

ENGLISH – AFTER DARKNESS ESSAYS

The idea of guilt is central to this novel.

Tomokazu's shame and guilt is accumulated by his surreptitious commitments and the ignominy of working at the Epidemic Prevention Laboratory in Christine Piper's historical fiction novel 'After Darkness'. The novelist portrays the notion of how an individual's dark suppressed past acts as a repercussion of the chagrin they undergo through repetitive repressed memory and 'silence'. While protagonist Ibaraki narrates his journey in Tokyo, his arrival in Broome and his experience at Loveday Internment camp, it is evident that in order to maintain the 'loyalty' and 'discretion' of his workings in Unit 731, Ibaraki lives in significant regret over his relationship breakdowns because he is caught between his job, his relationships and his moral conscience. Further to this notion, Piper attempts to highlight how the darkness of one's past will continue to haunt and self-destruct them despite an individual believing they are escaping it. In defiance of the ongoing trauma and repetitive feeling of guilt, it is revealed through Dr. Ibaraki's journey at Loveday internment camp and in Tokyo 1989 that in revealing his injurious experiments will set him free to see the 'light' after his own 'darkness', hence Piper's title 'After Darkness'. Through examining the effects of personal breakdown and one's guilt and shame over a lifetime because of his discomfort in his job, Piper elucidates the importance of addressing one's past so they can heal in the present. In doing so, Piper addresses the concept of 'historical amnesia' that she condemns between Japan and Australia suppressing their horrific pasts, therefore suggests through her characterization of Ibaraki to acknowledge their own wrongdoings in the past in order for a nation to move forward in the present.

Piper acknowledges how individuals find it strenuous to address the past due to them experiencing a substantial amount of indignity and mortification in the present. This is apparent in Ibaraki's experience as he was involved in dark experiments when working at the 'Epidemic Prevention Laboratory'. While it is simple for Piper's audience to condemn Ibaraki as a character, it is evident when Piper's non-linear structure begins to unfold that Ibaraki carries a significant amount of shame and guilt from working at the laboratory that prevents him from maintaining his relationships in the present, thus he believes he needs to escape and 'start afresh'. Piper elucidates throughout the novel how Major Kimura's words acts as a catalyst for his sufferings and the traumatic burden he has to carry through his experiences at Broome and Loveday Internment Camp.

The novelist exemplifies how Ibaraki's inability to tell the truth about his workings at the Epidemic Prevention Laboratory results in relationship breakdown that causes a significant amount of guilt he carries throughout the text. In Toyo 1934, it is evident that Ibaraki was too pre-occupied with his job that he needed to 'bathe' himself 'clean' in order to remove the memory of "rotting flesh. Blackened limbs" hence, him barely giving his time to spend with Kayoko because he was "too stained [his] association of the laboratory." Despite Ibaraki's attempts to tell the truth about his working when Kayoko has a miscarriage he states "emptiness gnawed my stomach" and "I longed to tell her about my work" however he believed "it was better to remain silent" despite the consequence of losing of her. In defiance of Kayoko leaving Ibaraki and him stating that the "rejection pained [him] more than the loss of our child", Piper's use of imagery allows her readers to notice the determine impacts of carrying the shame and guilt of to work in Unit 731 has on his personal life. This is apparent when Kayoko shuts the door and thereby returns him to the 'darkness' because he had an inability to tell her the truth. Ibaraki describes how the "branches of the deciduous trees, lining the streets were almost bare scattered with fallen leaves". Piper uses trees as a metaphor to represent him so the audience is able to determine how he has fallen apart, hence explaining why he wants to 'escape'. While Ibaraki believes that escaping will solve his problems it is evident that it does not. Piper encapsulates how Ibaraki is still haunted by

his past when asked about his 'marital status' in Loveday as he explains that he was "caught off-guard" and "opened [his] mouth but nothing came out" revealing how memories of his marriage to Kayoko drives his considerable guilt that he continues to suppress and essentially run away from. In doing so, Piper warns her readers about the significant harmful outcomes that arise to the surface if the truth is not told, but instead is merely suppressed.

