

Picturesque Landscape and National Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*

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Abstract Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* depicts the picturesque landscape composed of rural scenery and ruins, but beneath the surface of natural scenery lies a serious discussion about national memory. The rural scenery and historical ruins suggest an interaction between the picturesque and Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime. However, the bird's-eye view creates a distance between the viewer and the landscape. Such a way of seeing foregrounds the tension between nature and human factors, making political discourse naturalized. Even so, the ruins reject the picturesque way of seeing due to their relationship with past memories. As the "lieux de mémoire," the abandoned monastery serves as a memory medium that restores the national memory. Thus, the national identity can be enhanced by the commemoration. There are two kinds of national memory embodied in the landscape. On the one hand, the depiction of rural scenery shows an attachment to the myth of "rural England". Yet the novel questions the harmony of the rural community by introducing georgics into pastoral writing. On the other hand, the Roman ruins embody the imperial memory in Britain, and the imperial discourse is challenged when the "barbarians" reverse the imperial gaze. By unearthing the national memory embedded in the landscape, Ishiguro reconstructs the national identity and makes "Britishness" tolerant and diverse.

Keywords picturesque; landscape; national memory; *The Buried Giant*; Kazuo Ishiguro

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Introduction

Landscape writing is a striking feature of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*, for the novel is replete with detailed descriptions of the natural scenery. The opening of the novel begins with a landscape description, depicting how the cultivated rural areas, Roman relics and wilderness merge with each other. Almost every chapter includes descriptions of these three kinds of landscape. For example, chapter two focuses on the ruined Roman villa eroded by luxuriant vegetation, and especially mentions the oaks growing on the Great Plain. Chapter three describes the idyllic landscape of a Saxon village, depicting a stone bridge, working villagers and thatched cottages. Roman architecture, country scenery, oaks and cottages are all elements that commonly appear in picturesque landscape paintings. In addition to such common elements, *The Buried Giant* follows a three-plane composition when depicting the landscape, which echoes the picturesque aesthetics.

The term "picturesque" is first brought up by William Gilpin, who defines it as "that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture" (*An Essay Upon Prints* x). But one needs to follow a series of norms to reproduce or seek out the picturesque scenery, one of which can be reflected from the layout of the landscape. Picturesque aesthetics always adopt a three-plane form of foreground, middle, and background, with trees as side-screens framing the view. For instance, when depicting the picturesque views of the river Wye, Gilpin comments that the most beautiful scenery is "composed of four grand parts: the area, which is the river itself; the *two side-screens*, which are the opposite banks, and lead the perspective; and the most front-screen, which points out the winding of the river" (qtd. in Costelloe 143; emphasis original). The three-plane principle of the picturesque is echoed at the end of chapter three, when Axl and Wistan appreciate the rural scenery from a vantage point on a lookout platform. "Directly before them was a clear view along the valley floor; of the river curving gently as it followed the corridor out of view; of the expanses of marshland broken by patches of pond and lake further in the distance. There would have been elms and willows near the water, as well as dense woodland" (Ishiguro 92). The whole scene is composed of different sections, with the foreground of the valley floor, the middle view of the pond and lake, and the forest and woodland in the distance. Moreover, the landscape is framed by pine trees and mountains on both the left and right sides. Obviously, *The Buried Giant* coincides with picturesque aesthetics.

Till now, the picturesque landscape writing in *The Buried Giant* has been left unnoticed, as previous readings of the novel focus more on the political metaphor of

genocide or the relationship between the host and the foreigner¹. For Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant* is a story about “historical memory or societal memory,” because the novel investigates how “societies remember and forget particularly their dark secrets or the dark memories” (“The Persistence?”). To fully understand Ishiguro’s memory concern, it is helpful to study the interaction of the picturesque landscape and the memory theme. The interaction would be analyzed by figuring out three questions: How does the novel echo picturesque aesthetics? How is the politics of memory concealed by the naturalized picturesque landscape? What kinds of national memory are embodied in landscape writing? Answers to these questions can reveal Ishiguro’s reconstruction of national identity through his rewriting of national memory.

