But why can't you understand that I've nothing to hide, I've nothing to be ashamed of"? (Ishiguro, 1982:58) Also, after talking about Keiko with Niki, Etsuko says: "But such things are long in the past now and I have no wish to ponder them yet again. My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept Keiko's interest very much at heart." (58) Having this information in mind, we may conclude that Sachiko and Etsuko are quite similar. We may conclude that Etsuko does not have enough strength to talk about her guilt openly. She needs another story to face the guilt more easily. Ishiguro explains, "it's really Etsuko talking about herself, the meanings that Etsuko imputes to the life of Sachiko are obviously the meanings that are relevant to Etsuko's own life. Whatever the facts were about what happened to Sachiko and her daughter, they are of interest to Etsuko now because she can use them to talk about herself." (Petry, 1999:59) Furthermore, he adds, "the whole narrative strategy of the book was about how someone ends up talking about things they cannot face directly through other people's stories. I was trying to explore...how people use the language of self-deception and self-protection"(72).

By recollecting what had happened in the past, Etsuko tries to get to grips with

Keiko's death. Etsuko's memory reveals another side of her, a side which she constantly tries to hide from the reader. Shaffer claims both Etsuko and Niki display defense mechanisms, a concept from Freudian psychoanalysis, which allows an individual to temporarily escape from a situation which is too difficult to cope with at that moment. The defense mechanisms displayed in the characters of *A Pale View of Hills* are projection and rationalization. According to Shaffer, Niki "functions chiefly as Etsuko's rationalizing voice." (Shaffer, 1998:59) Niki says what any reasonable human being would say to the mother of a child who committed suicide: you are not to blame. Niki says out loud what Etsuko can not bear to say to herself because she does not believe it: "And you did everything you could for [Keiko]. You're the last person anyone could blame" (Ishiguro, 1982:176). Etsuko projects her feelings of guilt about neglecting Keiko and placing her own happiness over her daughter's onto the story of Sachiko and Mariko.

Throughout the story more and more similarities between Sachiko's life and Etsuko's come to the surface. Sachiko wants to leave Japan for America in order to start a new life there, and she is not really concerned about Mariko's wishes. Etsuko left Japan after divorcing her husband Jiro, but the daughter from that marriage, Keiko, never adapted to English life. While reading the novel, we do not get to know the outcome of Sachiko's story, whether she gets to leave for America with Frank or whether he abandons her because it does not matter. Etsuko only tells the story because of its relevance to her own story.

Eventually, Etsuko left Japan and she fears that if she had not, her daughter might still be alive. Trauma is not only present in the character of Etsuko, but also in the figure of Mariko. From the beginning it is clear that she is a strange and troubled child, not responding to question nor reacting to reprimands. Near the end of the second chapter Etsuko and Sachiko go out looking for Mariko who has gone missing. They find her "lying, curled on her side, knees hunched" (41). Mariko repeatedly talks about a woman whom she sometimes sees near the river. After a while the girl's mother offers a possible explanation for her daughter's psychological problems: at the end of the war they were living in Tokyo where the situation was awful and "everyone who lived in Tokyo saw unpleasant things. And Mariko did too" (73).

Once, Mariko saw a woman in the river, having just drowned her baby. They later heard the woman committed suicide after having killed her baby. Not only would this explain the hallucinations Mariko has of a woman, this would also make Sachiko's drowning of the kittens, while her daughter has to witness it, even crueler, because it would obviously remind Mariko of witnessing that scene.

In conclusion, the employment of situational irony in *A Pale Views of Hills* helps to reveal the themes and the real purpose and intention of the major characters as well as the author Kazuo Ishiguro. On the first layer of the novel, Etsuko has been trying to free herself of the guilt of ignoring to take good care of her daughter by making up stories to speak for herself; on the second layer of the novel, her story also makes great room for the readers to find out the truth to challenge the image that Estuko has created for herself. Through the display of ironies, the readers have got the opportunities to know more about Estuko as well as other minor characters in the novel; the readers get to know more about their histories, their trauma and their efforts to achieve self-redemption.