In correspondence to the secretly suppressed past due to the fear of denunciation, Piper reveals how it is almost impossible for an individual to tell the truth in these dire times. In doing so, Piper exemplifies how the shame and guilt of the laboratory and his wife create cumulative effects that results in him closing apart of himself to his most loved and admirable ones. Throughout Ibaraki's experience in Broome he explains how his relationship with Sister Bernice was the "strongest relationship he has ever had" and therefore he feels as if "weight had been lifted that released [him] from the past" however, Piper's imagery of "grey clouds blanketed the sky" foreshadows the events that are about to take place. When Sister Bernice, like Kayoko asks him to reveal "more of himself" the 'wooden tag' in the book "left an impression like a scare" that reminded Ibaraki of his past, thus causing Ibaraki to close apart of himself and feel as though Sister Bernice is attacking his personal life "I don't know like you intruding on my life". As a result of him carrying enormous amount of guilt he loses Sister Bernice when he states "she had closed apart of herself to me". In doing so, Piper positions her readers to be cautious of how suppressing one's past comes with tremendous consequences, hence suggesting her readers to address their wrongdoings and make amends for what they have done otherwise, like Ibaraki, will live in the 'shadow of the past'.

Piper reveals how the suppression of the truth haunts her protagonist and therefore results in further guilt and self-destruction. At Loveday interment camp, the novelist highlights how his 'loyalty', 'discretion' and 'silence' override his ability to see the truth despite his moral conscience suggesting him to. When Stan attempts to commit suicide because of the bullying and cultural exclusion encountered by Yamada, Ibaraki denies and tells Stanley that he must be 'mistaken'. The 'grey light' and 'darkness crowded the corners' foreshadows that there is something sinister going on within the camp. However, when the 'wind blew' and 'changed everything' Ibaraki's 'uneasiness grew' about Stan that he 'trembled with regret' about his past experiences which made him come to the realization that he felt 'ashamed' about defending Yamada because 'Yamada attacked Stan'. Piper's use of the dream when he is trying to find the shell, however 'no matter how hard [he] sifted he couldn't find it' and how the 'tug' he felt on the line attempted to pull him out but he kept looking reveals how he is always digging deeper to avoid his past when the truth is always at the surface. This causes further suffering for Ibaraki as a "feeling of shame rose up through [his] body" building the guilt he is already experiencing resulting in him believing that his "refusal to believe Stan had prompted his deterioration" hence he "could not forgive himself" which returned him back to the darkness alongside his past. Piper therefore, reveals how the repetitive suppression of the past causes endless suffering in the present and personal deterioration.

Notwithstanding the ongoing trauma Ibaraki encounters through repetitive repressed memory of 'silence' and 'guilt', Piper reveals to her audience how it is never too late for an individual to atone for their sins. In Tokyo 1989, Ibaraki come to the realization through Sister Bernice's letter that he'd "clung to this idea of discretion, when it was courage and forgiveness [he] needed all along," This reveals how addressing one's past and realizing that "in time. It will be worth the shame" that acknowledging an individuals wrongdoings is Christine Piper's intent for her readers that is achieved by his experience of guilt and shame. Further to this notion, Piper's use of imagery enables her audience to see how he has changed after a lifetime, through her repetitive use of 'yellow-grass' when Ibaraki describes the landscape of the camp. It can be suggested that the colour 'yellow'; represents Ibaraki's path to enlightenment 'After Darkness' where he moves forward from the shame and regret

of his past. This is apparent when the colour yellow beings to fade out and he begins to see what he calls a colour he has 'never seen before' an 'opaque white', this results in him stating that like the Mallee Tree, he would "regrow from the embers of his former life" and "never look back". Therefore, Ibaraki accepts his past atrocities at the end of the narrative, thus achieving ultimate redemption as 'the sentence starts to flow' and begins by saying. "There is something the Japanese should know".

