

A PAUCITY OF SELF-REFLECTION IN THE UNCONSOLED OF KAZUO ISHIGURO

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ABSTRACT:

The *Unconsoled* is a surrealist novel that represents paucity of self-reflection of a renowned pianist Mr. Ryder. The novel elucidates the different shades of life of Mr. Ryder. The present study illustrates the concept of a paucity of self-reflection by Mr. Ryder who tries to find out his real identity because of his confusion that who he is in reality. His confusion turns out to be the main point about his connection with other people with he meets in his life. The present discussion analysis of how Mr. Ryder faces intricacies due to the event that occurs in a Central European city and how his fragmented realities or memories are playing an important role in his life.

KEYWORDS: Identity, Memory, Paucity, Reality, Self-reflection

INTRODUCTION

The present study reveals a paucity of self-reflection of the main protagonist Mr. Ryder who comes out in an anonymous Germanic town for three days before his concert and suddenly discovers himself in a dream. The novel investigates that he always forgot things and fight to complete his promises before his Thursday's night performance. The people of the town feel regret to fund him when they do not understand his expressions because the personality of the famous pianist could not be right for them. The novel is divided into two plots where one plot explains the unhappiness in the life of Mr. Ryder due to his parents' divorce. To fulfill his promise and for reconciliation of his parents, he thinks that the only way is to end his career as a pianist. But he forgets that happened long years ago. Secondly, the story of Brodsky of an old man is also important because he thinks as a conductor he can bring love in his life.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995) is also a fourth novel that gives him renown in the world. He received many honours for his books like the Nobel Prize in Literature and The Booker Prize. In the forty languages, his works are translated. This fourth book is different from his earlier three books *A Pale View of Hills* (1981), *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and *The Remains of the Day* (1989). The first three novels explain historical realism. The novels give details about culture, social and political context that is an epidemic of World War II. But his fourth book explains the fictional realism. Ishiguro explains:

In a way, the first three novels were each an attempt to rewrite of horn down the material used in the previous one. It was almost three attempts to cover the same territory. With *The Remains of the Day*, I came to the end of that process. . . . But as I got older (I'm forty now) I wanted something that would reflect the feel. Life didn't feel to me like a process whereby episodes came at you and you didn't live up to the moment or you did. It wasn't as clear as that; thing seem messier. I wanted to write a book not from the viewpoint of someone looking back and ordering his experience, but of someone in the midst of chaos, being pulled in different directions at once, and not realizing why. Self-deception is dealt with differently in this book. (Jaggi 117)

In his first three novels, all the characters made their best to accept their past with their fragile memories in their present life in a new country whereas *The Unconsoled* is different from these earlier novels because it represents elements of dream and confusion. *The Unconsoled* also explores the sufferings of the main protagonist who suffer in his adulthood due to his bad experience of his childhood and separation from his parents.

The Unconsoled explains dimensions of memory, mind and dreams and self reflectivity through the main protagonist. The novel explicates ambiguity of identity and disappointment and wish of redemption. Ishiguro writes the story in a hyper-realistic way that readers experience it in true sense. Mr. Ryder is a highly praised pianist with amnesia and paucity of self-reflection who arrive in Central European for his concert. Mr. Ryder

thinks that it is important to deliver a concert at the event along with the speech of a man is also necessary as per the exception of the people to improve the hidden crisis of the country. The novel also explains the relationship of Mr. Ryder with other characters that are existed as locals. The story of Mr. Ryder intermingles with local characters' stories that are tormented by their past experiences. Mr. Ryder tells the stories with his fragile memories because he does not know what he is supposed to do and where he supposed to go to the concert. He goes for the classical concert but he recalls his memories that are connected with his youth and adulthood so he wanders in the countryside's house. But he finds himself in the hotel and assumes a woman and her son as his wife and child. This shows his paucity of self-reflection in the novel when he is not able to recognize his self. Gary Adelman in his work *Doubles on the Rocks: Ishiguro's The Unconsoled* explains about Ryder in this way that he is:

a concert pianist who lives in the past, haunted by memories of parental abuse. Fearful of failure, conditioned by his parents to believe himself a mediocrity, he is driven by the fantasy of winning their favor and deserving their love, so that he can escape the fate of becoming what he is already in essence, the spitting image of his hated father. All of Ishiguro's energy goes into constructing a cage of the past from which Ryder cannot escape. At the end of the novel, the retrospective impression is of having overheard a confession, the sort that is nakedly revealing yet capable of altering nothing. (Adelman 167)

The above textual explains Mr. Ryder who always lives in his memories of the past and has unpleasantness experience of his childhood with his parents. He recalls his memories and lives in his own fantasy to gain love from their parents. Ishiguro represents the main protagonist as a person who does not want to come out from his past that shows his paucity of self-reflection in the novel.

