



## **Information for Social Change**

*"an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers..."*

**When We Were Orphans, by Kazuo Ishiguro**  
**Alfred A. Knoff Canada, Toronto, 2000**  
**\$34.95, 313 pages**

### **Book Review by Julian Samuel**

Kazuo Ishiguro's 'When We Were Orphans' is written in a prose that falls like fine rain on a sunny day, glistening on the Lake District, the moor, Shanghai, on Japanese soldiers. The story captures English society of the 30's. Ishiguro is good at setting tactical conversations amidst large, festive, bourgeois balls, chandelier and glitter.

The splintered historical narrative has a faint hint of Excavating The Political. References to English Fabians with their righteous fight against the injection of Indian opium into China, and a young detective looking for his parents are the main themes.

Ishiguro's characters should have been better integrated into the Chinese history; this would have deepened our understanding of the political use of opium. *When We Were Orphans* tells us more about the individual as a personality, rather than the individual moving through-and-in-history.

Despite this imbalance, the book is a lovely, almost satisfactory read.