A Picturesque Landscape of Countryside and Ruins

Apart from the spatial composition of foreground, middle ground and background mentioned in the Introduction, the novel embodies a sublime tone as well as a beautiful tone. Both William Gilpin and Sir Uvedale Price cite Edmund Burke and engage in a dialogue with his aesthetic theory when illustrating the concept of the picturesque. For them, the picturesque is a mixture of beauty and sublimity characterized by variety, roughness and irregularity². The picturesque landscape of *The Buried Giant* is made up of the pastoral countryside and historical ruins. The former one mostly reflects the picturesque development of the beautiful, while the latter, the sublime. That is, the novel’s rural life is a representation of the picturesque country scenery, and the ruins add a decadent contrast to the idyllic landscape. Such organic composition reflects diversity, avoiding the neatness and orderliness of Capability Brown’s gardens³.

In *The Buried Giant*, peaceful rural scenery mainly conveys a beautiful tone of picturesque aesthetics. Burke’s aesthetics place considerable value on subjective perception, for people may feel terror or awe in front of sublime things, while taking pleasure in the beautiful. This reflects an association between objects and the subject’s feelings through various senses. Burke has listed a number of materials

1 See Elizabeth Burow-Flak, “Genocide, Memory, and the Difficulties of Forgiveness in Card’s Ender Saga and Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*,” *Renaissance* 71, no.4 (2019): 247-269; Matthew Vernon, and Margaret A. Miller, “Navigating Wonder: The Medieval Geographies of Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*,” *Arthurian* 28, no.4 (2018): 68-89.

2 See Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*.

3 Picturesque aesthetes do not appreciate the philosophy of Capability Brown (Lancelot Brown), whose gardens tend to use symmetry and full soft lines, presenting the quietness and orderliness of natural scenery. The picturesque aesthetics introduce broken grounds, rough tree trunks, collapsed churches, and the ragged poor into the landscape so as to add a sense of decadence.

that possess beauty, such as delicate flowers, smooth leaves, gentle streams and slopes, women with feminine qualities (like soft voices and tender skin) and so on. Therefore, beauty comes from smallness, delicacy and smoothness, emphasizing gradual variation instead of the “sudden variation” (Price 45) in picturesque aesthetics. As Price sums up, the idea of beauty is embodied in those “which are in a high degree expressive of youth, health and vigour, whether in animal or vegetable life; the chief of which qualities are smoothness and softness in the surface; fulness and undulation in the outline; symmetry in the parts; and clearness and freshness in the color” (qtd. in Hipple 205). Here is a beautiful rural scene depicted in the novel:

Before long they came to a sunny courtyard. There were roaming geese, and the yard itself was bisected by an artificial stream—a shallow channel cut into the earth—along which the water trickled with urgency. At its broadest point the stream was forded by a simple little bridge of two flat rocks, and at that moment an older child was squatting on one of them, washing clothes. It was a scene that struck Axl as almost idyllic, and he would have paused to take it in further had Ivor not kept striding firmly on towards the low, heavily thatched building whose length ran the entire far edge of the yard. (84-85)

Although images like rambling geese, rushing water and children at work inject a dynamic force into the landscape, and the stone bridge also meets the criterion of picturesque roughness, the whole picture is obviously more in line with the notion of the beautiful. For one thing, geese with smooth feather, tranquil river and young kids are exactly carriers of beauty. For another, the layout of the courtyard is symmetrically distributed, with all the scenery materials blending harmoniously with each other.

However, ruins and relics add a sense of roughness and decadence to the beautiful, forming a diverse picturesque landscape when combined with the countryside. Compared with the vibrant elements like children, geese and streams in the countryside, ancient ruins no doubt accentuate a sense of decay. For instance, at the ruined villa on the Great Plain, Axl and Beatrice find the villa “disfigured by stagnant puddles, weeds and grass sprouting through the faded tiles” (39). Such decadence achieves a picturesque effect by replacing the dominant principle of beauty with some rough elements, for picturesque aesthetes believe the landscape

composed entirely of beauty is monotonous¹. In a picturesque landscape painting, it is not hard to seek out rough elements. For example, the ground is always strewn with rubble, ruts and scattered shrubs. When it comes to human figures, picturesque aesthetes tend to emphasize wrinkles, muscular lines, messy hair or ragged clothes. Ancient abbey, Gothic cathedrals, old barns and thatched cottages are all common architectural elements associated with the picturesque taste. Similar elements and senses of decadence also permeate *The Buried Giant*.

