
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Memory Inhibition Techniques in Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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| ABSTRACT

This paper offers a psychoanalytical reading of the human memory's dilemma as portrayed by Tan Twan Eng in *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2011) and Kazuo Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day* (1989). Its objective is to analyze the role of memory in shaping the fragmented self, particularly in the context of the trauma from the world wars, employing a psychoanalytical perspective demonstrated through Michael Anderson's memory inhibition techniques and Carl Jung's theories on active imagination, which prioritize the unconscious mind. The study applies two methods of selective memory to the protagonists' behaviors: retrieval-induced forgetting in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and the think/no-think paradigms in Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*. These approaches aim to explore the role of intention in these inhibition processes and investigate whether these experiences yield positive or negative outcomes. Through a close analysis of the main characters' repressed memories, the study argues that the protagonists employ selective memory techniques differently. In *The Garden of Evening Mists*, intentional and positive utilization of these techniques helps overcome the horrors of war. Conversely, in *The Remains of the Day*, unintentional and negative application enhances the illusion of falsely representing oneself. This study's primary contribution lies in exploring the mechanisms underlying the control of postcolonial/imperial traumatic memories. Additionally, it delves into the significance of the natural world in the protagonists' healing and recovery revealing that gardens serve as a metaphor for recovery due to their profound impacts.

| KEYWORDS

Active imagination, Carl Jung, Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael C. Anderson, postcolonial/imperial traumatic memories, psychoanalysis, Tan Twan Eng, *The Garden of Evening Mists*, *The Remains of the Day*, memory inhibition techniques

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1. Introduction

"Memory," as Kazuo Ishiguro once stated, is "terribly treacherous terrain, the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception" (Shaffer, 2008, p. 9). The vagueness of memory, as evidenced by Ishiguro's work becomes a tool for self-deception, aiding individuals in either positively or negatively manipulating their recollections. It is a mechanism employed to navigate traumatic experiences, particularly those induced by imperialism, leaving indelible marks on individuals within colonized societies. Recent studies have delved into understanding the intricacies of human memory. Roediger (1980) presents memory as tangible, retrievable items within the mind's physical realm, subject to variation in recollection based on personal perspectives and past experiences. The topic of postcolonial traumatic memory garnered significant attention in the literary field. Examining postcolonial traumatic memory has become a focal point in literary analysis, allowing for a deeper exploration of historical occurrences through lived experiences. Memory studies allowed literature to be both aesthetic and referential in examining the cultural consequences

of historical change (Rasch, 2016, p. 165). Therefore, history has become "the determining factor in causing interracial traumas," further developing "within two closely related cultural contexts: postmodernism and postcolonialism" (Onega et al. 2017, pp.1-2).

Writers like Tan Twan Eng and Kazuo Ishiguro delve into the realms of postcolonial/imperial traumatic memory. The Malaysian Tan Twan Eng (B. 1972) reexamines in his second novel, *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012), "individual and collective memory through the trauma of the Japanese Occupation and the subsequent Malayan insurgency" (Willson 2020, p.262). Eng's narrative not only depicts the adversities of the Second World War but also emphasizes healing and recovery within postcolonial conditions. In contrast, the Japanese-British Kazuo Ishiguro (B. 1954), explores the impact of traumatic memories, particularly those stemming from post-imperial experiences. His novel *The Remains of The Day* (1989) explores how memory's ambiguity can be harnessed to assert control over traumatic recollections, leading to self-deception as a means of coping with the past. As Groes and Lewis (2011) argue, Ishiguro aims to restore human dignity and the possibility of bringing meaning and worth to human existence (pp. 3,7).

This paper aims to study Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2011) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) exploring their protagonists' utilization of motivated forgetting, their intentions in suppressing unwanted memories, and whether these techniques are perceived as positive or negative. The focus lies not solely on the outcomes but on the process or the purpose of forgetting, shedding light on the indelible effects of imperialism, trauma, and their role in memory construction. Moreover, this study investigates the coping mechanisms employed by individuals facing challenging circumstances by controlling their memories. Further, the paper studies the garden, promoted as a healing metaphor in Eng's novel, explaining nature's effects in trauma treatment. Utilizing Michael C. Anderson's memory inhibition paradigms and Carl Jung's concept of active imagination, this paper aims to provide a logical understanding of the protagonists' motivated forgetting and highlight the healing potential of imagination and the unconscious mind. Eng's protagonist utilizes consciousness to suppress the horrors of war while Ishiguro's protagonist attempts to forget a life filled with regrets. To analyze these, the paper employs Anderson's retrieval-induced forgetting and think/no-think paradigms in the analysis of the two novels exploring the different approaches to memory inhibition and their repercussions on emotional stability.