Chapter Four Structural Irony in *A Pale View of Hills*

In *A Pale View of Hills*, structural irony is built into texts in such a way that both the utterance of the characters and deeper implications are present throughout the novel. One of the most common ways of achieving it here is to adapt to the use of a naive narrator, who is simple and straightforward and whose comments are at variance with the reader's interpretation. The structural irony commences at the general structure of the novel and injects the ironical tone into the whole work.

4.1 Unreliable Narration in the Novel

It is generally assumed that Ishiguro uses the same technique of unreliability in all of his five novels he has ever created. The similarities in style, formal diction, narrators and thematic concerns appear to underscore this assumption. Yet, the degree and kind of unreliability in Ishiguro's novels differ considerably. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko gives an account of the four-day visit of her youngest daughter Niki and relates memories of her early married life in post-war Nagasaki, when she was pregnant with Keiko, who has recently committed suicide. She focuses especially on her brief friendship with Sachiko and her daughter Mariko, who were at that time about to emigrate to America. Etsuko's narrative has such following features, which are a formal, emotionally restrained language, the use of understatement, and a peculiar silence concerning certain past events. The narrator's ponderous reflection that "Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here." (Ishiguro, 1982:135) clearly hints at the questionable reliability of her own narrative.

Although Etsuko declares explicitly that "I have no great wish to dwell on Keiko now" (11) or "But such things are long in the past now and I have no great wish to ponder them yet again" (13), it proves that she is clearly obsessed with Keiko's memory. Thus it constitutes of ironies of the novel. It appears at first that Etsuko

adopts a kind of understatement and emotional restraint, but later a number of strange contradictions towards the end of her narrative are suggestive of her active distortions. In the penultimate chapter of *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko recalls the unsettling scenes on the day before Sachiko and Mariko left for America. Etsuko tries to placate Mariko who doesn't want to leave. Yet in the midst of that conversation, the pronouns shift and Etsuko seems no longer to be addressing Mariko, but rather her own daughter. "If you don't like it over there, we can always come back", she tells her. This confusion between Mariko and Keiko is repeated in the final chapter when Etsuko tells Niki that "Keiko was happy" on their outing to the hills around Nagasaki, an outing which she earlier described as having been made with Sachiko and Mariko. Etsuko herself does not realize these slips of tongues, but the reader will be conscious of these contradictions and consequently her reliability as the narrator will be suspected.

Of course it is still lack of convincing evidence to prove that Etsuko is an unreliable narrator but the conflicts here have aroused the readers' curiosity to know what had really happened to them. In this sense, the irony here becomes the driving force of the plot development. Later on the descriptions of Etsuko's story about Sachiko and Mariko appear to have a lot in common with that of Etsuko and her daughter Keiko. It is very easy for the reader to draw the conclusion that actually the two groups of mothers and daughters are just the one, that is, Etsuko is making up a story to tell her own story. She is trying to use this story to speak for herself and free herself from the guilt of her failure to be a responsible mother.

Reading Etsuko as an unreliable narrator allows for a meaningful interpretation. It constitutes of a big structural irony that the novelist has deliberately designed. It seems like that Ishiguro has been playing a game with the reader. He would like the readers to find out the truth by themselves and during their pursuit for the truth, they get to know not only the fact that Etsuko is an unreliable narrator but also have opportunities to know more about this woman as well as her families. The readers thus get into the inner aspects of the major characters' lives and see a lot of their histories, their traumas and their efforts to have the self-redemption.

4.2 The Application of Structural Irony in the Novel

Besides verbal irony and situational irony, structural irony is most typically used in this novel. Different from the above two types of irony, structural irony depends on the tension between naive hero or narrator or spokesman and knowing readers informed by author's ironic intention. In most cases, it is the hero or the heroine of a novel that becomes the target of structural irony, and what is satirized is the hero or heroine's naivety and other similar personalities. Structural irony is likely to occur only with authorial hint, which depends on some narrative techniques, such as authorial presence, the hero or heroine as narrative focus and free indirect speech. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko, as the focus of narration in this novel, is a naive heroine and spokesman whose narrative is characterized as extremely economic and restrained. Etsuko considers herself always innocent and nobody can tell her lies. In consequence, she suffers frustration again and again. Her simplicity and naivety is ironised by the author's use of structural irony. The structural irony on Etsuko is expressed clearly from two perspectives: one is her narration of her marriage to Jiro, and the other her narration of her relationship with Keiko.

