

## Women's Quest for Home: Spatial Imaginary in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*

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### Abstract

Unhomely homes have been a recurring theme in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, and his debut novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), is no exception. While previous research has primarily focused on themes such as displacement, alienation, and trauma in the novel, limited attention has been given to exploring the social-spatial and gendered spatial factors contributing to this sense of homelessness. This paper examines the meanings of home in *A Pale View of Hills* by drawing upon Blunt's and Dowling's concept of home as a spatial imaginary. It argues that the idea of home in the post-war Japanese discourse is actively challenged and reshaped by the female characters in Ishiguro's novel. This dynamic process encompasses three facets: materially, it includes the destruction of homes, the Westernisation of domestic space, and gendered space and domesticity; imaginatively, it involves long-lasting trauma and repression; and relationally, it signifies the transformation of home from unhomely to a homely one. This paper aims to provide a spatialised and politicised understanding of home in *A Pale*

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*View of Hills*, fostering a more dynamic view of women's identity construction.

### **Keywords**

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### **Introduction**

The meaning of home is mirrored in the work of many modern British writers, especially those of mixed heritage. In *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction* (1999), Rosemary Marangoly George underscores the centrality of the concept of home "in fiction written in English by colonisers, the colonised, newly independent peoples and immigrants" in the past hundred years (1). Kazuo Ishiguro, the 2017 Nobel laureate in literature, is also profoundly concerned with questions of home and homelessness. Wang classifies Ishiguro's main characters as "homeless strangers" in "their founding unhomely homes in a floating world" (32). These characters are ordinary individuals who endure emotional devastation and struggle to survive after historical catastrophe. Their sense of homelessness is reflected in the empty house images prominent in Ishiguro's novels.

Ishiguro's debut novel, *A Pale View of Hills* ([1982] henceforth *Pale View*), is narrated by Etsuko, a Japanese woman living in England three decades after World War II. Etsuko is haunted by her elder daughter Keiko's suicide. When her half-English daughter Niki visits, Etsuko shares her story along with that of her friend Sachiko, whose life mirrors and foreshadows aspects of Etsuko's own in post-World War II Nagasaki. The narrative presents Etsuko and Sachiko as navigating the post-World War II environment in Japan, both driven by a sense of displacement and desire for a new beginning. This theme, central to the novel, focuses on the search for a sense of home in the aftermath of the war's devastation. Based on this backdrop, this paper examines the meanings of home in *Pale View* through the lens of Blunt's and Dowling's concept of home as a spatial imaginary. It posits that the concept of home within the post-war Japanese context undergoes dynamic reevaluation and reconstruction through the actions of female characters in Ishiguro's narrative.

### **Spatiality in Kazuo Ishiguro's narratives**

The exploration of spatiality within Ishiguro's works is usually intertwined with other thematic elements. Beyond mere physical settings, critics have observed the active role of space and place in shaping characters' memories, mental states, and identities within Ishiguro's works. The protagonists in Ishiguro's novels often

harbour hidden past connections with the geographical spaces they inhabit (Teo 17; Maran and Raj J 2). Brian Shaffer (2001) discusses the relationship between emotions and places in Ishiguro's narratives and argues that external landscapes serve as mirrors to the central characters' "quietly anguished interior landscape" (2). Aligned with Shaffer's perspective, Awla and Sharif (2019) further point out the interconnectedness of place with characters in Ishiguro's *Pale View*. By emphasising the role of space and place in shaping the characters' psyche, scholars note that places in Ishiguro's works are carriers of memory and meaning, wherein both individuals and communities shape their identities (Ouseph 60; Çelikel 61; Wen 125). These scholarly insights concerning spatial elements in Kazuo Ishiguro's works collectively underscore the pivotal role of space in shaping the themes and character development within his novels.