2. Literature Review

Postcolonial fiction, as a rising genre, intricately dissects the enduring impacts of the imperialist legacies on memory. It is no longer the domain of psychologists; critics and writers have increasingly delved into investigating colonialism's psychological effects on individuals' experiences. Scholars like M. Fludernik (2012) highlight postcolonial literature's dual narrative techniques, juxtaposing collective and individual perspectives. This genre adeptly foregrounds communal ideals and memory traditions while also spotlighting individual experiences, fostering empathy for the 'other'. In a similar vein, Innes (2012) probes the interplay between history and memory in postcolonial fiction, emphasizing these works' focus on the colonial event and its repercussions. The conflict between memory and history in postcolonial novels endeavoring to construct a communal memory is pivotal for forging a unified national identity. These novels, as Innes emphasizes, challenge the colonial historical narratives, presenting a collective memory from distinct temporal and geographical vantage.

The exploration of Tan Twan Eng's and Kazuo Ishiguro's novels as postcolonial works unveils themes of repression, trauma, nostalgic sentiments, and nationalist racialism, each approached from varied perspectives. Critics examining these novels have particularly focused on the concept of memory. For instance, Pellano (2015) examines Eng's use of forgetting, arguing that memory serves as a painful reminder of unmet obligations and is central to historical recollection. Saxena (2020) concurs, stressing the intertwining of explicit and concealed memories in Eng's work, employing a garden metaphor to convey the survival-centric postcolonial situation, where nostalgia is perpetually entwined with loss. Poon (2016) underscores the consequences of violence on memory, arguing that Eng's novel transforms memory into a precious, politically charged aesthetic object, using artistry to obscure the brutality's repercussions, though at the expense of postcolonial politics.

In Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, scholars like Furst (2007) explore memory's fragility, highlighting its relative nature and frequent inaccuracies. Furst emphasizes that memory is dredged out randomly in response to changes in the mind's frail capacities. Matthews, Groes, and James (2009) analyze the narrative technique, suggesting that the objectification of memories enables Stevens to grapple with his past without reliving the pain. Thus, Stevens' narrative switches between trusting the recollection and self-consciousness regarding his involvement in past events. In addition, Ghariri (2020) delves into Carl Jung's archetypes, revealing the hidden persona and genuine personality within Stevens. Susie O'Brien (1996) applies Bhabha's discourse to critique Ishiguro's narrative, challenging the notion of good paternalism and discussing the novel's themes of dignity and loyalty, further expanded upon by Dilaver and Bayan (2015), who emphasize Stevens' suppression of emotions and the tragic realization culminating in remorse.

This study deviates from previous political and colonial perspectives, adopting a psychoanalytical lens to explore Michael C. Anderson's memory inhibition paradigms and Carl Jung's active imagination technique. By scrutinizing how protagonists utilize

motivated forgetting and intentionality in erasing traumatic memories, due to their experiences in the world wars this research offers psychoanalytic insights into Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*. These insights expand our understanding within the context of postcolonial trauma.

3. Methodology

This study adopts the psychoanalytical approach to explore the protagonists' strategies for coping with painful memories utilizing Michael Anderson's and Carl Jung's psychological concepts. Anderson's research (2005) examines the cognitive and neurological mechanisms involved in repressing undesirable memories. His work examines memory control mechanisms, proposing three methods for inhibiting or suppressing excluded memories: retrieval-induced forgetting, the think/no-think technique, and directed forgetting. This study applies the first two approaches to the protagonists' situations. Retrieval-induced forgetting involves inhibition driven by a goal to retrieve target memories, whereas the think/no-think procedure focuses on the intentional exclusion of unwanted recollections. In the analysis, the retrieval-induced forgetting method is applied to Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, while the think/no-think procedure is applied to explore the protagonist's condition in Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*. These theoretical frameworks offer insights into motivated forgetting and the role of intention in erasing distressing recollections.

