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Mapping Ishigurian Temporality: The Timeless Universe and His Prodigal Offspring

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ABSTRACT

Time's elusive and enigmatic nature becomes evident when examining its diverse conceptualizations across fields, from cyclical rhythms to linear progression and quantum manifestation. While in Einsteinian physics time intertwines with space to form spacetime, revolutionizing the view of the Universe, the human perception of time involves a complex interplay of psychological factors, influencing memories, decision-making, and well-being. Literature has also embraced time as a central theme, transcending reality and exploring temporal distortion. This study takes a comprehensive journey through the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of a concept so deeply embedded in the human experience. Drawing insights from temporal science, psychology, spirituality, and literary studies, the research paper delves into the profound implications of temporal manipulation in the works of renowned writer Kazuo Ishiguro. The protagonists' distorted timelines highlight the fluidity and subjectivity of time, reflecting the intricate relationship between psychological states and time perception. Ishiguro's use of temporal dislocation reflects feelings of alienation and disconnection, illuminating the characters' struggles with memory, identity, mortality, and the search for meaning. Ultimately, the study seeks to demonstrate that Kazuo Ishiguro's novels provide profound insight into the human condition and the timeless quest for understanding. By embracing the primordial nature of existence, individuals may transcend the limitations of their time perception and connect with cosmic greatness. Ishiguro's work thus stands as a testament to literature's enduring relevance in illuminating human experience and the enigmatic nature of time itself. Overall, an in-depth exploration of time and its variants in literature leads to a more comprehensive understanding of life, fostering interdisciplinary connections and a holistic view of the world.

***Keywords*-** interdisciplinarity, Kazuo Ishiguro, time.

I. INTRODUCTION

The exploration of time has captivated scholars and thinkers across disciplines. From ancient rituals and festivals, expressing the rhythms of nature, to the progression of history and the modern-day ticking of clocks, humanity has sought to grasp time's power and significance. Philosophers have grappled with the nature of time, pondering its flow, linearity, and cyclicity. Theological traditions have tried to reconcile the finite existence of mortals with the infinite duration of a higher power. Beyond the tangible realms of human experience, time also transcends conventional boundaries in mystical encounters and near-death experiences.

Yet time's impact extends beyond abstract ideas. Historians trace the footsteps of time through the annals of civilization, unearthing the stories of ancient empires, past struggles, and triumphs, and documenting the evolution of human thought and progress. Moreover, anthropologists and sociologists have examined the cultural constructs of time, revealing how different societies perceive and measure it and how time affects

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daily routines and rituals. Biology, too, dances to the rhythm of time, as circadian clocks orchestrate the ebbs and flows of life's processes, from the cyclic renewal of cells to the aging of organisms, while neuroscientists and psychologists explore how the brain processes temporal information, shaping human experiences and memories.

Time's pervasive influence also intertwines with ethics, environmental studies, economics, and education, highlighting its significance in shaping societal values and practices. Additionally, the exploration of time in architecture and cinematic narratives raises profound questions about its nature and impact on human lives. Even in linguistics, time's nuances manifest through time metaphors and linguistic temporality, shaping cultural perceptions and identities. As to art, music, and literature, they too have embraced time as a major theme to express human emotions and experiences, delving into the intricacies of temporal distortion.

Meanwhile, scientific investigations into time have expanded human understanding of the Universe as well as the human world. The theory of relativity, with its insights into time dilation and the dynamic nature of time, has thus revolutionized the view on the Universe's history, and physicists have ventured even further, into the fabric of spacetime dimension. On the other hand, quantum mechanics, the theory that governs the behavior of matter and energy at the smallest scales, challenges humankind to rethink its perspective on temporality and causality. While in classical physics, time flows uniformly and independently of the events occurring within it, quantum mechanics introduces a fundamental concept known as quantization, where certain physical properties can only take discrete, quantized values. Surprisingly, time itself becomes subject to this quantization in certain quantum systems.

In essence, this paper seeks to unravel the human perception of time, delving into the holistic connections between temporal science, psychology, spirituality, and literary. The subsequent examination of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels will then offer a unique lens through which to explore the complexities of human experience, memory, and the subjective nature of time itself. As temporal science continues to evolve, integrating insights from physics, psychology, and other disciplines, it promises to deepen one’s understanding of the nature of time. By examining the interplay between the objective and subjective dimensions of time, humans stand to gain a more nuanced understanding of this fascinating and ubiquitous aspect of their existence.

II. OVERVIEW OF TIME

2.1 Temporal Science

At the crux of understanding physics are three foundational pillars: classical physics, Einsteinian physics, and quantum physics, each describing a different aspect of physical reality and offering distinct interpretations of the nature of time.

Classical physics, often referred to as Newtonian physics, forms the bedrock of understanding the macroscopic world through Sir Isaac Newton's three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation. These fundamental principles offer a deterministic framework to comprehend the behavior of observable objects in daily life. According to classical physics, the Universe operates predictably, adhering to fixed laws of motion and interactions. Newton's first law states that objects in motion remain in motion unless acted upon by an external force, while the second law relates force, mass, and acceleration in a mathematical equation. The third law posits that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, resulting in balance and stability in various physical systems. Moreover, classical physics perceives space and time as absolute and independent entities, providing a consistent reference frame for all observers. While remarkably successful in explaining macroscopic phenomena, the limitations of classical physics became apparent when confronted with high speeds, extremely small scales, and strong gravitational fields. Consequently, this urgent need for more understanding paved the way for the development of revolutionary theories like special and general relativity, quantum mechanics, and other modern physics disciplines. Nonetheless, classical physics remains a foundational and invaluable tool for comprehending the vast majority of tangible experiences as well as the physical world at human scales [1][2].

Einsteinian physics, encapsulated by the theories of special and general relativity, adds layers of complexity to this picture, revolutionizing the understanding of space, time, and gravity. Special relativity thus introduces the concept that the laws of physics are the same for all observers moving at constant velocity, leading to phenomena such as time dilation and length contraction. It also famously establishes the equivalence of mass and energy through the famous equation E=mc^2. General relativity extends these principles to include gravity, describing it as the curvature of spacetime caused by the presence of mass and energy. Here, space and time converge into a single, four-dimensional fabric known as spacetime that can bend and warp in response to mass and energy, thereby accounting for phenomena such as the gravitational attraction of massive bodies and the bending of light as it passes near a star. Within this framework, time is no longer absolute, but relative and mutable – it can therefore stretch and squeeze depending on one's velocity and proximity to a gravitational source. General relativity provides a framework for understanding large-scale cosmic phenomena, such as the bending of light around massive objects and the dynamics of the expanding Universe. These groundbreaking theories remain foundational in modern physics and have been confirmed through numerous experiments and astronomical observations [2][3].