Critical discussions regarding human-place relationships in Ishiguro's narratives have broadened to encompass the material representations of homes. In discussing the ideas of dislocation and homelessness in Ishiguro's novels, Lewis argues that homes in Ishiguro's novels are "houses that are not quite homes" (7). However, Lewis does not illustrate the differences between a house and a home, leaving the reasons behind this prevailing sense of unhomeliness unexplored. Horton (2023) underscores that in *Pale View*, Etsuko's recollection of home is moulded by one or multiple traumatic experiences, the effects of which often extend into the present, shaping the significance of migration (17). Horton ascribes Etsuko's trauma to her interactions with patriarchal and imperial oppression in the context of diaspora (20). In alignment with Horton, Tan (2023) attributes the homelessness of the characters in *Pale View* and *When We Were Orphans* to their displaced condition of being nationally and ethnically rootless during immigration, which can be traced back to Ishiguro's early experience of displacement. These criticisms highlight the psychological reasons leading to the protagonists' homelessness; however, the physical and material intrusion of imperialism and patriarchy on the protagonist's troubled experience of home as a spatial imaginary which involves trauma and repression is not fully delved into. By utilising Blunt's and Dowling's concept of home as a spatial imaginary, this paper examines the meanings of home in *Pale View* so as to point out that home is a social-spatial system shaped by different axes of power and resistance leading to the transformation of home from unhomely to homely which contributes to the protagonist's identity construction.

### **Imaginariness of Home**

As a universal concept, home has been studied and conceptualised across various disciplines since the 1980s. The imaginaries of home, or the representations of

home, have varied from the most material to the least material, as well as from the least political to the most political. Based on the field of cultural geography, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling synthesise previous research in the area and propose the term “critical geography of home” in their influential book *Home* (2002/2006). Their interpretation transcends the binaries of exclusionary and idealisation of domestic space to show a spatialised and politicised understanding of home.

Blunt and Dowling extend the discourse initiated by humanistic geographers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan, who placed the concept of home at the forefront of geographical inquiry. Humanistic geography, with its emphasis on human agency, creativity, and the profound meanings imbued in places, sets the stage for a deeper understanding of home as a space of emotional and existential significance. According to Tuan (1971), a home is a place “to which one withdraws and from which one ventures forth” (189). While Tuan (1977) illuminates the experiential nature of space – how our perceptions and emotions imbue spaces with meaning (8) – Blunt and Dowling assert that these experiences cannot be decoupled from their socio-political contexts. In their view, the personal narratives and emotions associated with home are entangled with broader social power relations. This approach politicises the concept of home, expanding upon Tuan’s phenomenological lens to encompass the complex interplay between individual experiences and the broader social fabric.

Home as a spatial imaginary has three characteristics. It is not only a physical place/site but also a “set of feelings/ cultural meaning” and the relation between the two (Blunt and Dowling 9). Primarily, home is a physical place. The state of home as a residence is influenced by the social, economic, cultural, and political relationships in the world. The location and building forms of the residence, the layout of dwellings, materials used and function of rooms within domestic space are reflections of social and cultural norms. Therefore, home should be understood “in relation to the wide political, social and cultural contexts within which they are situated and constituted” (Blunt and Dowling 41). Secondly, the concept of home moves beyond dwelling and is an affective space, an idea and an imaginary that is shaped by emotions and feelings. According to Blunt and Varley, “[t]hey may be feelings of belonging, desire, and intimacy, but also violence, fear and alienation” (3). These feelings, ideas, and imaginaries are essentially spatial. Moreover, the authors emphasise that home is “neither the dwelling nor the feeling, but the relation between the two” (Blunt and Dowling 28), which means that “[t]he material form of home is dependent on what home is imagined to be, and imaginaries of home are influenced by the physical forms of dwelling” (28). Thus, “home is thereby a spatial imaginary: a set of intersecting

and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct and connect places and extend across co-existing spaces and scales” (9).

As emphasised by Blunt and Dowling, gender plays a crucial role in comprehending the imaginaries of home, given its intersections with race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age. Household and domestic relations are deeply gendered, and “[g]endered expectations and experiences flow through all these social relations and their materialities” (16). Therefore, feminists argue that home is the key site of oppression for women. For many women, rather than serving as a sanctuary, home transforms into a battleground rife with violence, isolation, and emotional turmoil. The destruction of home and the oppression within home deprives many women of a sense of belonging, leaving them homeless in both a literal and metaphorical sense.

In agreement with Iris Young, Blunt and Dowling also advocate a positive idea of home for women. The concept of home and the practice of homemaking contribute to women’s personal and collective identities in a flexible and material way. Acknowledging this significance also involves recognising the overlooked labour done by many women within the domestic space.