Obviously, the ruins highlight the connection between the picturesque and the sublime. The ruins in the novel are closely related to the Roman Empire and its connotations, like war. Take the monastery as an example. The seemingly peaceful monastery was once a battleground where Saxons and Britons slaughtered each other. And the underground mausoleum is “surrounded by walls bearing traces of murals and Roman letters” (199), which shows the monastery is steeped in Roman culture. The ancient monastery conveys subliminal implications through its connection to war and the Roman empire, since the sublime is always related to the power which brings fear to people, like the power of kings or the destructive power of war. In addition, Burke points out that the color that can foreground sublimity is always dark and gloomy (75). Dark clouds, twilight, crows, ravens and even supernatural powers often appear in monastery scenes, reinforcing a frightening atmosphere. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the sublime is always accompanied by a variety of social emotions, one of which is sympathy. That is to say, one can perceive fear, helplessness and despair felt by others who are in danger, while feeling delight at the same time, since he is kept safe away from threat in reality. When Axl sees the bloody sacrifice cart in the wooden shack, he goes through the experience of the sublime. Feeling a chill on his spine, he “shares” the uneasiness when he knows the evil intention of the device. Yet at the same time, Axl idealistically thinks that “there may yet be some more gentle purpose” (171) when it comes to the cart. This means Axl, as a bystander, is reluctant to give up his peaceful aesthetics of the monastery from a distance.

Axl’s way of seeing as a bystander exactly shows his detachment from the landscape he views. And his bird’s-eye view is always highlighted, which reminds us that the landscape is always controlled or even constructed by the gazing subject. Axl’s gazing at the landscape from a high position echoes the picturesque call for a perfect viewing spot when appreciating the scenery. For instance, Gilpin insists

1 Going after “natural wilderness”, picturesque aesthetes try to integrate the rough side of nature into the landscape so as to provide a truer representation of nature. See Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 138-139.

that before sketching, the traveler should take a view of nature, and the “first consideration is to get it in the best point of view” (*Three Essays* 63). That means distance is a key element when people seek out the picturesque landscape, for the distance may help the subject grasp a general knowledge of the scene. Focusing only on the general look and ignoring the details shows that the landscape is often idealized by the gazing subject¹. Gazing at the Saxon village “from a distance and a certain height” (54), Axl can roughly see forty or more thatched roofs “laid out on the valley floor in two rough circles, one within the other” (54). However, when he places himself inside the Saxon village, Axl “was puzzled that a village which from a distance looked to be two orderly rings of houses could turn out to be such a chaotic labyrinth now they were walking through its narrow lanes” (57). The messy distribution of buildings and the roads in a confused criss-cross pattern can be experienced only when Axl gets nearer to the village, which exactly suggests that picturesque eyes tend to idealize the scenery viewed at a distance.

Such idealization means there is human manipulation behind the natural scenery. “Landscape” in the western tradition, as John Wylie generalizes, is “not only something we see, it is also a way of seeing things, a particular way of looking at and picturing the world around us” (7). In the same way, the countryside and ruins in the novel are not simply picturesque elements to be appreciated. Instead, power relations permeate the landscape. This will be the focus of the following section.