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In the quantum realm of subatomic particles, however, time takes on a unique character, defying conventional logic. One of the most significant formulations of quantum mechanics is Schrödinger's equation, which describes how quantum states evolve over time. Unlike classical mechanics, where trajectories of particles are deterministic, quantum mechanics introduces the notion of wave-particle duality and superposition, wherein particles can exist in multiple states simultaneously until observed. As time progresses, these quantum states can interfere with each other, leading to complex and often counterintuitive behavior. Also, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle asserts that there is an inherent limit to how precisely one can simultaneously measure certain pairs of properties, such as position and momentum of a particle. This uncertainty also extends to time, implying that there is a limit to how precisely one can measure the time at which a quantum event occurs. Additionally, the phenomenon of quantum entanglement allows particles to become intertwined in such a way that the state of one instantly influences the state of the others, regardless of the distance between them. This behavior raises questions about the nature of causality and the role of time in linking events across space, as it seemingly defies the speed-of-light limit for information transfer. Some theories, such as the block Universe perspective, propose that all moments in time exist simultaneously, suggesting that the past, present, and future are equally real. This peculiar aspect of quantum time arises from the phenomenon of time-reversal symmetry, also challenging the conventional understanding of time as a linear progression. While classical physics suggests that time's arrow flows in one direction, from past to future, quantum mechanics allows for the reversal of time in the equations governing certain quantum processes. However, it is important to note that this temporal reversal does not imply that macroscopic events can be reversed in time, as it typically applies to individual quantum interactions. Quantum mechanics also posits that particles can exist in multiple places at the same time and even interact with themselves, as demonstrated in the famous double-slit experiment. Furthermore, particles can undergo a quantum jump, transitioning from one state to another without any apparent trajectory. This behavior, along with the phenomenon of quantum superposition, has led to the concept of multiple realities or timelines coexisting, as suggested by the multiverse theory [2][4][5].

These three pillars of physics thus provide humankind with a multifaceted understanding of the Universe and its time. Classical physics shows a deterministic, predictable world while Einsteinian physics reveals a Universe where time and space are interwoven and influenced by mass and energy. Quantum physics, on the other hand, suggests a Universe at the smallest scales, which is inherently probabilistic and where the act of observation can influence the observed. Despite their divergent views, these three branches of physics could combine to explain, in one voice, a spatio-temporal reality that is equally deterministic, vibrational, free-willed, multi-perceptual, and much more. This holistic view could further reveal the roles of consciousness and perception in shaping human behavior and experience.

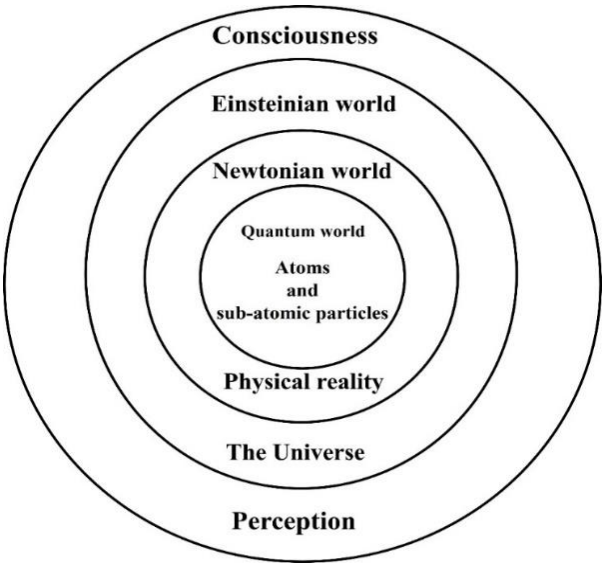

Figure 1: Physics and consciousness [7]

Accordingly, Smolin (2014) challenges prevailing notions within the scientific community that treat time as an illusion or an emergent property, delving deeper into the crisis faced by modern physics, particularly in reconciling the principles of quantum mechanics and general relativity. He thus contends that the traditional approach of treating time as an external parameter in equations has led to a disconnect between quantum mechanics, which relies on a fixed notion of time, and general relativity, which incorporates time as an active and dynamic element intertwined with space. Smolin's central thesis posits that time should not be regarded as a mere abstract concept or a convenient mathematical tool but as a real and fundamental aspect of the Universe. He argues that the Universe's dynamism and complexity can only be adequately understood when time is granted an essential role in the laws of physics. By reevaluating the concept of time, Smolin aims to provide a solution to the ongoing crisis in physics and offer a more coherent framework that unifies quantum mechanics and general relativity. Furthermore, Smolin challenges the prevailing block Universe view, which suggests that all moments in time coexist simultaneously and that the past, present, and future are equally real. Instead, Smolin advocates for a view of the Universe that is inherently evolving, where the future remains open and uncertain, and time is an active participant in shaping events [6].

Thus, the exploration of temporal science, by weaving together these different strands of understanding, from classical, Einsteinian, and quantum

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physics to a more dynamic and integral view of time, could be leading humankind closer to a comprehensive grasp of the role of time in the intricate interplay between consciousness, perception, and reality.

2.2 Temporal Psychology

The psychology of time mainly focuses on the subjective perception of time and the various temporal distortions and biases that can occur. This study contributes to the rich tapestry of temporal science, revealing a human dimension of time that, while less tangible than the physical dimensions explored by physics, is no less real in shaping human experiences and perceptions of reality. Subjective time varies significantly across individuals, being influenced by numerous factors. For instance, one's age, cultural background, emotional state, and even attention level can all impact how quickly or slowly time appears to pass. Perception and action occur in functional moments, defining simultaneity and succession in milliseconds [8]. Experienced moments, integrating information up to a few seconds, create temporal windows for conscious representation and the experience of "nowness." Continuity of experience, facilitated by working memory, leads to mental presence, providing a temporal window for an individual's subjective presence [9].