Due to the duality of the meaning of home for women, there exists a dynamic interplay between the spatial imaginaries of home and the identity construction of women. This paper explores the spatial imaginaries of home for women through three distinct lenses. Firstly, it delves into the material aspects of home, particularly examining its influence by political and patriarchal power dynamics in post-war Nagasaki in *Pale View*. Secondly, it investigates the emotional dimension of home, highlighting its association with trauma, loss, and repression stemming from imbalances in power dynamics. Lastly, the paper explores the relational aspect of home, focusing on the characters’ quest for belonging through the act of homemaking.

### **Domestic transformations in *A Pale View of Hills***

Home refers to the process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. In *Pale View*, home as a domestic space is set in post-World War II Nagasaki in the early 1950s when the Korean War broke out and Japan, still haunted by the devastation of the atomic bomb, remained under the Occupation of the Allied Powers, primarily the United States. The Occupation from 1945-1952, overseen by US General Douglas MacArthur, involved a total of nearly one million soldiers in Japan (Dower 206). This presence of foreign forces represents the only time in Japan’s history when it has been subject to occupation by an external power (Kushner and Muminov 174). In this context, the materiality of

home is not only informed by political forces but also by patriarchal power relations.

Primarily, political forces exert a substantial influence on altering the material aspects of home in post-war Japan. America's dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and the Occupation that followed had a significant impact on the physicality of Japanese homes, which not only led to the destruction of traditional houses but also to the Westernisation of domestic space.

In *Pale View*, the devastating impact of the atomic bomb and air raids during wartime resulted in the profound destruction of homes. In Etsuko's recollection of post-war Nagasaki, she and her husband Jiro lived in the apartment blocks newly erected on the riverbank where a small village used to stand, but "then the bomb had fallen, and afterwards all that remained were charred ruins" (Ishiguro *Pale View* 11). All the houses in the village were destroyed except one wooden cottage, which "had survived both the devastation of the war and the government bulldozers" (11). Throughout this novel, these two sentences are the only ones describing the destruction of houses in the moment of atomic bombing; however, the effect behind this seemingly casual mention is shocking when readers think about the lives of the civilians sacrificed for the warfare. Even several years after the atomic bomb and the city was under reconstruction, there were still traces of ruins permeating their daily life:

Of the four, our block had been built last and it marked the point where the rebuilding programme had come to a halt; between us and the river lay an expanse of wasteground, several acres of dried mud and ditches. Many complained it was a health hazard, and indeed the drainage was appalling. All year round there were craters filled with stagnant water, and in the summer months the mosquitoes became intolerable. (11)

Besides the destruction of houses and homes due to the atomic bombs, the air raid in Tokyo, where Sachiko used to live, caused the destruction as well. Sachiko recounts the memories of Tokyo's air raids, "living in tunnels and derelict buildings [...] nothing but rubble" (73). This destruction extends beyond physical structures to the very essence of community and personal spaces (Tuathail and Dahlman 246).

Etsuko, Sachiko, and other survivors' experience of unhomey displacement shows that "home is an intensely political site" (Blunt and Dowling 233), which corresponds to Homi Bhabha's observation that "[t]he unhomey is the shock of recognition of the world in the home, the home in the world" (141). The erasure of the spatiality of home by warfare makes victims feel more about the centredness of home and justifies their sense of homelessness, as Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) suggests about the idea of homelessness, "[t]o be forcibly evicted from

one's home and neighbourhood is to be stripped of a sheathing which in its familiarity protects the human being from the outside world" (99).

Following the destruction of homes in the war, the materiality of domestic space is continually transformed by America's hegemonic ideology in post-war times. Cultural metamorphosis is well reflected in the construction and renovation of the domestic space. In *Pale View*, old spacious Japanese houses with huge gardens remain in the past. Their place is now occupied by "modern" apartments. Like many young married couples at this time, Etsuko and her husband Jiro live in an apartment building owned by Jiro's company rather than with the older generation in the traditional Japanese house. The conditions of the apartments are far from satisfactory, as they are too small to remain cool during the warmer months. Inside the apartment, beside the bathroom and the kitchen, there is a bedroom for the couple, a little square room for a future child or a temporary guest like Jiro's father Ogata-San, and a living room serving as a public space for the family to dine, rest, and entertain guests. Additionally, household appliances, like electric fans and a washing machine are equipped, which surprise the older generations like Mrs. Fujiwara and Ogata-San but are widely welcomed by young housewives. These changes reflect Blunt's and Dowling's argument that "the spatial layout and perception of many forms of dwelling correspond to dominant ideologies of home" (92). In *Pale View*, the domestic interior changes from a traditional one to a Western-style blended with Japanese customs designed for nuclear families, reflecting the spatialised impact of American ideology on the post-war generation within domestic space.