Politics of Memory Concealed by the Landscape

The landscape in *The Buried Giant* is always depicted from Axl’s point of view, which means the landscape is always viewed. That indicates the landscape has been manipulated by humans. Therefore, there will never be any totally “natural” landscape, since the landscape always involves a conflict between human factors and natural scenery. Such a conflict highlights the tension between nature and culture within the picturesque discourse. For Gilpin, “nature is the archetype” (*Three Essays* 53), indicating “the highest praise for a painting was to say it resembled a painterly nature” (Birmingham 57). The best natural scenery, on the other hand,

1 One may think of how Claude Glass was used in the 18th century to learn about picturesque scenery. To see the view framed in the glass, users must turn back to the landscape and face the Claude Glass, a convex mirror. Because of the convex surface, the reflected landscape is zoomed out, allowing one to appreciate the overall beauty while missing out on many details. The idealization of scenery can also be reflected from various colored glass slides, assisting users to lay over tones on the landscape so as to achieve the effects of color transformations. See Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990).

must be in accordance with picturesque taste. That is, “the highest praise for nature was to say that it looked like a painting” (Birmingham 57). In other words, nature is always transformed into a graphic medium through certain human “improvement,” and during this process, landscape painting has made cultural elements—like human conduction, social ideology and power relations—naturalized¹. In *The Buried Giant*, the landscape of the tranquil village and the ancient monastery both naturalize complex power relations by focusing on “natural” objects like rural scenery. However, human manipulation, like the “improvement” embodied in picturesque aesthetics, conceals authentic social realities beneath the foregrounding of natural elements. What the observer intentionally eliminates is the flow of power relations. Then what political discourses have been naturalized by the picturesque landscape?

Despite evoking picturesque aesthetics, the ruins clearly demonstrate the naturalization of political discourses. The archetypal ruins in British culture are always “crumbling feudal castle, the transcendent and evocatively decaying medieval abbey or the heritage-preserved buildings of the Roman Coliseum or the Athenian Acropolis” (Murray 9). Such a mode of representation is repeated and consolidated by picturesque and subsequent Romantic landscape painting, and it is clear that Roman relics and the long-abandoned Saxon tower in *The Buried Giant* work very close to such an archetypal expression. Both picturesque and Romantic traditions are concerned with the power of nature: “nature breaks buildings and makes them ruins. Vegetation plays an essential role in the Romantic vision, for the life of plants kills the art of human beings” (Ginsberg 317). In the novel, ruins of human civilization often appear in contrast with vibrant natural vegetation, which strongly indicates that human civilization is vulnerable in the face of long-lasting nature. Sir Gawain has recapitulated many times the idea that the whole country is actually a burial ground. “[...] a fine green valley. A pleasant copse in the springtime. Dig its soil, and not far beneath the daisies and buttercups come the dead [...] Beneath our soil lie the remains of old slaughter” (200). We can detect from those words that wars, though they may have caused great casualties in the past history of mankind, are only a small part of the natural process. Yet Gawain’s words remind readers that undercurrent power relations are hidden beneath the naturalized

1 For more comments on landscape’s naturalization of cultural factors, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1980); Ann Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*; Denis Cosgrove, and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1988); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2002).

landscape.

It is exactly the ruins that reveal the political discourses concealed by the naturalized landscape. Ruins have their own discourses, “making the original invisible” and presenting “what is not meant to be seen” (Ginsberg 51). Readers, through Axl’s memory and his perspective, form a typical aesthetic view of the Gothic monastery: an antique church haunted by supernatural elements, tainted with a note of mystery and terror, and decorated with picturesque withered trees and wild grass. However, by revealing the politics of memory, the ruins transcend the limits of picturesque aesthetics, getting nearer to John Ruskin’s “noble picturesque.” According to Ruskin, “surface picturesque” often derives a kind of aesthetic pleasure from the poor or the ruins, ignoring the sordid conditions those people or things are faced with. He once wrote in his diary that “I could not help feeling how many suffering people must pay for my picturesque subject, and my happy walk” (qtd. in Landow 232), for it is toiling figures that provide beholders with a picturesque taste. It is clear that Ruskin has a deep moral concern and refuses to regard people or things as purely aesthetic objects. Ginsberg also points out that, as a social symbol, “the ruin gives aesthetic expression to shared moral values” (109). Likewise, a strong sense of moral concern can be felt in *The Buried Giant*, from which one may discover how the politics of memory work in an unobtrusive way.