Additionally, Carl Jung's theory of active imagination is employed to analyze the protagonist's approaches in handling the conflict between past trauma and aspirations for the future. Carl Jung (1875-1961) developed the concept between 1913 and 1916, emphasizing the need to facilitate the unconscious's integration with the conscious mind through active imagination. In *Yoga and the West* (1969), Jung explained that "everything must be done to help the unconscious to reach the conscious mind and to free it from its rigidity." This method which comprises "a special training for switching off consciousness, at least to a relative extent, thus giving the unconscious contents a chance to develop"(Jung, et al p.535), allows the unconscious contents to manifest, offering a chance for development.

By examining the protagonists' dilemmas through these theories, this research aims to evaluate their success in overcoming traumatic memories and scrutinize the role of intention in their inhibitory control processes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Understanding the Process of Memory Construction

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* delve into distinct strategies for managing memory. Better Help (2022) suggests that human willpower plays a pivotal role in selective memory formation. Intentionally suppressing a memory over an extended period activates the brain, signifying a concerted effort to forget. This endeavor to expel unwanted memories from consciousness encompasses diverse processes, some unintentional while others driven by the explicit intention to forget. The perception of selective memory might vary, considered negative in some contexts while possibly seen as positive in others.

4.2. Unintentional Motivated Forgetting in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989)

In his historical narrative detailing the pre-Second World War years, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Kazuo Ishiguro highlights the capacity of individuals to control their memories, showcasing their ability to override unwanted memory retrievals. Stevens, the esteemed butler of Darlington Hall, an English estate, dedicates his life to achieving perfection in his profession, particularly in the service of Lord Darlington. However, as the narrative unfolds, Stevens undergoes dramatic changes, marked by the end of the empire and his service to a new American master, Mr. Farraday. The arrival of the new employer, Mr. Farraday, serves as a catalyst for Stevens to prevent the further loss of his remaining life. Stevens' decision to embark on a trip, a suggestion from his employer, becomes the first step of this awakening.

The journey, undertaken in the summer of 1956, intended as a break, evolves into an immersion in memories revisiting England's past, the impact of Nazism, the two world wars, and an unfulfilled romantic relationship with his maid, Miss Kenton. Unexpected flashbacks interrupt this exploration, and Stevens finds himself "turning over certain recollections from the past" (Ishiguro, 1989, p. 211). These recollections, emerging in a structured stream of consciousness, reveal that reality is often concealed between spoken words, creating a nuanced narrative. His trip becomes a journey of healing, offering insight into a life-changing theme: the pain of retrospection. As he focuses on his life, hidden aspects emerge, including regrets, his fear of intimacy, neglected emotions, and deep agony. The narrative exposes the disappointments, losses, and lonely, empty existence devoid of love and warmth. Sebastian Groes and Barry Lewis assert that this journey allows Stevens "to remember and understand better his earlier professional experience" (2011, p.4). Stevens attempts to recover his past, present, and identity depicting his inner turmoil and grief as he contemplates the remnants of his life.

Stevens succeeded in this professional aspect of his life at the expense of other emotional needs. The narrative unfolds his success in his professional life, his loyalty to Lord Darlington, and the sacrifices made, juxtaposed with the emotional void and tragic waste

of a life devoid of true connection. This is evident when Miss Kenton tells him, "Here you are, after all, at the top of your profession, every aspect of your domain well under control. I really cannot imagine what more you might wish for in life" (Ishiguro, 1989, p. 153). For Stevens, Lord Darlington is an honorable and gentle man deserving of the deepest respect, appreciation, and acknowledgment of his true sacrifices. Stevens' loyalties to his master and the sacrifices he made caused him to miss out on opportunities that could have fulfilled his emotional needs. To recall himself accurately, Stevens needs to delve even further into the past delving into deep introspection to remember his regretful decisions. However, Stevens never fully recognizes this remorse, as doing so would shatter his self-perception, rendering his entire life pointless and devalued.