In the narrative, homes have been Westernised, impacting both their interiors and exteriors. This transformation is a consequence of post-war Japan's housing shortages, rendering traditional gardens a rarity for young couples. Etsuko, who had once envisaged a home adorned with azaleas at its entrance, now resides in a modest apartment. Her view encompasses a desolate expanse adjacent to the riverbank, a stark contrast to her ideal of tranquil domesticity. This landscape fails to evoke the sense of home Etsuko desires. Despite an overarching contentment among the inhabitants, there exists an implicit sense of temporariness. As Sloane notes in his reading of the "transient homes" in the novel, "Etsuko's small apartment creates ... not quite happiness or homeliness but a more utilitarian feeling of temporary sufficiency.... Like a waiting room, the space encourages thoughts of leaving... not conducive to permanence, futurity, dwelling" (109-110).

Warfare and the resulting cultural hegemony play a significant role in the transformation of the materiality of domestic space in post-war Nagasaki. In addition to this, patriarchal gender relations are pivotal in comprehending the

notion of home as well. On 10 April 1946, in the first general election of the House of Representatives, Japanese women were granted universal suffrage on par with men. However, in the context of the Occupation, the nature of women's suffrage is far more complex. Instead of being the catalyst for women's liberation, their right to vote was seen as essential in ensuring the stability of a nation that the United States sought to cultivate as its ally during the Cold War era. MacArthur conveyed his hopes that granting suffrage would empower Japanese women to "utilize their new right as an extension of their familial role, not to assert their gender-based needs against men" (Koikari "Exporting Democracy?" 29). Meanwhile, for post-war Japan, this gendered narrative of occupation resonated with the nationalist ideal of good wives and wise mothers, underscoring "women's contribution to postwar Japanese society through their familial roles" (Koikari 72).

Against this historical backdrop, gendered spaces still existed as pre-war models of spatial division persisted into the postwar era, and women's relationship with home and their use of domestic space have remained relatively unchanged. To begin with, gendered space is reflected in the division of separate spheres in *Pale View*. As the outcome of modernisation, separate spheres, considered as "the most pervasive representation of gendered space" (Rendell et al. 103), confine women within the private sphere of reproduction (the home), which obstructs women's access to the public domain and subjugates them to male dominance. In the novel, though some women begin to work outside, married middle-class women like Etsuko are still expected to stay home.

Gendered spaces extend beyond public and private dichotomies into domestic settings. Traditional gender roles are reinforced through the division of the domestic space. In Etsuko's cramped apartment, the kitchen, distinct with its tiled floor and separation by tatami, becomes her primary space. Lacking personal space, like those of many other women, Etsuko's activities are confined to this area, emblematic of her role in family care (Wajcman 117). Conversely, Jiro, her husband, occupies the living room. This space, though "public" within the context of their home, is predominantly his, where he engages in leisure and social activities. As Oshima points out, "[Jiro] looks to his wife to keep the house as a place of rest for him and to serve him" (30). This paradigm of gendered space exemplified in Etsuko's apartment shows that "being a woman means living largely according to a geographical imagination that is masculinist in nature, that privileges and makes room for male subjects to express and impose themselves in and on their environs" (Nelson and Seager 21).

Gendered spatial divisions confine women to domestic spaces, aligning them with domesticity and unpaid tasks such as childcare, housekeeping, and



cooking (Mallett 72; Frank 131). These duties are often perceived as acts of love rather than essential contributions (Coontz 155), an ideology that informs the post-World War II Japan context, the backdrop of *Pale View*. In post-war Japan, the pre-war ideology of “good wife, wise mother” persisted and was being recovered to “[frame] motherhood as decisive for the prosperity of the nation” (Castellini 109). In *Pale View*, married women are expected to be “splendid mothers,” who should “look forward” instead of indulging themselves in any personal loss of the past (Ishiguro *Pale View* 77). The female characters with whom Etsuko lives are “those who had suffered, those with sad and terrible memories” but they are, to the surprise of Etsuko, “busily involved with their husbands and their children” (13). These women’s lives are centred upon their families and dependant on their husbands, which reflects their assumed roles as obedient wives and sacrificial mothers by patriarchal society.