First, there is a political conspiracy on memory beneath the surface of the naturalized ruins. Memory shows certain “plasticity” (Assmann and Linda 3), the possibility of being transformed. This means memory can be constructed through selection, adjustment, reconstruction, simplification, and intentional or unintentional rejection. King Arthur turns “active forgetting” to natural “passive forgetting”¹ by manipulating people’s memories, which makes people find their memories fading. Arthur’s actions indicate that he rejects or even covers up the memory. Meanwhile, memory can be reshaped due to political changes, and this can be seen in the transformations of the city landscape, the renaming of roads, etc. It is the same with the monastery where Axl stays for the night: the monastery under the rule of Britons was once a Saxon fortress. Such conversion is one of the consequences of memory

1 Aleida Assmann first put forward the terms “active forgetting” and “passiveforgetting.” “Active forgetting” means an intentional repression of cultural memory. Censorship, dumping and destroying materials and mental cultural products are some of its typical manifestations. “Passive forgetting” is the unintentional loss of certain memory caused by losing or neglecting it. Such a memory can be rediscovered through archaeological research and the reconstruction of archives. See Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Estrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2008), pp.97-98.

manipulation by the ruling class. On the other hand, ruins, because of their rupture and discontinuity, symbolize a past that cannot be wholly recovered—"signaling an abyss between past and present" (Assmann 292). Hence, the past history of the monastery as told by Wistan remains under question. Even Wistan himself says, "who knows what went on here in ancient days?" (229) Such uncertainty calls into question the current authority of Britons when casting doubt on Wistan's own discourse. "The problem with ruins is that their meaning cannot be controlled. They threaten to imprison us in the unguarded labyrinths of the past, and they also promise to open imaginary escapes" (Boym 83). Such inconsistency rejects a unified or single interpretation of ruins. Therefore, the ruins have the power to question the existing politics of memory.

Secondly, facing the memory conspiracy, the ruins play an important role in protecting and even restoring national memory. For Wistan, the ruined monastery plays the role of "lieux de mémoire," binding all the Saxons together with its rich connotations of a shared past. Pierre Nora believes memory plays a major role in the construction of national identity and social cohesion, and his "lieux de mémoire"¹ focuses on how societies use external props and different reminders to commemorate or remember the past. The giant's cairn on the mountain is supposed to "mark the site of some such tragedy long ago when young innocents were slaughtered in war" (313), serving as a sort of monument of commemoration. Compared with other sites on lower ground which are meant to commemorate a victory or a king, the giant's cairn, being forgotten in the remote place, suggests a collective repression or even rejection of certain memories. By contrast, the stone tower in the monastery serves as a "lieux de mémoire" that awakens the shared memory of Saxons. Even Edwin, who has little knowledge of the previous slaughter, begins to receive relating memories as a younger generation of Saxons, and he promises that he will eventually bear "a duty to hate all Britons" (353). Such a promise raises another related question about nationalism: Does nationalism imply fighting against common outsiders? Inheriting the long-repressed national memory of Saxons, Edwin also ponders whether his hatred against all the Britons includes Axl and Beatrice, "the gentle couple" (353) in his eyes. As a result, the novel leaves

1 One has to notice that "lieux de mémoire", though always translated as "site of memory" in English, is not confined to geographical places only. "Lieux de mémoire" also includes anniversaries, folk songs, celebrities, arts and crafts, written texts, common expressions, and so on. Astrid Erll generalizes, "any cultural phenomenon, whether material, social, or mental, which a society associates with its past and with national identity," is a site of memory. See Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.25.

room for readers to consider how to consolidate national identity, and whether narrow nationalism against all “enemies” is appropriate in today’s world.

The novel ends with an open ending without telling readers a definite personal/national fate, leaving readers with senses of suspense and uncertainty. Such an incomplete narrative form makes the story a fragmented ruin. Most of the ruins in the novel are caused by wars, which means that the novel regards the conflict between Britons and Saxons as a historical metaphor for the wars of the 20th century, such as the two world wars, the Yugoslav Civil War, the Rwandan Genocide, and so on. What attitude should nations adopt when faced with past memories? How to coexist peacefully with other nations? These are the moral issues raised by the novel, going beyond the aesthetic level.