Temporal distortions are therefore common experiences where time seems to stretch or shrink. They occur in a range of situations, from the seemingly slow passage of time when one is bored to the quickened pace of time during enjoyable activities, to the dramatic dilation that can occur in high-stress situations, like accidents or emergencies. Such experiences, while inherently subjective, are nonetheless real for the individuals experiencing them and have substantial psychological and emotional impacts [10]. Temporal biases constitute cognitive tendencies that influence how humans perceive and remember events over time. Three of the most well-known temporal biases are the recency effect, the rosy retrospection, and the planning fallacy. The recency effect refers to the human tendency to remember better and give more importance to information or events that occurred most recently. In the context of memory, this bias means that, when presented with a list of items or experiences, individuals are more likely to recall and emphasize the ones encountered at the end of the list, because recent events are still fresh in the human mind. In real-world scenarios, the recency effect can impact decision-making processes, where people might place disproportionate importance on the most recent pieces of information, potentially overlooking earlier data that could be equally relevant or even more critical to consider [11]. On the other hand, the rosy retrospection entails the tendency to remember past events more positively than they were experienced at the time. When recalling past experiences, individuals often remember the positive aspects more vividly, while downplaying or forgetting negative aspects. This bias can lead to a skewed and overly optimistic view of the past. The rosy retrospection bias may be influenced by memory consolidation processes, where negative emotions associated with an event fade more quickly than positive emotions. As a result, people may find themselves reminiscing about past experiences with a sense of nostalgia and sentimentality, which may not accurately reflect the complexity and nuances of the original experiences. The rosy retrospection bias can impact decision-making by influencing choices based on overly positive memories of past events, potentially leading to unwise or unrealistic decisions in the present [12]. As to the future, the planning fallacy refers to the tendency for individuals to underestimate the time it will take to complete a task, despite having prior experience with similar tasks taking longer than expected. When individuals plan a project, they often focus on the best-case scenario and fail to account for potential delays, obstacles, or unforeseen complications. They thus tend to be overly optimistic and believe they can complete the task more efficiently than they have historically done or than is realistically possible. As a result, deadlines are set unrealistically, and expectations are not aligned with actual time requirements. The planning fallacy can occur for various reasons, including an overconfidence in one's abilities, a neglect of past experiences, and an underestimation of the time needed for individual steps or sub-tasks. Additionally, people might fail to consider external factors that could impact the project's timeline, such as resource constraints, collaboration issues, or unexpected events [13]. As a common phenomenon in both personal and professional settings, this temporal bias can have significant implications, leading to missed deadlines, increased stress, and budget overruns. To mitigate the planning fallacy, it is essential to incorporate historical data and consider potential obstacles when estimating the time needed for a project. Additionally, seeking input from others and using external benchmarks can help create more realistic and achievable timelines.

The relationship between memory and time is therefore particularly complex as recollections do not usually act as perfect recordings of past events. Instead, they are most often constructive and malleable, prone to errors and distortions over time. This process, known as memory consolidation, can lead to significant alterations of the perceived duration and sequence of past events. For instance, traumatic and stressful events, as well as emotionally charged situations, can induce a neurological condition known as *tachypsychia*, which manifests as an illusion of time either decelerating or accelerating. Thus, intense emotions such as fear, guilt, anxiety, or awe can inflate the perception of time, creating the sensation that more time has elapsed than actually has [14].

Temporal psychology also encompasses personal views and attitudes toward the past, present, and future, which significantly influences one's behavior, decision-making, and overall worldview. For instance,

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someone with a future-oriented perspective might prioritize long-term goals over immediate rewards while a person with a present-oriented perspective might seek immediate gratification and show less concern about the future. The Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) can measure one's time perspective – that is, one's orientation and attitudes toward the past, present, and future. The inventory consists of five factors, each representing a different time perspective. These factors provide valuable insights into how humans perceive time, make decisions, and approach various aspects of their lives. Thus, the Past-Negative (PN) factor reflects one's tendency to focus on negative past experiences and regrets. People high on this scale may be haunted by past failures, traumas, or disappointments, which can influence their current emotional state and decision-making processes. They may struggle to move on from past events and find it challenging to let go of negative memories. This perspective can lead to feelings of bitterness and pessimism about the future, hindering personal growth and well-being. The Past-Positive (PP) factor represents a positive orientation toward the past, where individuals cherish fond memories and past achievements. Those scoring high on this scale often feel nostalgic and satisfied with their past experiences, deriving a sense of identity and continuity from them. While embracing positive memories can provide a source of comfort and self-esteem, an excessive focus on the past may hinder adaptability to change and growth, as individuals may resist moving forward to preserve their idealized past. The Present-Hedonistic (PH) factor reflects a focus on living in the moment and seeking pleasure and immediate gratification. Individuals high on this scale tend to prioritize enjoyment and seek experiences that provide immediate pleasure or relief. While being mindful of the present can promote well-being and mindfulness, an excessive emphasis on instant gratification may lead to impulsive behavior, lack of foresight, and neglect of long-term goals and responsibilities. The Present-Fatalistic (PF) factor reflects a perception that the future is predetermined and that individuals have little control over their destiny. Those scoring high on this scale may feel trapped by external circumstances and believe that their actions have little impact on their future outcomes. This fatalistic view of time can lead to a sense of helplessness and resignation, discouraging proactive behavior and goal pursuit. The Future (F) factor represents a future-oriented perspective, where individuals prioritize long-term goals, planning, and delayed gratification. People high on this scale tend to invest in education, career development, and setting achievable objectives. A future-oriented time perspective can lead to higher levels of motivation, discipline, and resilience, as individuals work toward their envisioned futures. However, an excessive focus on the future can also create anxiety and stress if individuals become preoccupied with achieving their goals and neglect their present well-being. It is important to note that everyone possesses a combination of these time perspectives to varying degrees. The Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory thus provides a valuable tool for psychologists and researchers to understand how different temporal orientations influence individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and overall well-being [15].

Cognitive neuroscientists thus need to consider the concept of time from both a physicalist viewpoint, describing the brain as a dynamic system, and a psychological viewpoint, understanding how different temporal experiences relate to brain dynamics. There is a distinction between timing, inherent in neural processes for perception, action, and cognition, and time perception, which focuses on how the brain represents the temporal structure of events. While techniques like EEG and MEG have been used for timing studies, there is still a lack of research specifically on temporal cognition. Nonetheless, the field is growing, and researchers are encouraged to utilize EEG and MEG to explore temporal cognition further [16]. Understanding the principles of temporal psychology can thus have far-reaching implications, from enhancing therapeutic interventions in clinical psychology to improving productivity in organizational settings, to even informing public policy decisions [17][18]. Additionally, by becoming aware of their own time perspective, individuals can gain insights into their decision-making processes, coping mechanisms, and ways to foster a more balanced and adaptive approach to time management.