In the gendered division of domestic labour, Etsuko bears the primary responsibility for household management. Her daily routine revolves around and is confined to the kitchen. She serves her husband with the diligence of a devoted maid, promptly attending to him during and after meals and efficiently manages household tasks, maintaining a quiet subservience. These examples show that her existence within domestic space is to serve her husband wholeheartedly as a good wife. Her “cultivating, nurture, and preservation of home” (Blunt and Dowling 18), or her homemaking are unnoticed and taken for granted in this home which confines her and does not offer her any self-fulfilment, because her role as a housewife is socially constructed by patriarchy since “[h]ousehold and domestic relations are critically gendered.... Gendered expectations and experiences flow through all these social relations and their materialities” (16).

Home as a physical dwelling in *Pale View* is not only influenced by political forces through the destruction of homes and the Westernisation of domestic space but also by patriarchy as a gendered space separated from the public world and confining women in to serve as obedient wives. The materiality of home paves the way for the traumatic emotions and repressed feelings of the female characters.

### **Emotional landscapes of home in *A Pale View of Hills***

As analysed above, home as a material space is informed not only by socio-political forces but also by patriarchal power relations. Changes in the material structure of homes contribute to the female characters’ imagined sense of home, since home is not only a material dwelling but also “an idea and imaginary that is imbued with feelings” (Blunt and Dowling 9). As Blunt and Dowling explain, “[t]hese may be feelings of belonging, desire, and intimacy, but also violence, fear,

and alienation” (28) because “homeliness and unhomeliness co-exist and define each other” (Blunt and Dowling “Home: A response” 569). Therefore, home can also be oppressive and alienating when the dweller cannot have a positive relationship with a dwelling place.

Home imaginaries are influenced by the materiality of physical dwellings. In *Pale Vietnam*, because of the destruction of homes and unequal gender relations, home as an affective space is filled with feelings of trauma and repression. Firstly, the physical destruction of homes is not only a spatial but also an emotional upheaval. As survivors of the atomic bombs and air raids, people experience great loss at the death of family members. After the catastrophe, Etsuko is so shocked, bereaved, and traumatised that after she first comes to live with Ogata-San's family, she plays the violin in the dead of night, waking up the house for the first few nights. Her frantic reaction to playing the violin appears to be a ritualistic farewell to her past home. Etsuko's way of treating trauma reflects the collective attitude towards this disaster. In every instance where Etsuko attempts to broach past events with those around her, she is invariably encouraged to let go of these memories and focus on the future. The collective reaction observed here represents a PTSD symptom cluster, specifically avoidance symptoms. For Kaminer and Eagle, this symptom cluster means that “in an attempt to manage the highly distressing re-experiencing symptoms... the trauma survivor may attempt to avoid any reminders of the trauma” (32). They highlight that “the person may make a conscious effort to avoid places or situations that are associated with the trauma” (32). As a result of this symptom cluster, “despite the obvious industrial and economic advances made in the city, there is an emptiness and a sense of repressed emotion within the city and among its people” (Teo 52).

The transformation of homes from shared family spaces to sites of grief underscores a poignant aspect of displacement. This narrative reveals not just individual experiences but a broader, more complex relationship with home. Etsuko's move from her familial home to an apartment with her husband symbolises a physical departure, yet her emotional attachment to her childhood home in Nakagawa lingers. Her confessions to Mrs. Fujiwara about waking up disoriented at night and longing for Nakagawa underscore her unresolved ties to places filled with personal history. The conflicting emotions stirred by her visits to Nakagawa reflect the intricacies of memory and loss. Etsuko's longing to return to a past, to a home that once was, encapsulates the enduring, often unattainable desire to reclaim a sense of belonging and wholeness in the aftermath of change. To avoid constant reminders of loss and emptiness, Etsuko stows away all belongings associated with the past in discreet and secluded places

in her apartment. This includes her violin, her mother's watercolour, photo albums, greeting cards, letters, and photos of her deceased lover. Despite being hidden, these items, when occasionally unearthed, resurrect the lingering pain of the past.