National Memory Connotted by the Landscape

Besides concealing the politics of memory, the picturesque scenery also embodies the national memory shared by the British people. Therefore, Ishiguro reconstructs national identity by tracing back the national memory of the British people. What kinds of national memory are embodied in the landscape of rural areas and Roman ruins? And how does the national memory help to reconstruct today’s national identity?

The idyllic landscape in the countryside reflects British historical attachment to rural myths, echoing the call for green “rural England.” The novel revives the pastoral tradition by depicting the joy of villagers. Pastorals were initially written by city poets for urban audiences, exploiting “a tension between the town by the sea and the mountain country of the shepherd, between the life of the court and the life of the shepherd, between people and nature” (Gifford 15). Thus, “pastoral” shows a strong contrast between the city and the country. The binding relationship between country and nature, together with the contrast between the country and the city, have been recurring topics in British literature during different periods. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams has also straightened out structures of feeling toward the city and the country in British literature, from which the sentimental attachment to “rural England” can be easily detected. Given that the word “country” not only refers to rural areas but also means “nation,” it is not hard to imagine that “rural England” has become a national myth pursued in various periods. It seems that the idyllic depiction of rural life in *The Buried Giant* works in a similar way as a reinvention of the national myth, highlighting the stability of a rural community. Yet on the contrary, the novel subverts the ideal state of pastoral country life from two aspects.

Replacing pastoral expression with that of georgics is the first way to subvert the rural myth. With little effort, we can find out that the characters are toiling in fields and faced with harsh trails from nature. As William Empson notices, the pastoral is not written by shepherds, nor for shepherds¹. Instead, it is manipulated by aristocracies out of their ideology. The pastoral emphasizes the cheerfulness and idleness of shepherds and the harmony of rural life. As is depicted in Virgil's *Elogues*, shepherds in pastoral do not need to work or till the land, for they always have a good harvest. But it is totally different in the georgic tradition. "Georgic is a mode that stresses the value of intensive and persistent labor against hardships and difficulties; that it differs from pastoral because it emphasizes work instead of ease" (Low 12). It is obvious that hard work is an indispensable scene in the novel when depicting rural life. Villagers are not required to work on Sundays, yet "the livestock had still to be cared for, and with so many other tasks waiting to be done, the pastor had accepted the impracticality of forbidding everything that might be construed as labour" (22). In addition to such labor, villagers are also faced with threats from nature. For instance, they have to fight against man-eating ogres, but there are many other things to worry about. People are more concerned with how to maintain their daily lives: "how to get food out of the hard ground; how not to run out of firewood; how to stop the sickness that could kill a dozen pigs in a single day and produce green rashes on the cheeks of children" (3-4). Such realistic writing breaks the ideology of the ruling class that endows rural life with leisure and ease.

Secondly, the alienation rooted among people becomes an unstable factor under the appearance of peaceful country life, thereby interrogating the social cohesion of the rural community. For a long time, the social order carried by the pastoral embodies an aristocratic way of seeing, which is "an idealisation of actual English country life and its social and economic relations" (Williams 26). The marginalization of Axl and Beatrice exactly reflects an inharmonious interpersonal relationship in the countryside. The couple live in the outer reaches of the warren, unable to share the warmth of the great fire burning in the middle part, and they are deprived of candles so that they can just spend their nights without any light. Their situation may have something to do with their status as lonely elderly people, for Axl faintly remembers that "perhaps there had been a time when they had lived closer to the fire; a time when they had lived with their children" (5). Also, considering the fact that neighbors always complain about their slowness at work, we may know that the young labor force is highly valued in the countryside. This further reflects that hard work is the basic tone of rural life. Sir Gawain, who roams on

1 See William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1968).

his horseback here and there, forms a sharp contrast to those toiling country people. And it is not hard to imagine that much of the manual labour is in the service of the intellectual upper class. Such a division of labour indicates a total breakdown of the idealized rural community, where people connect with each other in trust.