2.3 Temporal Spirituality

Throughout human history, spiritual teachers have delved into profound insights about time, offering unique perspectives that transcend conventional understanding. These mystical perspectives further shed light on the nature of time, its relativity, and its significance in shaping human consciousness. Triggered by personal emotions, distorted temporality underpins all social dysfunctions besides a majority of psychological phenomena. Social interactions involving individuals with erratic temporal awareness can only result in a vicious circle of inverted beliefs and values that are transmitted across generations. The only means to reverse the effects of collective temporal distortion and transform it into a virtuous circle is to reclaim the freedom to mold time according to harmonious individual needs. Despite the scientific evidence supporting the chronological storage of events in the mind, the act of recollection can never be a chronological process, which leads to an inevitable distortion of timekeeping. However, a healthy temporal distortion would be more akin to an intuition of time, based on the unconscious adaptation of scientific time and a sincere desire to be in tune with the laws of the Universe.

Indian yogi and mystic Sadhguru emphasizes the significance of living in the present moment and avoiding excessive preoccupation with the past or future. He believes that dwelling on past experiences or anxiously worrying about the future detracts from fully experiencing the richness of the present. According to Sadhguru, time is a human creation – a tool used to structure and navigate people's lives. While it serves as a means to measure events and plan activities, becoming overly entangled in the construct of time can lead to stress, anxiety, and a constant sense of rushing.

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Sadhguru's teachings advocate mindfulness and conscious awareness to regain control over time, enabling a more balanced and fulfilling life [19].

Medieval Christian mystic Meister Eckhart contemplates the eternal present – a divine realm where past, present, and future converge. He suggests that God's eternal nature exists outside the linear flow of time, encompassing all moments simultaneously. For Eckhart, the present moment is not just a fleeting point in time but a gateway to the timeless and eternal. By awakening to the eternal present, individuals can experience a direct connection with the divine and a profound sense of unity with all existence [20].

Eckhart Tolle, a renowned spiritual teacher, also speaks of the eternal now – a state of consciousness beyond linear time. He suggests that true spiritual awakening involves transcending past and future and fully embracing the present moment. Like Sadhguru's, Tolle's teachings emphasize that the present moment is the only reality, and one's attachment to the past or anticipation of the future often leads to suffering. By living in the eternal now, individuals can access a deeper level of consciousness and experience a profound sense of peace and clarity [21].

Ram Dass, a spiritual teacher and author, explores the concept of timelessness as a way to transcend temporal boundaries. He proposes that the true self, or the soul, exists beyond the constraints of time and space. Through practices such as meditation and self-inquiry, individuals can connect with their timeless essence and realize their interconnectedness with the Universe. Ram Dass's teachings advocate embracing the eternal nature of the soul and aligning one's life with the timeless wisdom found within [22].

Sufi mystic and poet Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī explores the concept of divine time in his ecstatic verses. He views time as a manifestation of the divine will, where every moment carries the potential for spiritual awakening and union with the divine. Rūmī's poetry often uses metaphors of love and longing to express the soul's journey towards timelessness, as it seeks reunion with its eternal source [23].

Renowned Bengali poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore perceived time as a flowing river, carrying the essence of existence. He emphasized the fluidity of time, where moments blend into one another like the ripples of a river. Tagore's contemplation of time as an ever-changing continuum encourages individuals to embrace the impermanence of life and find meaning in the interconnectedness of all things [24].

Jiddu Krishnamurti, a philosopher and spiritual teacher, delved into the relationship between time and the mind. He proposed that the human mind, conditioned by past experiences and knowledge, creates a psychological time that traps individuals in patterns of thought and perception. Krishnamurti's teachings advocate for a direct observation of the mind and its relationship with time, enabling individuals to break free from psychological conditioning and experience a state of timelessness and true freedom [25].

Mystical perspectives on time thus reveal a profound understanding of time's relativity and its significance in shaping human consciousness. From living in the present moment to experiencing the eternal now, these insights offer transformative ways to recalibrate one's temporal perceptions and connect with the timeless essence within oneself and the Universe. By embracing such teachings, humans can experience a deeper sense of inner peace, spiritual awakening, and unity with all existence.

2.4 Temporal Turn

The landscape of literary studies has been undergoing a transformation, striving to move beyond Eurocentric and American-centric premises, and embracing a more inclusive and democratic perspective [26]. The geographical turn, with its focus on the interdependence between space and cultural autonomy, has played a crucial role in redefining the literary system [27]. However, another essential aspect of literary analysis, that of temporality, has not received the same level of attention until recent times. The temporal turn, with its potential to dismantle rational periodization and challenge Eurochronology, has remained relatively unexplored, despite its relevance in understanding power relationships within the global literary system. However, recent literary scholarship has recognized the significance of temporal concepts and their ideological presuppositions [28]. Scholars have thus denounced the conventional long-term time structures that have perpetuated Eurocentric narratives of cultural evolution. Instead, they advocate for a more nuanced understanding of time, one that accounts for the multiplicity of lived experiences and challenges standardized approaches to cultures.

In consequence, contemporary literary studies seek to interrogate the relationship between time frames and theoretical constructs, inviting reflections on how different temporal concepts impact the interpretations of literature and culture. In *Time and the Other*, Fabian (1983) thus propounds the term *coevalness* to elucidate a shared timeframe and critique colonial and evolutionist narratives [29]. In a similar vein, Heise (1997) notes in *Chronoschisms* that technological advances have fostered a new culture of time, leading to contradictory storylines that challenge traditional conceptions of plot, history, and post-history [30]. Such observations highlight the need to keep exploring the interface of literature, along with science and technology, while maintaining a historical perspective.

Thus, by challenging Eurochronology and embracing diverse temporal experiences, scholars can create more inclusive and enriched literary canons. Moreover, the study of time can serve as a bridge between arts and sciences, enhancing the understanding of temporal distortion and enriching the human experience. The integration of scientific truths with

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humanistic connotations can thus have healing effects, offering therapeutic potential through fiction, philosophy, and other humanities. Ultimately, through interdisciplinary collaboration and a reframing of temporal premises, humankind could embark on a transformative journey, unraveling the intricate relationship between time and literature in its quest for a more profound comprehension of the human condition.

III. ISHIGURIAN TIME

3.1 Temporal Distortion

In the realm of fiction, as in the reality of human existence, the distortion of time carries significant implications for the recalibration of a character's identity and their mental equilibrium. Literary voices, such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, have exemplified a preference for time of the mind over time on the clock [31]. Their temporal exploration is not far from the problems of periodization in historiography, shedding light on the complexities of how humans perceive time. The concept of inner time is also evident in the works of Kazuo Ishiguro, an English author of Japanese descent, who primarily explores the arduous quest for meaning through introspection and the recollection of troubled pasts. Ishigurian characters thus serve as profound embodiments of the human condition, with its frailties, irrationalities, and the agonizing inability to accept the stark simplicity of life.