Besides war trauma, patriarchal gender relations are also critical in understanding the emotional aspects of home in *Pale View*. For Etsuko, home as an affective space not only contains trauma but also repression for an obedient housewife. The home Etsuko shares with her husband, Jiro, is a site of oppression and alienation for her. Jiro's coldness and indifference mirror the prevailing marital role in Japanese society during the post-war period, as the Japanese sociologist Ochiai Emiko contends that "[i]n the postwar period, the state of being a housewife became so strongly normative that it was practically synonymous with womanhood" (35). In the novel, Jiro's colleague resorts to domestic violence, beating his wife with a golf club merely because she does not share his political preference. The male characters in the narrative normalise such acts of violence. The normalisation extends to the husband denying the use of a golf stick rather than acknowledging the inherent wrongness of his actions. Upon hearing this, Ogata-San is more taken aback by the wife voting differently from her husband than by the fact that he has beaten her. Therefore, it is unsurprising that neither Ogata-San nor Jiro's colleagues object to Jiro's cold treatment of Etsuko.

As an obedient wife, Etsuko experiences a sense of repression in her relationship with Jiro. Their relationship is particularly mechanical, with no visible affection or love between them in their daily life. Jiro treats his wife as a domestic aide and routinely expects her to cater to his domestic needs, often conveying demands and reproach rather than appreciation or partnership (eg: 60; 61;62; 132;154;155, *Pale View*). Jiro lacks interest in fostering a nurturing home environment. Their relationship lacks intimacy, as evidenced by their lack of physical affection and Jiro's habitual reticence after work, leaving Etsuko's concerns unaddressed. Horton notes that such marital strains aggravate Etsuko's depression, highlighting a lack of support for her emotional needs (25). This dynamic mirrors the broader patriarchal power structures that disadvantage women in societal practices.

As depicted above, the asymmetrical gender relations within the domestic space contribute to the construction of home as a site of repression for Etsuko. Often left alone, she habitually gazes out the window during her moments of solitude. Eaglestone describes Etsuko as confined within her cramped, stifling apartment, emblematic of a housewife's monotonous and isolating existence in a small town (Eaglestone 188; Friedan 85). This sense of

isolation permeates not just her marital relationship but also her family connections. Her bond with her father-in-law, Ogata-San, stands as her sole meaningful relationship. Yet, Jiro's estrangement from his father strips away this last source of support, intensifying Etsuko's feelings of confinement within her domestic life.

As previously discussed, home is a concept and a construct imbued with emotions which are contingent on its materiality. In *Pale View*, built on the debris, home as an affective space is full of trauma and loss due to its destruction and Westernisation. It is also a gendered space of repression for the female character, where domesticity and womanhood are considered synonymous. However, home is a complicated and multifaceted concept. It is not only material and imaginative but also a relation between the two. As home is a "fluid entity... altered and altering the lives of characters" (Ouseph 62), this fluid nature of home provides the potential for those who feel homeless at home to build a sense of home both materially and psychologically.

### **Home as relational in *A Pale View of Hills***

Blunt and Dowling state that "home is a relation between material and imaginative realms and processes" (28). The experience of unhomeliness can lead to "the search for a new place to call home [...] to relocate oneself, to leave home and reconfigure it elsewhere" (Brown 50). In this sense, home is a relational process, which is "continually created and recreated through everyday practices" (Blunt and Dowling 23). Thus, home is the ever-changing outcome of ongoing, mediated interactions between the self, others, and the environment.

In *Pale View*, home emerges as a relational construct through Etsuko's homemaking, where her careful preservation of family heirlooms underscores their importance to her identity. Although these items evoke traumatic memories, they remain integral to her life and are stored in hidden places in her home. For instance, her mother's belongings are kept in a bedroom cupboard drawer, under which a black lacquer box holds personal letters, photographs, and some concealed money, all unnoticed by her husband (Ishiguro *Pale View* 71). Etsuko's meticulous handling of these items reflects both the sentimental value she assigns to them and her intent to shield them from Jiro. These personal objects encapsulate Etsuko's memories of her loved ones and "symbolise attachment to a 'place' which is remote, but which nevertheless summons a sense of 'home'" (Chambers 6). The secret stash of money Etsuko keeps to herself reveals her sense of financial autonomy and foreshadows her eventual resolve to seek independence from her husband and forge a new life in England.