4.2.1 Structural Irony of Etsuko's Marriage to Jiro

Hardly has she mentioned her first husband Jiro directly. In the novel, the entire story about Jiro is a collection of fragments and hints, and Etsuko talks directly about her marriage to Jiro happens only once which is a quarrel between Jiro and Ogata. She narrates ironically that: "I can see now, with hindsight, how typical this was of the way Jiro faced any potentially awkward confrontation. Had he not, years later, faced another crisis in much the same manner, it may be that I would never have left Nagasaki" (Ishiguro, 1982:126). The "another crisis" which leads to Etsuko leaving Japan may be their marriage crisis about which the readers do not know which is explicitly clarified by Jiro's callous and adamant attitude towards Ogata and his colleagues. One evening after supper, two colleagues of Jiro drop on in when Jiro and Ogata are playing chess. They jokingly called Jiro "Pharaoh" in the office, because Jiro urges his underlings "to work like slaves" and he orders others around "like his dogsbodies" while he does nothing except "reading the newspaper" (Ishiguro,

1982:61). His behavior towards his colleagues is like his domineering treatment of Etsuko, which is ordering Etsuko to do housework even she is pregnant, and regardless Etsuko going find Mariko without company in late night; moreover his hostility towards Ogata echoes his neglect of Etsuko.

Sachiko, the “alter ego” of Etsuko, describes her husband “very strict and very patriotic”, and never “the most considerate man”, who forbids Sachiko to learn English, even forces her to “throw away” her English books. Though not stated explicitly, the abuse of Sachiko, and a wife abuse of Jiro’s workmate Hanada, who beats his wife with a golf club because she wouldn’t vote the same way, imply indirectly the possibility that Jiro abuses Etsuko. Moreover, Jiro’s indifferent attitude towards his father Ogata and his workmates is also the evidence that he lacks love and concern for Etsuko and even neglects her existence in his life. It is clear that Etsuko’s marriage to Jiro was unhappy. The series of misfortunes, including her failure to recover from the bereaved trauma and then she marries a nonchalant husband, foretell her misdeed to the impending baby Keiko, the offspring of unpleasant matrimony. “Keiko’s possession of her mother is ultimately a detrimental form of what, in psychological teens, we think of as repetition”. (Groes & Matthews, 2009:51)

4.2.2 Structural Irony of Etsuko’s Relationship with Keiko

Keiko is the first daughter of Etsuko and Jiro. At the beginning of the novel, Etsuko says, “I only mention her (Keiko) here because those were circumstances around Niki’s visit this April”, and she claims that she has “no great wish to dwell on Keiko”, which brings her “little comfort”(Ishiguro, 1982:11) However, all the memories and events Etsuko tells subsequently are all related to Keiko. Etsuko tries to disguise her intention and excuses and she has a strong sense of remorse at neglecting Keiko which motivates her reflection on a “friendship no more than a matter of some several weeks one summer many years ago” (Ishiguro, 1982:11) with Sachiko. Etsuko tries to dispel and deny the magnitude and impact of Keiko’s death that she gets by the memory of a several weeks’ long friendship. Though Etsuko constantly repeats that she and Niki do “not discuss it any further”, and “there is no

point in going over all that now” (Ishiguro, 1982:17), ironically the whole text centers upon Etsuko’s subtle relationship with Keiko.