In examining Ibaraki's journey of how there are negative connotations that guilt carries throughout an individuals life, leaves readers to notice the importance of addressing one's past and therefore remain 'open' to their loved ones because burying the truth not only affects external relationships but also results in personal destruction. Tomokazu at the end of the novel understands that the memories he tried to escape in moving to Broome, Kayoko's miscarriage and Stanley's death were "always there like a shrud across the surface, edges drawn tight." By acknowledging himself "it is much harder to descent the depths of suffering then find a way to keep living. I know, because that is what I have done" reveals how strong of a character he is that rather than wallow in self-pity he eventually grew the courage to write about his wrongdoings in the past. Therefore, Piper's message for humanity is to understand how suppressing ones past has detrimental impacts on the present as it can result in ultimate lamentation. In doing so, Piper brings to light the dark repressed past between Japan and Australia and suggests that ultimately the only ways in which society can grow is through acknowledging the truths of the past by weaving them into her narrative in her characterization of Ibaraki in the 'light' he sees after his 'darkness'. While guilt is heavily apparent throughout the text, it is evident that the 'central' of Piper's intent is to encapsulate how acknowledging one's past, like Ibaraki results in an individual being free from the darkness of their own past.

'In After Darkness, Christine Piper explores how individuals are affected by cultural difference and exclusion". Discuss.

During World War II, copious amounts of Japanese civilians and 'haafus' were arrested as 'enemy aliens' and interned to Australia to be locked and isolated in internment camps. Christine Piper's historical fiction novel 'After Darkness' attempts to elucidate the mistreatment present between Japan and Australia that has been eminently suppressed by the Japanese government. Amidst the cultural diversity, the novelist portrays how an individuals dark past acts a repercussion of the conjunction they undergo through repetitive repressed memory and 'silence.' Whilst protagonist Ibaraki narrates his experience at the Loveday internment camp in 1942 after being arrested as an 'enemy alien', Piper expounds the hidden histories of the past by addressing a concept of historical amnesia that she condemns. As a repercussion of the mistreatment, After Darkness endeavours the challenging lives of these men in a camp divided by culture and allegiance. By examining the traumatic effects of cultural conflict in the past, Piper attempts to shed light on the history between Japan and Australia positioning her readers to be aware of the significant trauma experienced by ancestors of the past.

In correspondence to the ongoing trauma that Ibaraki encounters, Piper examines how cultural conflict has a splintering effect on social cohesion and personal breakdown. In encapsulating the detrimental effects, the novelist highlights the devastating unfairness of a government locking its own people. As the non-linear narrative progresses, it is significant for the readership to note how Piper's diction is picturesque and aesthetic to enrich the paradoxical beauty of hardship in the Australian landscape. The imagery that the novelist portrays in the landscape and people's facial expressions foreshadows the events that are about to take place in the novel. This is apparent when Ibaraki arrives to Loveday, Piper juxtaposes the "pink-red sand" in Broome to the "littered with pebbles and clumps of stubborn grass beyond a barb wired fence" to elucidate the isolation and cultural diversity between the camps "although we could see each other, we had limited contact". Further to

this notion, Ibaraki describes how a woman's "eyes [were] narrowed, mouth-tight, her features twisted with hate" who yelled "Bloody Japs!" and spat on the window establishes the cultural exclusion and mistreatment of the Japanese men getting off the train to Loveday. In order to effectively deliver her message the racial conflict present between main antagonist, Johnny Chang and "his gang" who are called 'halfcaste' or 'haafus' against the leaders of the camp Mayor Mori and Yamada demonstrates how the exclusion present impacts individuals tremendously. This is highlighted when Johnny caused upheaval at the breakfast due to the injustice they experience when an old man at the mayor's table yelled "You haafu fools don't deserve the Japanese blood in you!" when Johnny says "You're a bunch of stinking racists". Through examining Johnny's behaviour "they've got us doing shit jobs because we're not like them" and "This camps run by dictatorship, not by a democracy. And it's guys like me who suffer" additionally outlines the ill-treatment of those who are half Japanese and Australian. In presenting the conflict between the haafus and Japanese not only highlights the unfairness they experienced but also demonstrates how there is conflict that every individual faces. Woven throughout the text in the characterisation of Johnny and the other haafus, Piper exposes the truth surrounding Australia's internment camps during World War II and the cultural clashes that seemed to plague its prisoners.