Moreover, Groes and Lewis (2011) assert that Ishiguro's protagonists "have something to hide, from themselves no less than from their readers" (p.7). Specifically, protagonist Stevens conceals his past and prevents himself from acknowledging reality to mitigate the negative impact of these memories on his self-esteem. The narration unmistakably exposes the unreliability of Stevens' memories. In a conversation with Suanne Kelman (1989), Ishiguro articulates his purpose in writing to unveil the reality of memory. He emphasizes that flashbacks transcend mere intuitive descriptions of past experiences; rather, they represent a distortion of the truth as the narrator relives specific memories based on their present emotional state. Consequently, the readers are prompted to question the authenticity of these recollections, pondering whether they truly occurred or if the narrator intentionally colors them (p. 48).

This applies to *The Remains of the Day's* protagonist. Aside from resisting all self-indulgence, Stevens frames the past in a positive light. When he reflects on his work, he reminds himself of the privileges of serving Lord Darlington, the "gentleman of great moral stature" (Ishiguro, 1989, p.114). He emphasizes that saying, "My chief satisfaction derives from what I achieved during those years, and I am today nothing but proud and grateful to have been given such a privilege" (p.114). Stevens' strong values of dignity and integrity have led him to deny certain unpleasant aspects of reality. He has molded his character after Lord Darlington and places great importance on maintaining an image of greatness, which he believes is crucial to his self-worth. Stevens' continual self-denial demonstrates the damaging consequences of self-forgetfulness. While serving at Darlington Hall, his complete devotion to perfection caused him to lose sight of his rights for the rest of his life, even as he was recovering. The process of healing was done in a very dignified way.

It can be argued that Stevens is controlling his memory in a way that overrides unpleasant memories when retrieving them. Inhibition is used to suppress the emotional response to his memories. While reflecting on these memories, Stevens observes how much his attention to them influences his perception of the worth and value of his past and his life as a whole. He says: "But I see I am becoming preoccupied with these memories, and this is perhaps a little foolish" (Ishiguro, 1989, p.60). Stevens feels that remembering certain memories harms his self-esteem. As a result, he tries to push away those thoughts to focus on more positive aspects of his life instead. He believes that it is his duty not to let his past failures bring him down and instead focuses on the fact that he has achieved dignity for himself and humanity. Stevens consciously reinforces this positive thinking and tries to avoid dwelling on negative experiences saying, "I will try and quote accurately from memory; the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position" (p.30). These words prove Stevens' conviction that his actions of seeking dignity are in keeping with his position as a butler. For him, "'dignity' has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits" (p.38).

To suppress the painful memories, Stevens tried to give himself some excuses for wasting his life. He justifies that he is not in a position to comprehend the great affairs of today's world but his "best course will always be to put our trust in an employer we judge to be wise and honorable, and to devote our energies to the task of serving him to the best of our ability" (Ishiguro, p. 201). Furthermore, he claims that being a great butler means that "he is bound" to control himself in moments of intense emotion (p.39). Stevens' father's death affirms his compliance with dignity and perfection, even at the expense of his intimate and personal relationships. Although he is not comfortable leaving his father in his last hours, Stevens confirms his pride in his compliance with dignity saying: "Whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (pp. 85, 101). Commenting on his father's death incident as a traumatic memory, Porter and Birt (2001) state that the traumatic memory accounts featured much more details and allusions to the emotional state at the time of the event (p. 103). Stevens remembers all the details about his father's death and his emotions at that moment. Meanwhile, he managed to control this memory by focusing on specific aspects of memory, excluding unpleasant memories that lead to forgetting them. In doing so, he finds relief: "One could presumably drive oneself to distraction in this way" (Ishiguro, 1989, p.159).

Through Stevens' reflections, the reader observes that Stevens lived a wasted life; despite having a successful career and meeting significant political figures, he still felt lonely and sad. Stevens tried to justify his choices, but deep down he knew he had never experienced a true and intimate relationship; all he had known was solitude and isolation. Therefore, *The Remains of the Day* reflects a virtually un-lived life, highlighting the dangers of a pretend existence. The narrative demonstrates that memory bestows abundant tears of agony on Stevens, and it becomes a complicated burden. Thus, he carefully conceals his painful

memories deep inside his heart, creating a refuge on which he dwells, finding solace in the pleasure of his fond recollections, resulting in a sense of vision alienation and a crisis of self-image.