Etsuko seldom appears to be frank, once she admits that “although we never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko’s death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked” (10). “The narratives’ evasive movement toward the respective disclosures indicates some secret to be revealed about the narrators’ past guilt, embarrassment, or disgrace.” (Groes and Matthews, 2009:129). It is an instinct reaction of the self-protection mechanism to alleviate a painful wound and obtain a bit dignity that Etsuko hides from memories about Keiko. Wong comments that, “Remembering the pain of the past, she is able to forget, momentarily, the horror of her daughter’s demise” (Wong, 1995:128). Etsuko projects onto Sachiko and her daughter Mariko, who “are perhaps only projections of her own experiences and hopes” (Groes and Matthews, 2009: 48), or who “serve as a mirror, even as scapegoats” (49). Once Sachiko chats with Etsuko about her plan to leave Japan, she aggressively requests Etsuko “Did you suppose I would decide to leave the country without having first given the most careful consideration to my daughter’s welfare? ...My daughter’s welfare is of the utmost importance to me” (Ishiguro, 1982: 44). Days later, on their trip to Inasa, Sachiko repeats that “what is of the utmost importance to me is my daughter’s welfare. That must come before everything else. I’m a mother, and my daughter’s interest come first. My daughter comes first” (86). Sachiko says she is never distressed by Frank’s hanging out with saloon girls, because “I’m a mother, and my daughter comes first.” “I’m going to do what’s best for Mariko, and that’s my decision” (87). Though emphasizing her care for Mariko and the importance of Mariko on and on, Sachiko betrays and violates her words in behavior. Sachiko ignores Mariko’s absence from school; she neglects Mariko’s fight with other children; she even leaves Mariko to Etsuko, a new friend she barely knows in order to date her lover Frank. Mariko’s welfare and better future become Sachiko’s excuses for escaping from obligation. It becomes more explicit when Etsuko’s argument about leaving Japan uncannily mirrors Sachiko’s: “My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept Keiko’s interests very much at heart. There is nothing to be gained from going over such matters again” (Ishiguro, 1982:

91). When Sachiko in the presence of Etsuko insists that it is in her own best interest to leave Japan, she then adds, “You know that yourself, Etsuko” (Ishiguro, 1982: 170-171). Although Etsuko’s motives for leaving Japan are never clearly written out, it is through Etsuko’s relation to Sachiko that the readers can conclude that it is “her rejection of Japan, duty, and motherhood” (Groes and Matthews, 2009: 49-50). In a word, in an ironical way, the whole story of the novel criticizes subtly that Etsuko abandons her parental responsibilities, and she is responsible for Keiko’s suicide.

4.3 The Function of Structural Irony in the Novel

A Pale View of Hills is written in the first point of view. The narrator, Etsuko obviously takes advantage of her narrating strategy of unreliable narration to blur the boundary between facts and her personal evaluation or interpretation. On one hand, Etsuko finds self through the narrating self on the axis of present time; on the other hand, Etsuko reconstructs self through the experiencing self from four main stories on the axis of the past time. The experiencing self of Etsuko becomes gradually clear through her narration of four main stories: the memory of Sachiko and Mariko, the memory of her father-in-law’s visit and short stay at her home in Nagasaki, Japan, the memory of her first husband Jiro and the memory of Mrs. Fujiwara. From Sachiko and Mariko, Etsuko tries to show the readers an image of a responsible mother, which she stresses constantly so as to make clear a significant fact that what she has done is out of her daughter’s interest.

However, the implied author Ishiguro’s ethical position is clear to us as well. The responsibility of a mother is always to put love on her children at the first place. At the beginning, Etsuko doesn’t straightly narrate past memories about her and Keiko, but turns to narrate the story of Sachiko and Mariko. As to Etsuko’s intention, the reader has to doubt the reliability of her narrating of others’ stories. Then, we find some unreliable points from her underreporting and misevaluating on the axes of the fact and the axes of values or ethics. The process of Etsuko finding and reconstructing herself is unfolded with the narrative progressing. In her narration, She is not immersed in confusion and grief any more for she can express her apology to Keiko