In fictional contexts, temporal impairment becomes amplified by the author's personal experience of time. In consequence, the behavioral patterns of Ishiguro's characters emerge from a synthesis of Japanese and English approaches to internal and perceptual timekeeping. This reflects the profound influence of the subconscious mind, resulting in a literary style that defies conventional norms to convey human emotions in the most restrained yet interactive manner possible. As a master of human emotions, Ishiguro illustrates how his characters experience the retrospective passage of months and years (Etsuko, Ono, Stevens, Christopher, Kathy), the chaotic progression of minutes during a hectic day (Ryder), the confusing journey to retrieve lost memories (Axl and Beatrice), and the yearning for a human heart (Klara). His atemporal intentions are paired with a co-existing space that transcends both *fabulism* and fantasy [32]. Depression, guilt, fear, and post-traumatic stress disorder cause Ishigurian characters to perceive time as a slower entity when narrating or re-narrating their stories, which could elucidate the bias of their narrative unreliability. This reiterates the pivotal role of emotions in the perception of time passage, both in real life and in fiction [33].

The true conundrum in Ishiguro’s novels is that his characters cannot make a clear distinction between their temporal perceptions at all times. The many nuances of the same past event are due to the current state of the protagonist. As quantum mechanics postulates, time is not a continuous flow but the sum of minuscule discrete values that constitute one’s present moments. When walking down memory lane, characters re-experience the same event at a different emotional level, which engulfs the retrospection of the past feelings. Basically, people and characters cannot retrieve moments in the past as such, but their present images, distorted by their current states – and herein lies the vicious circle of distorted temporality in each of Ishigurian protagonists. Living an event and thinking about it are two very different temporal experiences [34]. This comes to prove one of the crucial tenets in quantum mechanics, that the presence of the observer makes the subatomic particles behave either as waves or as particles. In other words, an event stays neutral before the participant regards it as either happy or sad. The way one views the world renders the world real! Furthermore, the temporal limitation of directly experiencing only the present is doubled by the impossibility of perceiving the future. While the transience of events makes the past elude people as a direct experience, the future takes on a deterministic quality, so the effect can never be perceived before the cause. Briefly, people can only perceive something that has already happened, not something that is yet to happen. This can better explain why Etsuko, Ono, and Stevens think their actions are good, or contributing to the greater good, at the time they experience them, although they will be chastised for their past actions later on. Even if, from a quantum mechanical perspective, characters could accept the idea that past, present, and future happen simultaneously, influencing each other in each moment, they still cannot perceive their future, only anticipate or guess it. However, future scenarios can magnetically influence the present and therefore the past as well, since each life segment becomes past by the time characters start perceiving it. Moreover, retrieving the past through present perception is invariably accompanied by certain emotions, such as wistfulness in addition to reliving the original emotions of the past event [35][36]. Thus, the feeling of the past will always render the present meaningful or meaningless. In other words, the perception of the past compels one to prioritize the present based on a new temporal distortion.

3.2 A Pale View of Hills

Etsuko is a middle-aged Japanese expatriate in denial of her post-traumatic stress disorder. As a widow, she has also outlived her elder daughter and lives apart from her younger daughter. She suppresses any overt expression of guilt for being alive after the atomic bombing and after her elder daughter has taken her own life. Etsuko's past is a constantly shifting amalgamation of war and marital memories, emanating from a deeply scarred Nagasaki, which denied its survivors any individual expression of their immense suffering due to its morbid repetitiveness. Etsuko's perception, as communicated to her younger daughter Niki, forms the narrative structure of her past experiences in Nagasaki.

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A meaningful experience can only be registered by a mind possessing a sound temporal compass: "The age of an individual is irrelevant, it's their experiences that count. People can live to be a hundred and yet experience nothing" [37]. Etsuko's recollections, especially those of Sachiko and Mariko, lack a rational conclusion. The reader is left to infer that the neglectful mother and her troubled daughter have somehow made it to America. Similarly, the reader must deduce how Etsuko left both her Japanese husband and Japan to marry a British journalist and relocate to England with her daughter Keiko. Etsuko's non-chronological regression in the past represents her method of coping with the trauma of immigrating to a foreign country and adapting to new customs. Despite their interconnectedness, Ishiguro successfully differentiates the collective trauma of a post-nuclear world from Etsuko's personal turmoil, thereby revealing the true monsters from Etsuko's past, influenced by her psychological state, her physical environment, and the recurring patterns in her life.

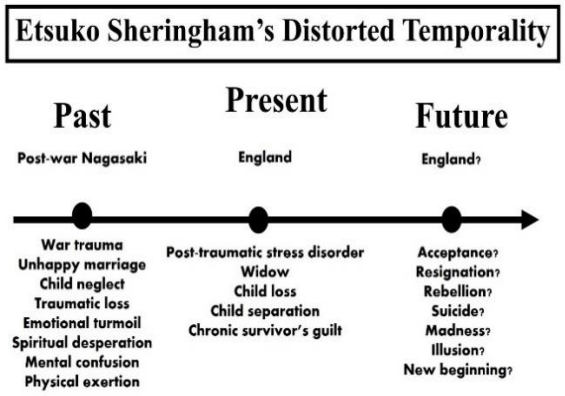

Figure 2: Etsuko's timeline [7]

3.3 An Artist of the Floating World

Masuji Ono navigates through various stages of self-examination, revolving around dichotomous questions: Should he express remorse for his past behavior or should he stand by it? Should he accept intergenerational conflicts or should he respond to them? Language serves as a potent tool for those who can consciously manipulate it, and Ono is certainly one of them. He seldom communicates his true intentions, oscillating between different tonalities and styles, from euphemistic to revelatory, in accordance with how he desires others to perceive him. At times, he evades and obscures the actual meaning while, at other times, he employs it as a linguistic weapon. Ono succeeds in creating various aspects of the personal and collective past through language, primarily dealing with nationalistic warfare, loss, guilt, and embarrassment. However, what is relatively correct differs significantly from what is universally fair. Ono's good intentions largely depend on his own set of beliefs, perceptions, choices, and intentions. It may thus be a strategy that the old painter publicly expresses regret for his past actions at his younger daughter's *miai*, in order to secure Noriko's future as a respectable married woman [38].