In addition to the national rural myth, landscape writing also arouses the imperial memory of Great Britain by depicting Roman ruins. Britain shows great respect for Roman culture, and even compares the British Empire to the descendants of the Roman Empire. For example, Stanley Baldwin repeatedly stated that the formation of the British national character was inseparable from the conquest of Rome. He regarded Britain as “the youngest son” who would inherit the torch of the Roman Empire (Hingley 102). Britain also adopted a number of political measures similar to those of the Roman Empire, the most notorious of which was the control of immigrants. The Roman Empire called people outside itself “barbarians,” and attempted to keep outsiders out of Rome in order to ensure the purity of blood. In the novel, Britons regard Saxons who do not believe in Christ as pagans, and always refer to them as “savages.” Even the respectful elder, a Briton who acts as the leader of the Saxons, says that “I wonder at myself to live among such savages. Better dwell in a pit of rats” (86). Comparing Saxons to filthy rats obviously degrades them, which reflects the fact that colonists only regard colonial subjects as ignorant and uncivilized animals. Wistan also recalls his young days in the army as an “other” excluded by Britons. However, the power coming from the savages is so huge that it cannot be ignored, for Wistan, who was once the dominated, comes back and gazes at the landscape of Britons. Especially at the end of the novel, Wistan wishes Edwin, his successor, would stand high on the mountain, seeing “this place, the fallen knight and the broken she-dragon, all before his next steps” (350). Such an act of seeing the bloody battlefield from a vantage point straightforwardly demonstrates the power taken by the Saxons, and the subversive power of “barbarians.” The gaze of barbarians means a revolt from colonial subjects against the imperial eyes, foreshadowing the fate that Saxons would eventually take over the lands of Britons.

By rewriting rural myth and imperial memory, Ishiguro reflects on the reconstruction of national identity. For one thing, the national image of “rural England” should not be condensed into a simple political discourse, or be regarded as an ideal myth without any conflicts. In the eyes of the common British people, “rural England” often means an idyllic life without any confrontations in daily life. However, by introducing georgics, Ishiguro challenges pastoral discourse and reveals the social alienation hidden beneath the harmonious appearance of the rural community. The author encourages people to be concerned about contradictions

within the country, and deal with practical issues such as urban-rural relations and interpersonal relations. Only by solving concrete problems can the vision of “rural England” be realized. For another thing, “barbarians” interrogates the mainstream discourse within the British nation, aiming to reconstruct “Britishness” which embodies all the nations in Britain. In *The Buried Giant*, the Britons call the Saxons “barbarians,” which is contrary to the mainstream English discourse. In fact, the Saxons have long been regarded as the elite, whereas the Celts have been humiliated as “barbarians.” By deconstructing the dominant center, Ishiguro suggests that “Britishness” does not center on “Englishness” but calls for diversity and tolerance.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant* presents the interaction between landscape and memory, and the rural scenery and ruins form the landscape with strong characteristics of the picturesque aesthetics. On the one hand, the picturesque landscape covers up the politics of memory due to its naturalization of human factors. The ruins, on the other hand, reject the picturesque mode of perception by emphasizing historical discourses. As “lieux de mémoire,” ruins can store and restore national memory, which in turn enhances national identity. The abandoned monastery brings back memories for the Saxons, but also warns against falling into the trap of xenophobic nationalism. Meanwhile, Ishiguro not only focuses on how societies remember their past memories, but retraces national memories connoted in the landscape as well. Through depiction of picturesque country scenery, Ishiguro revives the myth of “rural England,” and reveals, at the same time, the alienation crisis lurking beneath the idealized rural myth by incorporating the georgic tradition into pastoral writing. The ruins, related to the Roman Empire, awaken the imperial memory in Britain. Just as “barbarians” revolt against Rome, Saxon “savages” in the novel counter the imperial gaze by gazing at the landscape of Britons. As a result, Ishiguro advocates for a more tolerant British identity that includes “others.”

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