Furthermore, Etsuko asserts her agency over her sense of home through a strategic relationship with a British journalist, Mr. Sheringham, paralleling Sachiko's determined pursuit of marrying an American soldier. As Suzuki observes, Etsuko may be categorised as a "war bride," "a woman who married an American, British, or Australian man who stayed in Japan after World War II and then repatriated along with her husband" (77). In Japanese, this term carries a negative connotation "because of the belief that most war brides were former prostitutes" (Crawford et al. 249). Nevertheless, given her status as a victim of the atomic bomb and a housewife constrained by the patriarchal norms of Japanese society, her decision to divorce and relocate to England through marriage demands thoughtful consideration, rather than dismissing it as a superficial longing for a transnational romance. Feeling devoid of a sense of home in Japan, she aligns with Sachiko's assertion: "Japan is no place for a girl. What can she look forward to here?" (Ishiguro *Pale View* 170). Therefore, her marriage with a British journalist is an opportunity for her and her daughter to escape Nagasaki and seek a sense of home in other locations.

Moreover, in the English countryside house, Etsuko cultivates a sense of home, both in material and psychological aspects. Her dominance of home begins with her transformation of the garden. The house is located in the countryside of England where wealthy people live. Upon first seeing the house and its surroundings, Etsuko thought that this was exactly what England looked like in her imagination. However, the house initially consisted only of itself and a vast expanse of typical English grass. Over the years, Etsuko's dedicated efforts have resulted in a splendid garden behind her house featuring an orchard, a tomato-laden vegetable patch, and a fishpond surrounded by a rockery. This garden undeniably bears the influence of Japanese aesthetics. Etsuko's creation of this harmonious garden manifests her homemaking practices, portraying an act of spatial agency. As Dowling and Mee assert, "the work of homemaking involved personalization of space" (286). The personalisation of domestic space, described as "a true mirror of the occupants' personal and social identity" (Bonnes and Secchiaroli 92), is exemplified in Etsuko's endeavours to create her garden, contributing to her identity construction as a manifestation of "a spatially situated process" (Hetherington 17).

Etsuko's personalised spaces extend beyond the garden to the interior of her home, asserting her "control" over the domestic space. She adorns the window ledge with potted plants, tending to them during moments of emptiness. Her classical records are proudly displayed rather than concealed. This spatial agency is further evident in her allocation of space. Despite Mr Sheringham's evident dislike of her Japanese daughter Keiko, Etsuko grants Keiko "the most

pleasant room in the house with a splendid view across the orchard” (Ishiguro *Pale View* 53). These examples illustrate that Etsuko’s control over domestic space affords her the chance to organise her living environment, tailoring the space to suit her needs.

Psychologically, even though she is still stereotyped as a Japanese immigrant in the English context, she gradually becomes integrated into society. She establishes rapport with her neighbours by sharing most of the tomatoes she plants with the Morrisons. When she encounters her neighbours, they address her as Mrs Sheringham, a sign of her acceptance within the community. Through homemaking strategies, Etsuko cultivates a sense of community, thereby enhancing her place attachment, which “is one of the most influential factors in human’s psychological health, and is therefore powerful in constructing an individual’s identity” (Yavari et al. 145). In Sloane’s view, this “detached, idyllic English house” provides Etsuko with “the felt security” and a sense of belonging (110).

As analysed above, home, in its material and imaginative forms, continuously influences each other. Both materially and psychologically, home is in a constant state of contestation, negotiation, and (re)creation. In this fluid process of home, Etsuko, a woman “whose life bears the imprint of two soils” (Mok 143) transitions from homelessness to homeliness.

## **Conclusion**

In *Pale View*, the concept of home as a domestic space during post-war Japan is intricately shaped by the growing influence of American power and the prevailing patriarchal dynamics. This influence manifests materially through the destruction of homes, the Westernisation of the domestic space, and the gendering of space and domesticity. Additionally, it has an imaginative impact, leading to long-lasting trauma and repression. However, since home is a fluid process, the female character’s adaptability and resilience through homemaking practices negotiate and recreate it to establish a sense of belonging and homeliness.

Ishiguro being a writer of the post-war generation and global prominence, his novels highlight the psychological turmoil of civilians whose lives have been drastically altered by the Second World War and the sociocultural transmutation that war has unavoidably produced. Viewing home as a spatial imaginary provides an understanding of how significant historical events and patriarchy impact women confined to domestic spaces. At the same time, *Pale View* expresses Ishiguro’s suggestion of the transformative power of home, enabling women’s resilience in gaining agency and constructing their identities.

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