Anderson (2005) states that repression is assumed to lower the degree of arousal for a particular reaction, inhibiting its emergence. As a result, weaker but more suitable reactions can be given, allowing for flexible, context-sensitive behavior (p.178). This concept is applicable to Stevens, who relies on the act of forgetting to navigate the challenging shifts in his life and move forward. For instance, he employs Retrieval-Induced Forgetting to suppress dominant responses to his difficult experiences. The purpose of this inhibition technique is to induce memory impairment in his present situation by compelling the mind to selectively identify and retrieve items, such as greatness, dignity, and the worth of life. The outcome of Stevens' act of retrieval-induced forgetting reflects the suppression and inhibition of his excluded memories. He forgets unwanted recollections by focusing on specific items. Anderson also notes that a more automatic form of inhibition produces retrieval-induced forgetting.

The same can also be said of Stevens' method of controlling his memories. He did not explicitly state a desire to forget competing exemplars, such as guilt and blamelessness. His inhibition did not arise from the wish to obliterate unwanted memories but rather from the desire to regain what is valuable to him, such as serving humanity. However, as Anderson indicates, "the lack of intention in retrieval-induced forgetting does not imply an absence or even a reduction of controlled inhibition" (p. 180). This is evident in Stevens' strategy for dealing with his problem. Although he does not explicitly state an intention to forget these unpleasant memories, he actively controls and inhibits them.

The Remains of the Day is significantly grounded in both forgetting and remembering. Stevens traversed distinct paths between recalling and suppressing. Two types of memories afflict him: those he wishes to forget and those he desires to retain. Consequently, he employs two selective memory types: suppressing and remembering specific memories - each time he decides which memories to focus on based on his feelings. In the beginning, Stevens deliberately forgot who he was to attain perfection and dignity. The second type emerged when he retraced his steps to recollect himself entirely. At this stage, Stevens is determined to find something lost in his life, such as his identity and the significance of his past. Consequently, Stevens attempts to control his memories to preserve the remaining value of his life and identity. Yet, when he fully acknowledges that his life is wasted, he reverts to his strategy of self-deception, wherein he forgets himself and denies all self-indulgence. Stevens' contemplative thoughts must navigate scattered trails of the past to achieve an inner balance between remembrance and oblivion, reality and trickery, sorrow, and faultlessness.

This interplay between memory and forgetting accentuates Stevens' struggle with acceptance and denial. An awakening was imperative for Stevens to break free from the confines of his own self, unveiling the person underneath the artificial layers of grandeur and refined manners. Following this enlightenment, he faces the challenging task of forgiving himself for a life spent in pursuit of self-preservation. This realization crystallizes at the culmination of his healing journey when he reflects, "I suppose, when with the benefit of hindsight, one begins to search one's past for such 'turning points', one is apt to start seeing them everywhere" (Ishiguro, p. 155). Ishiguro employed a refined approach to explore awareness, the impact of suppression, self-serving denial, and the profound effects of regret. Consequently, *The Remains of the Day* emerges as a narrative intricately woven with the theme of selective memory, meticulously crafted within the realms of self-defense worlds. It vividly illustrates how individuals strive to shape their identities, demonstrating the inevitability of grappling with the inescapable realities of life.

4.3. Intentional Motivated Forgetting in Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2011)

Tan Twan Eng's novel unfolds in Malaysia during the late 1980s, intertwining flashbacks from 1949 and the Second World War. Following her retirement as a Supreme Court judge, the protagonist, Teoh Yun Ling returns to her inherited property, Yugiri, a captivating garden and house in the picturesque Cameron Highlands of Japan. This return serves as a poignant opportunity for flashbacks to Yun Ling's harrowing past experiences, chronicled in a diary that weaves together her traumatic memories of the Japanese occupation. The novel deeply explores the hardships endured by people during the Second World War, exposing the profound trauma inflicted upon lives. Trauma, as defined by Vickroy (2015), emerges as the severe consequence of catastrophic events affecting mental, emotional, and physical well-being. A traumatic situation might have long-term psychological consequences (p. 15). Eng's protagonists grapple with the shifting power structures during the war, leading to trauma and a yearning for a pre-colonial past. Despite the struggles and hardships, the narrative reveals the characters' resilience in overcoming the traumatic experiences by actively managing their memories.