Notwithstanding the racial conflict, Piper exemplifies how individuals are deeply affected by exclusion because of they're 'differences'. The novelists characterisation of Stan Suzuki portrays the notion of the unfairness of the Japan Government in World War II as he should not have been arrested because he is Japanese and served at the 'AIF for six months' before being 'kicked out' as an 'enemy alien', Stan explains how "Everything has gone to hell" ever since; however. Major Locke addresses how "alot of these half breeds are upset about their internment. But we didn't make the decision, we just have to uphold the law" which positions readers to condemn the Japanese government of this time because it was a nation that not only fought other nations but also within itself. In examining the devastating unfairness of a government locking up it's own people, readers are also encouraged to pity the internees as their treatment towards 'haafus' is grossly unfair. When Stan is beaten up by Yamada; however, is not believed because Ibaraki succumbed to the behaviours of the leaders despite Johnny claiming that "I see you are a coward. Just like the rests of the Japs here" contributes to Stan's suicide attempt. Stanley's inability to cope with this conflicted identity is exacerbated by the bullying because the 'haafus' refuse to "kiss their [Japanese leaders] arse, worship their god, bow to their emperor." Further to this notion, during the Matsukaze Mr McKenzie highlights the injustice "I wish I could do more. It doesn't seem fair you lot are locked up in here, just for being Japanese" and Piper's imagery of Mori's facial expressions towards the haafus "Mori's expression turned Stony" and his voice was 'shrill' as he hissed "get rid of them [haafus]" elucidates the continuous racial conflict between the Japanese and 'Australians'. The 'grey light that [shone] through the windows" and the "darkness of the crowd" foreshadows Stan's suicide attempt. The pain Stan encountered through exclusion and difference motivated him to kill himself. By illustrating this event, Piper demonstrates the conflicted identity that has been foisted upon him by the nationalist ideologies of the war, when the ambiguity of being both Japanese and Australian is not an acceptable formulation of identity. The certainties of being classified as either a friend or an enemy are not by personal choice as highlighted through Major Locke's statement but under political conditions. Piper positions readers to feel empathy towards these 'hybrid' characters that struggle with identity and belonging so much so that they would take their own life due to the exclusion they face under the Japanese governments law.

By examining the traumatic effects of social exclusion and difference in the dire times of World War II between Japan and Australia, Piper suggests that ultimately the only ways in which society can grow is through acknowledging the truths of the past by weaving these into her narrative in her characterisation of Ibaraki in the light he sees after his darkness. Despite the endless suffering that Johnny and his gang encounter and the personal mortification of identity through Piper's characterisation of Stan, the protagonist's journey

illustrates how a nation can recover through the secret histories of the governments hypocrisy in interning their own people because they can heal from the mistakes they have made in the past. In filling in the gaps of historical amnesia between Japan and Australia by adding to the plurality of national memory and by incorporating aspects of 'unfinished business' that have yet to be included in the remembrances of both Japan and Australia, Pipers novel intends to draw attention to the past to position her readers to have sympathy for the Japanese and Australians victims in internment camps. In doing so she attempts to bring awareness of the history to the present, and to address concerns about ethics and justice and the dark hidden secrecy of the past and the continuous trauma and shame that arises because of it. The enforced 'silence' that Piper uses when Ibaraki has an inability to address his past is an allegory to the past of Japan and Australia that has been repeatedly suppressed. Ultimately in examining the racial conflict during WWII, *After Darkness* portrays the notion of how history is at threat to repeat itself if the darkness of the past isn't acknowledged in the present.