by misremembering Mariko as Keiko and saying that “in any case, if you don’t Like it over there, we can always come back”, “Everything will turn out well, I promise”(Ishiguro, 1982:173). As Keiko doesn’t tell her mother whether she really likes there or not, it accounts for that Etsuko is not fully responsible for the suicide of Keiko. Besides that, memories of her father-in-law and her ex-husband Jiro show Etsuko being a traditional Japanese woman and submissive wife. From these stories, we can realize the reason why she made decision to leave Japan. From Mrs. Fujiwara, Etsuko learns an optimistic life attitude towards the present and the future. The narrating self of Etsuko states frankly that some of her narration is unreliable for “it is heavily colored by the circumstances in which one remembers” (156). As a result, we become confused and doubtful of the reliability of these stories. It is certain, however, that what Etsuko cares is not the reliability of the stories but the way to present and construct her. Getting back to the present time, with her little daughter Niki’s visit and companion, Etsuko reconstructs and repositions herself as a strong and kind mother who will get well along with her little daughter in the following days of her life.

In general, Etsuko tries to find personal significance of past experiences from the perspective of the present. However, the significance of those past events may have changed when they are viewed in retrospect. The change of commitment may occur within a self as a result of later knowledge or an experience that radically alters the pattern in which life develops. However, we can learn from Etsuko that one therapy to cure trauma and find a lost and confused self is to look back at what has happened, tracing lines that have led to the outcome, discovering why plans have not succeeded, or how successful actions have led to unanticipated results. In other words, we can find and reconstruct ourselves in memories so as to live better at present and in the future, which is the ethical stand that both the implied author and the character narrator hold.

In a word, the contradictions between Etsuko’s narrations and reality form the departure between the narrator and implied author, and this departure results in the effect of structural irony presented in the novel. Through the disclosure of the structural irony, the readers get an opportunity to understand the physical as well as spiritual living conditions of the major characters in the novel. As the immigrants in

the new land, they have great expectation for a good future, but the reality is it is very hard for them to be accepted by the major society. Keiko's committing suicide is an obvious evidence for their failures in life and it also functions as a mirror for their traumas and sufferings. Whether before or after the death of Keiko, Etsuko and her family have not received due attention, care or help from the major society, what they could do is just to shoulder all of the difficulties, challenges and trauma, to try to have a kind of self-redemption and their efforts seem to doom to fail, which is the most tragic color of the story.

Conclusion

Irony is one of the oldest concepts in Western literary criticism. In its long history of development, irony has gone through four periods: the classical period, the romantic period, the new critical period, the modern and postmodern periods. So far, the concept of irony has been in the process of expansion and revision. Irony is an elusive concept, and it is difficult for us to get a clear, convincing definition of it. But it is widely accepted that irony can be divided into three categories, namely situational irony, verbal irony and structural irony.

As the maiden work of Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* is excellent in quality and makes Kazuo Ishiguro recognized as a major writer in the world of literature. In this novel, irony is well used which is not just a rhetorical device, but also an effective vehicle to express the author's attitude and views towards the world, a trigger of doubt to provoke our further thinking.

In the novel, Irony applied in the depiction of the characters' images shapes round characters---individuals are not merely devil or good, and they obtain their own characteristics through the irony which have been shown in the disclosure of their characters. Kazuo Ishiguro depicts vivid images against traditional binary opposition so as to create objective description and enable the readers to be closer to real life. Rhetoric ironies such as verbal irony in the concrete language used, situational irony in the plot, and structural irony applied in unreliable narration are effective clues to reveal Kazuo Ishiguro's implied attitude towards life. Irony is indispensable to enlighten readers in deep thinking about the essence of human life. Etsuko's story is a typical story of the immigrants who come across difficulties and sufferings such as poor living conditions, cultural conflicts, loss of self-identities, personal traumas etc. Her trauma and her efforts to seek for self-redemption also bear the universal significance for modern men's struggling to find their own solutions of their own problems in a modern society.

In conclusion, being a decisive mark of literary modernity, irony is considered to be one of the most effective tools to reveal the existing predicament of mankind. The study of *A Pale View of Hills* from the perspective of the irony suggests that human

nature and human life are complicated. Irony is a rhetoric device and could even be regarded as a life attitude. As Kazuo Ishiguro's first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* has already embodied his preference over irony, which has been well inherited and further developed in his later writings. Irony has become a very important perspective for our deeper understanding of Kazuo Ishiguro as well as his works.

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