Referencing Anderson's explanation of the think/no-think paradigm, forgetting occurs by excluding unwanted memory out of awareness demonstrating a moderate level of intention. This concept aligns with the characters' conditions, particularly the two sisters, who employ an active imagination method akin to a waking dream during the war. To cope with the brutality of war, Yun Ling and her sister, Yun Hong, visualize their Japanese-styled garden as a refuge, facilitating communication between their conscious and unconscious minds. By doing so, they switch off consciousness to tap into their deep unconscious. This is evident

when Yun Hong says, "This is how we'll survive, [...] this is how we'll walk out of this camp. [...] And 'Day by day we added details to it. The garden became our refuge. Inside our minds, we were free'" (Eng, 2011, p. 62). Teoh Yun Ling continues using the same approach to heal herself even after the war when she returns to Yugiri. Ling's utilization of active imagination is evident from the statement, "I put the book down and closed my eyes. Emptiness: it appealed to me, the possibility of ridding myself of everything I had seen and heard and lived through" (p. 98).

With this reaction, the two sisters delve deep into the inner realm, actively impairing regular daytime consciousness. Yun Ling discusses the aesthetics and emotional effects of the garden by stating: "The garden has to reach inside you. It should change your heart, sadden it, uplift it. It has to make you appreciate the impermanence of everything in life" (Eng, 2011, p. 188). In this dream scene, they pay close attention to unconscious materials, which gives them a peaceful sensation. During their time in the camp, the picture of the Japanese garden they visited on vacation in Kyoto provided hope. For them, gardens "were created to approximate the idea of a paradise in the afterlife" (p. 97). Additionally, Anderson claims that people may resort to controlling their memories whenever the environment presents unavoidable reminders of things they would prefer not to think about. Thus, the "end result may be impaired memory for the things that people avoid thinking about" (p. 10). This relates to the main characters who viewed the Japanese gardens as a representation of recovery, a crucial tool for alleviating their physical and emotional distress, and a means of escaping from their traumatic experiences. Teoh Yun Ling confirmed this hypothesis when she said, "Yun Hong's love of gardens kept us alive when we were in the camp, [...] We escaped into make-believe worlds." (Eng, 2011, p. 61).

The protagonists' attempt to overcome the horrors of war is rooted in an intentional forgetting technique; they purposefully avoid contemplating undesirable thoughts. They construct garden images in their unconscious thoughts and then add details. The ego actively enters the event once the unconscious and conscious minds have interacted and the effects of the unconscious minds have flowed into consciousness. The ego actively participates in the event; they feel liberated, and thus manage their deep trauma. Therefore, they engage in active or awake fantasy activity, intentionally focusing on their inner lives to escape a harrowing experience. By concentrating on these thoughts, they prevent their bitter memories from entering their conscious minds. Thus, as the think/no-think procedure dictates, inhibition occurs when people consciously block out a memory they do not want to remember. The two sisters in this novel are not only refraining from speaking about the memory but also from bringing it to mind.

Tan Twan Eng portrays the garden as a refuge that can be used to escape, forget, or remember. Anderson argues that the think/no-think technique causes forgetting of the excluded memories (p.2). This argument applies to the protagonist, Teoh Yun Ling's experience. As a prisoner of war during World War II, she faced several challenges. Therefore, she imagined a garden that would protect her, a refuge for peaceful reflection and remembrance. After thirty-six years, Teoh Yun Ling suffers from an illness that might wipe out her recollections. She understands that she cannot simply erase the memories of what happened to her; therefore, she must keep them in mind. She elaborates that once she loses all ability to communicate with the world outside herself, nothing will be left but what she remembers. Her memories will be like "a sandbar, cut off from the shore by the incoming tide. For what is a person without memories? A ghost, trapped between worlds, without an identity, with no future, no past" (Eng, 2011, p. 37). Teoh Yun Ling is on a journey to recover her past, future, and sense of self. Throughout the journey, she takes the reader through her history, "a voyage of a million miles, and memory is the moonlight [she] will borrow to illuminate [her] way" (p. 375). Therefore, Tan Twan Eng has crafted a memory garden that bridges the gap between the past and the future. As Yun Ling's memories are pieced together, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of her past and her future. This unique garden offers insights into memory and forgetting.