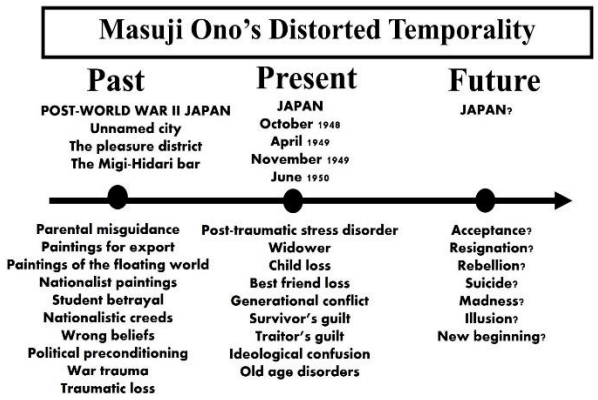

Figure 3: Masuji Ono's timeline [7]

By coming to terms with the passage of time, his insignificance and the lack of legacy brought by his art, Ono seems to accept the one fundamental law that governs the whole Universe: entropy. Since all systems in the Universe run on energy, entropy refers not only to the forward movement of disorder throughout the systems, but also to the heat transfer effect [39]. Thus, in the distant future, all the energy will be spread out and none of the engines will run any more, including human bodies, so that everything will come to a universal end. It is therefore much more natural for a system to come apart than come back together as disorder is more natural than order. So, when people resist to change, they unconsciously oppose the natural tendency of all systems toward expansion and, ultimately, decay. Even the restoration of order in certain systems, like nations' regaining peace and prosperity after turbulent periods, is transitory and, most importantly, illusory since such deeds are achieved at the entropic expense of other systems, namely the death and sacrifice of numerous people.

3.4 The Remains of the Day

In the contemplative solitude of the English countryside, Stevens embarks on an introspective journey, reassessing his tenure at Darlington Hall during the interwar period. His professional relationship with Miss Kenton, under the patronage of Lord Darlington, forms a significant part of his reflections. As he traverses the countryside, Stevens grapples with the perplexing decisions made by his employer, known for his quintessential Englishness, and contemplates his potential role in influencing Miss Kenton toward an undesired marital alliance. Intriguingly, her departure from Darlington Hall coincides with the pivotal meeting orchestrated by Lord Darlington between English diplomats and the German ambassador. The landscape Stevens traverses serves as a catalyst for his recollections. After he meets Miss Kenton, Stevens sheds tears on a bench on the Weymouth pier, before

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returning to Darlington Hall. A significant conversation with a former butler occurs as the pier lights illuminate the surroundings [40]. Following this cathartic episode, Stevens resolves to serve his new employer with the same dedication as his previous one, even if it necessitates adopting the American style of bantering.

What initially appears as a humble journey of a modest butler evolves into a quest for resolution to questions and dilemmas encompassing friendship, collaboration, dignity, betrayal, trauma, unrequited love, anti-Semitism, political ideologies, social welfare, memory, and regret. This journey essentially becomes a psychological deconstruction of the socio-political and economic dynamics leading up to World War II while Stevens' professional dignity is predicated on his ability to suppress or deny personal attachments, as he dedicates himself entirely to his duties. Stevens' temporal dilemma thus mainly stems from his heightened sense of duty, a trait possibly influenced by the transgenerational consciousness and traditional values, including Confucian duty [41]. The reconciliation with Miss Kenton, the woman in his memories and the one he encounters much later, indicates the depth of Stevens' emotional life, despite his Confucian persona. Stevens is often misinterpreted as making poor choices, but a closer examination reveals his ownership of his decisions until the very end. Rather than attempting to become something his genetic predisposition would not allow, he embraces his convictions and their consequences, living by them to the best of his ability.

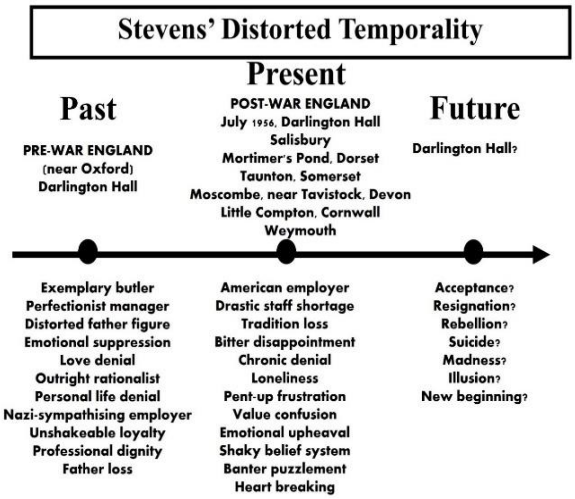

Figure 4: Stevens' timeline [7]

3.5 The Unconsoled

A concert pianist of international renown, Ryder has been invited not only to perform but also to deliver an address that will help the unnamed city rediscover its cultural identity. Presumably a stranger to the city, Ryder nonetheless encounters a woman and child who are probably his wife and son. The wreck of a car remembered from his childhood turns up on a lawn. Rushing to the concert hall after getting lost on the way, he meets up with a wall built across a main avenue of the city. Reinforcing the absurdity of these occurrences, the narrative conventions switch without warning, the first-person narrator becoming suddenly omniscient. Or, conversely, Ryder becomes invisible, a ghost overhearing derisive conversations about his character and demeanor. Like Kafka's country doctor [42], Ryder is expected to heal the city's wounds, both cultural and spiritual; and, in a space of more than five hundred pages, his burden grows nearly unbearable, as person after person, remembered from childhood or encountered for the first time, divulges secrets and solicits Ryder's healing powers. Similarly, the atmosphere of the novel grows ever darker, lightened though it is by a mocking irony and an undercurrent of hilarity.

Ryder can only achieve high levels of success by ensuring each facet of his competitive nature is fully expressed. His persona – a control enthusiast, never distracted, never pulled in uncontrollable directions – makes him "the world's finest living pianist [...] perhaps the very greatest of the century" [43]. In truth, Ryder is a profoundly disordered individual, with a multitude of addictions and obsessions competing for his attention to the extent that he lacks awareness of his current situation or future direction. Rather than interpreting the perplexing narrative as a nocturnal dream, one should view it as a daytime neurosis derived from the mentality of relentless competition. The harried-looking pianist bustles about incessantly, finding no time for reflection; no sooner has he settled somewhere than he is summoned back to futile duties by a ringing phone or a prattling official. The cinematic quality of his mental film consists of a series of rapidly advanced scenes that elastically zoom in and out of focus, appearing from nowhere only to vanish into nothingness shortly thereafter, in a timeless and spaceless dimension that fluctuates between urgency and leisure; timeliness and untimeliness; past, present, and déjà vu. Ryder's distorted temporality thus embodies the parable of life, with its beautifully authentic blend of paranoia, fear, and anxiety, as well as its eerie logic.