In his journey of town, he feels that he has visited this place earlier. His paucity of self-awareness is the example of the surrealism where he does not know about his past. His strange attitudes about his lover Sophie and her son is also an example of his strange attitude because he has some different kind of past with them that he forgot now. Sophie has a son whose name is Boris and he follows the footsteps of Mr. Ryder. He finds his friend of childhood in England unexpectedly due to absurd dream. He finds a terrible attitude of the people of the Germanic town and experiences shocking repercussion. The atmosphere represents the pessimistic behaviour of people where friends are not real and lovers do not live together. People do not have sympathy with each other and it makes the atmosphere gloomy where no one can be happy. The development of the town is also not possible because of their attitudes and ambiance where they are unable to get the inspired genius. Throughout his concert, he comes to know the fact that his recollection about the trip of his parents to the city was only his hope in his thoughts. It gives him a shock and he does not give his performance. This leaves his negative impression on the people so the next day the people show their lack of concern toward him and his performance. Sophie also neglects him and disappoints from him.

Ishiguro works explore the awful injuries that families impose on their members as well as the countries or societies on their people. The novel explains the vague experience of the main protagonist that gives him a loss. Every character of the novel struggles with elf reflectivity due to their fragile memories. The process of memories starts from their past but memories determine their present life's situation or sadness in which they have a paucity of self-reflection. The situation of Mr. Ryder and the people of the city are miserable because they do not want to unshackle themselves from their distressing past. The emotional journey of Mr. Ryder is not an easy task he recalls his childhood memories that are triggered through certain scenes in his present life. The most touching image of uneasiness as a child he recalls he buys the second-hand bicycle with his parents. With his parents, he wanders from one place to another to buy the bicycle. The old woman has mistaken them as an ideal of a happy family that makes a child panic. He explains: "A huge tension had followed this realization, one which had continued to mount within me throughout the half-hour or so we had stayed. It was not that I had feared my parents would fail to keep up their usual show – it was inconceivable they would have started even the most sanitized version of one of their rows. But . . . she would suddenly freeze in horror before us" (Ishiguro 264). Mr. Ryder recalls his conversation with Fiona Roberts who was his school friend many years before and says:

Your parents. They don't argue like that just because they don't get on. Don't you know? Don't you know why they argue all the time?" Then suddenly an angry voice had called from outside our hide-out and Fiona had vanished. And as I had continued sitting alone in the darkness under the table, I had caught the sounds from the kitchen of Fiona and her mother arguing in lowered voices. At one point I had heard Fiona repeating in an injured tone: 'But why not? Why can't I tell him? Everybody else knows.' And her mother saying, her voice still lowered: 'He's younger than you. He's too young. You're not to tell him.'(172-173)

The above textual explores the rift of the relationship between the parents of Mr. Ryder. The novel explains the relationship of parents with the help of the main protagonist as well as by other characters. Mr. Ryder has a bad impact on his childhood in his life that gives him a fear of denial. The strange condition of Mr. Ryder represents his

childhood wounds where he is not able to admit his failure. The situation forces him to forget his concert because of his displeasure experience of his childhood. The present discussion explains his paucity of self-reflectivity because of the connection between trauma and forgetting.

Mr. Ryder does not know his purpose of life due to amnesia and he tries to make his identity with the help of memories and events. He influences the lives of other individuals. His incompleteness due to his fragmented memories is also the reason for his paucity of self-reflectivity. He has always the feeling of rejection both in his professional and personal life. His relationship with his parents is always stressed in his childhood. During his performance, he has hope that his parents will come to see his performance but in the end, he realizes that this is his only belief. He breaks down and recalls his childhood relationship with his parents that give him a fear of lack of confidence. All the other characters of the novel like Ryder and Sophie, Sophie and Gustav, Brodsky and Miss Collins linger under pressure that affects them in the situation where they have been cast and hurts each other. All the incidents like nonattendance of Mr. Ryder's parents and the Hoffmans' nonexistence in the concert during the performance of Stephens, the tragedy of Brodsky to come back as a conductor to win the love of Miss Collins and failure of Mr. Ryder in his historic speech explores the pointlessness of their desires in their lives and criticizes their future with their continue agony. Hoffman is accountable for the organization of the concert and this is a chance for him to show his wife that he is not a failure. He says:

The evening. It's a shambles. Why pretend it's anything else? Why continue to tolerate me? Year after year, blunder after blunder. After the Youth Festival, your patience with me was surely at its end. But no, you put up with me further. Then Exhibition Week. Still you put up with me. Still you give me another chance. Very well, I begged you, I know. Implored you for one further chance. And you didn't have the heart to refuse me. In a word, you gave me tonight. And what have I to show for it? The evening is a shambles. Our son, our only son, making a laughing stock of himself before the most distinguished citizens of this town. (506)

The above text summarizes acknowledgement of Hoffman where the efforts of an individual are experienced by the other characters in the result of an unsuccessful concert. He tries to explain his pain through these words because his insight does not show the way to successes.

The setting of the novel represents the incapability to attain a distinct cultural and nationwide identity. The novel explains the postmodernism condition where the concept of the Eastern and Western explains the culture of Europe. *The Unconsoled* imagined as figurative work according to author and Peter Oliva says: "The book is supposed to be a metaphor for the way most of us have lives that we blunder through, pretending we know where we're going but not really knowing where we're going" (Oliva 122). Mr. Ryder tries to fulfill his promises as a celebrity but he goes back to the identity of a father and a husband with his memories. Mr. Ryder is not successful in his any roles that create paucity of self-reflection in his identity. The *Unconsoled* explains that all characters try to create their identities with the fragile history that gives them hope to compare themselves with superior positions in the hierarchy of society.

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