The garden metaphor inspires the reader to explore more about the values and effectiveness of nature. Oliver Sacks (2020), a physician, neurologist, and author, investigates the ability of nature to reinvigorate and heal the most severe maladies. He discovered that gardens might be used as non-pharmaceutical therapy, vitally important for individuals suffering from chronic neurological diseases. According to Sacks, our brains benefit from the relaxing, organizing, and healing impacts of nature and gardening. In many circumstances, gardens and nature are more efficient than any treatment. Sacks describes how a natural connection is an essential aspect of the human experience and is profoundly ingrained in us. Nature's attributes have various effects on health, encompassing the spiritual, emotional, physical, and neurological dimensions (pp. 199-200).

To understand Teoh Yun Ling's and her sister's situation in Tan Twan Eng's novel, it is evident that gardens positively influence their mental and psychological states. During her life, Teoh Yun Ling used the power of imagination through gardening to dampen her emotional response to her traumatic experiences, not only during the Second World War but also after she survived the war. She suffers from a mental disability called Aphasia, which affects her communication and memory abilities. Therefore, she utilizes gardening as a tool for remembering and healing; it becomes a memory garden. Every part of nature in Yugiri, including the trees, the sky, and the clouds, plays a significant role in relieving Yun Ling; her "laughter sounds loud in the study, unnatural," but she does not care, and she laughs again (Eng., 2011, p. 130). Furthermore, Teoh Yun Ling describes her feelings toward the garden and its effect on the healing of her soul. The possibility of ridding herself of everything she had seen, heard, and lived through appealed

to her (p. 98). This comfortable feeling made her consider this garden and the clearing between the trees as a "symbol of harmony" (p. 121).

Moreover, after Yun Ling found comfort in nature and gardens, she felt the joy of life and the hope for a better future. This resulted in a conflict between the past traumas and the love for the future. She was filled with relief, but when she looked around and remembered how, in the camp, she had forced herself to take the first steps in saving her life, she realized that the journey had not ended (Eng., 2011, p. 104). As she practices active imagination while building the garden, she erases all memories of her past to enjoy a peaceful future. She believes that there is so much to do, and there is no time for her to think about anything else when they are working although what Frederick says, "spikes into a memory [she] thought [she] had buried away" (p. 114).

4.4 Discussion

In both novels, the main characters' healing journeys share some similarities and differences. First, both experiences explore the balance between forgetting and remembering by examining the power of memory control. Each protagonist wishes to erase certain memories and keep others. They employ selective memory in suppressing and remembering specific memories; they choose which memories to focus on based on their purposes.

In Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens threaded separate paths between remembering and forgetting, resulting in self-deception. He forgets himself and denies all self-indulgence, reaching a difficult point where he struggles to regain the value of his identity and past by trying to remember the positivity of his career. Meanwhile, in Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Teoh Yun Ling goes through contradictory stages between remembering and forgetting. She wants to forget how harshly she was treated as a prisoner of war in Malaya during the Second World War. However, Teoh Yun Ling also wants to retain and write down all the details of her past experiences so that she will remember them.

This confusion between memory and forgetting confirms the protagonists' sense of the instability of the self, their impermanence, and the idea of self-subjugation to better align oneself with the flow of life. Moreover, their reflection journeys captured many shades of silence, telling the real story without words. In reality, the truth lies between what is said and what is not said, so silence can reveal it. This notion is evident when Teoh Yun Ling wonders if all of us are the same when we navigate our lives "by interpreting the silences between words spoken, analyzing the returning echoes of our memory in order to chart the terrain, in order to make sense of the world around us?" (Eng, 2011, p. 348). The experiences of Stevens and Teoh Yun Ling controlling their memories show that although escaping may seem like a way to save oneself, it can also lead to a feeling of emptiness that can threaten their stability.