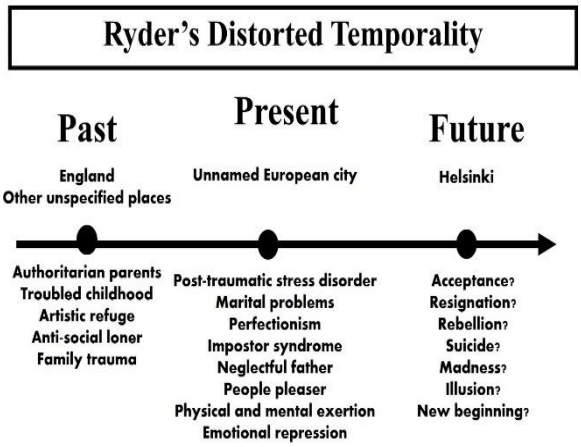

Figure 5: Ryder's timeline [7]

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The pianist is by far the most accomplished time traveler of all Ishigurian characters. Whether Freudian or not, Ryder's dream, or dream-like reality, enables him to contract and expand space-time at will, thereby displacing himself by losing, dividing, or multiplying his identity while fulfilling wishes across spatio-temporal borders and re-experiencing events at the cost of his own identity. The past and present are therefore fused, as are realism and uncanniness, leaving the reader confused, perplexed, exhausted, and liberated simultaneously. At the end of his agonizing experience, Ryder rides alone, accepting the circular banality of life as it is, without any escapist flourishes.

3.6 When We Were Orphans

Christopher Banks opts to disregard his mental constructs and speculations about his lost family, seeking to mend "the rift between the objective reality and the distorted concept of reality, which he has clung to for decades." As he confronts the harsh truth, which negates "the heroic scenario of his parents' kidnapping for political reasons" and exposes "the fact that his father escaped Shanghai with a mistress and died soon after while his mother is a pensioner of a mental asylum" [44], Banks finally commences to live in the present.

At an initial glance, the detective's resilient demeanor as an orphan who has risen to success appears plausible, given his upbringing by his aunt in Shropshire and his financial capability to pursue education at Cambridge. This background potentially provides a sense of security for an orphan, contrasting with the experiences of those institutionalized or living with multiple foster parents. However, from the onset, a discrepancy emerges between Banks' self-perception and the image others hold of him, despite the detective being the sole narrator.

As an adult, Christopher discloses his genuine curiosity about the concept of well-connectedness, which reveals his true disposition during his school years as a reserved and timid boy, hesitant to form healthy relationships with his peers due to the trauma of his parents' disappearance. Emotions, through their elusive and complex nature, can often lead individuals to underestimate the severity of their responses to traumatic events. As Banks struggles with romantic commitments, his failure to travel abroad with Sarah Hemmings substantiates his inability to love any woman other than his mother. His enduring image of his parent is that of a vibrant, soft-spoken, yet resolute woman, unwilling to compromise her principles for trivial reasons [45].

The detective's fleeting references to his daughter Jennifer's suicide attempt underscore the illusory nature of his present reality and his inability to extricate himself from the comfort of his pre-abduction childhood.

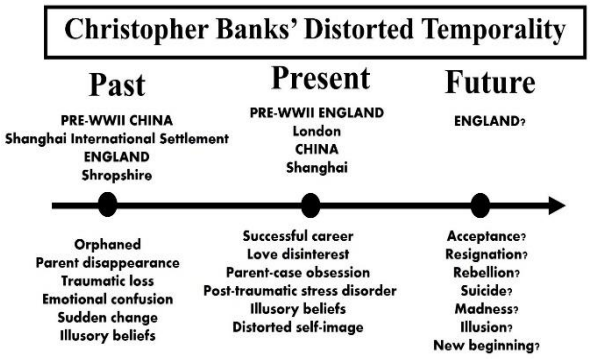

Figure 6: Christopher Banks' timeline [7]

3.7 Never Let Me Go

In addition to her non-linear narrative timeline, the caregiver Kathy H. also adheres to a chronological sequence. Initially, she reflects on the duration of her career in the context of impending changes set to occur in a few months [46]. Having cared for other donors for over a decade, Kathy creates a retrospective illusion that clones can somehow evade their predetermined fate – specifically, by choosing to care for other clones and aiding their recovery post-donation, not by being in love with another clone. However, throughout the narrative, Kathy oscillates between revealing and informing the reader that clones have no alternative life trajectory than the one preordained for them. The topic becomes increasingly poignant when the reader discerns that the author's suggestion of a vague free will only serves to underscore the societal confinement of the clones.

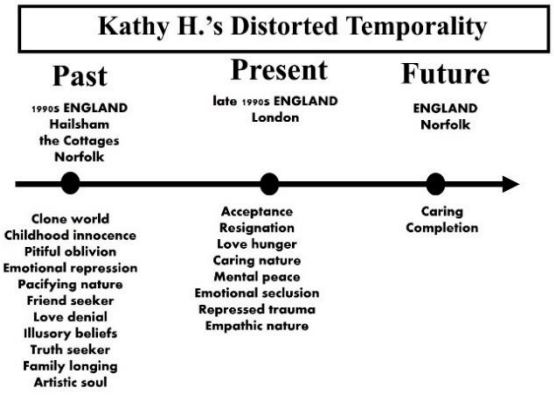

Figure 7: Kathy's timeline [7]

According to Kathy's description, her caregiving role primarily involves a psychological effort to maintain the donors' tranquility, with the biological implications of sequential vital organ removal largely overlooked. The reader will therefore feel deeply engaged in the process of sifting through Kathy's childhood memories of her friends, Ruth and Tommy, and of discerning the true function of the Hailsham school. Kathy demonstrates her therapeutic abilities from an early age, intervening during Tommy's crises and successfully alleviating them. The *carer*'s acceptance of

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her existential trajectory at the novel's conclusion attests to the uniqueness of her consciousness. Kathy thus appears to have relinquished the desire to be treated as a human being, having found her human essence within her memories, which provides her with peace. Her future may have been predetermined, but her inner strength demonstrates that freedom invariably originates from within.

3.8 The Buried Giant

In a postmodern context that emphasizes living in the present, the medieval Britons, Axl and Beatrice, illustrate the emptiness that can arise from a lack of historical awareness. While they can perform their daily activities, they lack an understanding of their life's purpose. Axl experiences stirrings of past emotions, prompting him to contemplate an alternate past life filled with children and vibrant activities. His deep affection for his wife, coupled with a longing for something seemingly experienced long ago, engenders a potent force within his psyche that transcends his doubts about the legitimacy of his imagination. Motivated by the desire to reclaim their lost memories and shared history, Axl and Beatrice embark on a quest to rediscover their past identities, anticipating a reunion with their son, whose face they cannot recall. Along their journey, they encounter individuals who either share their goal or oppose it, and a closely guarded secret of the post-Arthurian era finally comes to the surface: the wizard Merlin has manipulated the breath of a slumbering dragoness into a mist in order to induce forgetfulness of past atrocities among both Britons and Saxons. Merlin's magic, intended to prevent the perpetuation of a futile war and obscure Arthur's costly mindset, comes at a cost, though: the artificially induced peace is also accompanied by the loss of individual histories [47].