Further, this paper argues that just as Stevens needs to forgive himself for wasting his life to achieve self-preservation, and an inner balance between memory and forgetting, Yun Ling also needs this forgiveness to be able to preserve her identity and inner peace. She achieves this forgiveness at the end of the novel. Just as Stevens has come to accept the fact that his mentor has failed him, Teoh Yun Ling accepts her enemy's gardening art. Teoh Yun Ling's attitude toward Aritomo and the Japanese changed dramatically. For the first time since she survived, she sensed harmony and calm in Yugiri, Aritomo's garden. She explained her soothing feeling by saying: "it was only in the carefully planned and created garden of Yugiri that I had found a sense of order and calm and even, for a brief moment of time, forgetfulness" (Eng., 2011, p. 26). Therefore, these journeys serve as a method of confronting the protagonists' repressed issues, which provide self-discovery and self-acceptance.

Furthermore, one of the differences between the protagonists of *The Remains of the Days* and *The Garden of Evening Mists* is how they employ the motivated forgetting technique. In Ishiguro's novel, Stevens controls his memories in an automatic form. He does not explicitly state the intention of forgetting unwanted memories; instead, he concentrates on retrieving target items, such as serving humanity. On the other hand, in Tan Twan Eng's novel, Teoh Yun Ling suppresses her unpleasant memories with a clear and explicit intention to forget aiming to overcome her difficulties. Teoh Yun Ling's method may be seen as a positive one that assisted her in overcoming the cruelty of the Second World War. In contrast, Stevens' method may be viewed as a negative one that encourages self-deception.

5. Conclusion

The examination of the effects of the imperialist past on people's psyche and its impact on memory brings forth multiple dimensions of the predicament faced by those who strive to overcome these unpleasant memories. The discussion of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* reveals the implacable effects of the imperialist past leading to traumas contributing to the construction of memory. By employing Michael Anderson's memory inhibition techniques and Carl Jung's active imagination theories, which prioritize the unconscious, the discussion illustrates how people's emotional response to a traumatic experience has long-term psychological consequences. The selected texts portray different dimensions: both light and dark, positive and negative, with characters striving to recover in their ways by actively seeking healing

or unknowingly avoiding it. Both protagonists engage in motivated forgetting while also utilizing remembering to reflect on the significance of their lives, revealing the precarious relationship between remembering and forgetting, suggesting that reality might be an artificial illusion.

This paper contends that the protagonists utilize selective memory techniques differently. On the one hand, Ishiguro's protagonist, Stevens, conceals his past and prevents himself from remembering his reality by focusing on his pride to achieve dignity. He has developed a method to control his unwanted memories, including regrets, deep pain, loneliness, and sorrow arising from an unintended intention. In contrast, the protagonist of Tan Twan Eng's novel uses intentional forgetting to overcome her harrowing experience. During the Second World War, Yun Ling tries to escape reality by envisioning a Japanese-style garden. She aims to create a space for inner contemplation and reflection between her conscious and unconscious mind. In this dream scene, she concentrates on a group of unconscious thoughts and feelings, bringing her a sense of calm.

Moreover, this paper finds that Yun Ling's intentionally motivated forgetting approach, combined with the uplifting impact of nature, has enabled her to triumph over her challenging experience. Stevens' approach to suppressing memories also helped him overcome his sense of guilt over wasting his life. However, this paper confirms that despite the effectiveness of the approach of motivated forgetting, it has unpleasant effects on people's lives. Escaping from reality through controlling memory can have serious consequences. For instance, Stevens' experience results in a more significant issue: the instability of the self. Further, both protagonists suffer from inner emptiness. Thus, in the end, they reach a self-discovery stage that leads them to choose a peaceful path. For instance, Stevens gradually realizes how his mentor, Lord Darlington, eventually fails him by giving himself excuses and not blaming himself. Yun Ling also accepts her enemy's gardening art by prioritizing her inner peace and love for the future. Though this research provides insight into the experience of memory suppression in postcolonial conditions, the discussion is limited to two texts: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*. Therefore, this research recommends further studies of Kazuo Ishiguro's and Tan Twan Eng's texts using other psychological theories to provide deep insight into people's natural techniques for dealing with traumatic memories.

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