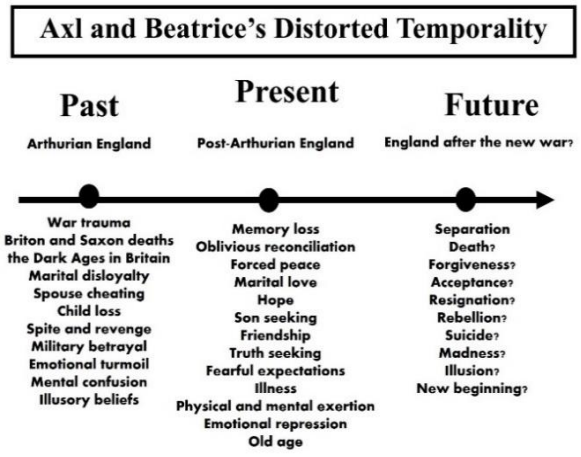

Figure 8: Axl and Beatrice's timeline [7]

On their journey toward an altered reality, the elderly couple commits to helping the Saxon Wistan slay the enchanted Querig and reignite everyone's memories. The protagonists ultimately discover that, while they are willing to accept the unpleasant memories along with the pleasant ones, the restoration of the old order can empower certain recollections to rekindle initial chaos. The dilemma lies in the morality of forcibly erasing a violent past to maintain an artificially imposed peace. An intermediate solution, forgiving what cannot be forgotten and moving forward, is challenging to achieve without conscious effort. Consequently, the couple fails to manage the intense emotions that have led to estrangement while the two nations with conflicting worldviews cannot address their past disagreements. Once again, Ishiguro prompts the reader to acknowledge the fallibility of the human condition and its dependence on the socio-economic environment during specific historical periods.

3.9 Klara and the Sun

As an Artificial Friend, Klara does not age or experience time in the same fashion humans do. However, Klara's timeline remains linear due to the laws of the world she lives in. Her fragmented and episodic narrative of specific events and interactions also resembles the intricacy of human recalling. This is mostly evident in her observations of the Beggar Man and his dog, where she meticulously notes their movements and changes over time. The human characters, on the other hand, experience time in a more traditional sense, marked by aging, illness, and death. Josie, a young girl who becomes Klara's owner, experiences a significant health crisis, which further distorts Klara's timeline, as the latter is drawn into Josie's health struggle [48].

Despite being an AF, Klara exhibits a deep sense of empathy and understanding of human emotions. She remains steadfastly loyal to Josie, even as Josie's health deteriorates, demonstrating a level of emotional depth that arguably surpasses that of the human characters. The novel ends with a sense of slow fading as Klara's solar-powered energy diminishes. This gradual decline parallels the humans' experiences of illness and aging, and underscores the novel's exploration of time and mortality. Klara's unwavering commitment to Josie, even in the face of her own degradation, raises ethical questions about the capacity for empathy and compassion in artificial beings. The novel challenges traditional notions of time, memory, and emotion, offering a nuanced exploration of the human condition.

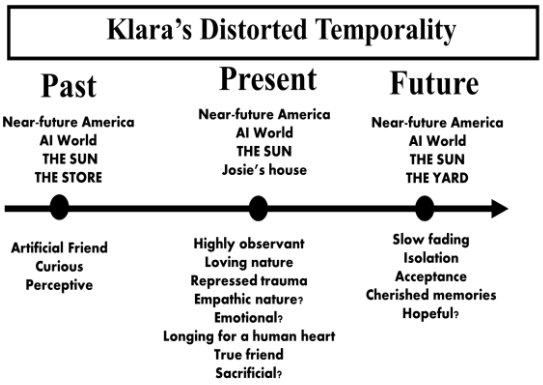

Figure 9: Klara's timeline

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IV. CONCLUSION

The human identity is invariably entwined with the human perception of time. The memory component of the human identity organizes human experiences chronologically, facilitating a narrative connection between the past, present, and future. However, the concept of present is fundamentally ambiguous, its interpretation contingent on location and speed. Even so, the commonplace notions of chronological time, albeit scientifically contestable, contribute to one's humanness. In the study of time, an interdisciplinary approach has therefore proven beneficial, encouraging collaboration across fields, bridging gaps between sciences and arts, and appreciating the value of intuition and imagination. This acknowledges the multiplicity of temporal perspectives, from the philosophical assertion of time's relativity to the existential appreciation of the moment and the scientific contention that time did not exist before the Big Bang.

The dichotomy between the standardized approach to cultures and the multiplicity of lived experiences lends itself to modernist critique, resonating with problems of periodization in historiography. Although the concept of time presents an underexplored dimension in literary studies, an in-depth exploration of all valuable narratives can ultimately lead to a more comprehensive understanding of both life and fiction, elucidating power relations, disrupting cultural normativity, and fostering interdisciplinary connections. New narrative theory can therefore serve as an essential instrument for unfolding the intricacies of both human experience and literary discourse. The time has come to integrate all temporal approaches into the healthiest form of time distortion to create a holistic understanding of the human world within a timeless Universe – and beyond.

This interdisciplinary paper seeks to foster a comprehensive dialogue that deepens one's appreciation of time's significance and its profound impact on the human experience. Through the lenses of temporal science, psychology, spirituality, and literary studies, the paper creates a foundation for the case study of Ishigurian temporality. Ishiguro's novels offer a profound reflection on the human mind's capacity for temporal distortion as well as a unique perspective on the fluidity and subjectivity of time. The characters' psychological states shed light on the concept of temporal dislocation as they entail feelings of alienation and disconnection. The exploration of time dilation and cyclical time adds depth to the novels, revealing the characters' struggles with memory, identity, mortality, and the search for meaning. Ishiguro's novels therefore serve as a testament to the power of literature in capturing the intricacies of human experience and humankind's quest for understanding its place in the Universe. The characters' entanglement in their memories and perceptions echoes the challenges faced by all humans in reconciling their pasts with their present identities. However, the potential for liberation from memory-based identities still emerges, suggesting that, by embracing the primordial nature of existence, humankind can transcend the limitations of time and connect with the cosmic greatness.

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