

# The Echoes of Young Kazuo in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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**Abstract** In his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro symbolically presents the 'young Kazuo' as a fading, distinctly Japanese part of himself that he left behind when he moved to England at the age of five. Rather than imagining an alternative life, as John Freeman suggests, the novel mourns the disappearance of Ishiguro's purely Japanese self – a childhood memory gradually dissolving. Kathy mirrors this fate; her inevitable disappearance mirrors that of the young Kazuo. Through parallel structures in the novel and across Ishiguro's body of work, I argue that Kathy embodies the young Ishiguro who is destined to fade from memory.

**Keywords** Japaneseness. Memory. Originals and Shadows. Author's Implication. Geographical Moves. Alliterative Names. The Young Kazuo.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Theoretical Framework: The Principle of Equivalence in Prose Texts. – 3 Two Distinctive Parameters of Equivalence in Ishiguro's Works. – 4 Conclusion.



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## 1 Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) tells a shocking story about a group of clones, or in my interpretation, fading shadows separated from their originals, who donate their organs and are waiting to die.<sup>1</sup> The story begins with the main character, Kathy, who is over 30 years old, looking back on her childhood spent with other children in an institution called Hailsham, and her past, which gradually awakens her to a secret. In order to look back on the past, memory is an important question, and Ishiguro has mentioned the importance of memory on several occasions. In an interview in Stockholm on 6 December 2017, during the week he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he was asked, "Memory, guilt and delusion are recurring themes in your work—why?" to which he replied: "I was always very interested in looking at individuals who struggled with their past and memories" (Ishiguro 2017b). In his Nobel lecture entitled *My Twentieth Century Evening and Other Small Breakthroughs*, he again referred to the question of memory: "I'd often written about such individuals struggling between forgetting and remembering" (Ishiguro 2017a, 25). An interview with writer and journalist Hope Whitmore of Barnes and Noble about *The Buried Giant* (2015) was entitled "Kazuo Ishiguro: The Kingdom of Memory", and in this interview, he said that *The Buried Giant* was also about memory (Ishiguro 2017c). In the 2006 French translation of *Never Let Me Go*, titled *Au près de moi toujours* (2006), the theme of the work is presented on the back cover as "la perte de l'innocence, l'importance de la mémoire" (the loss of innocence, the importance of memory).

Kazuo Ishiguro's approach to the theme of memory is not unlike Marcel Proust's famous madeleine and memory scene in Ishiguro's favorite book, Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu I: Du Côté de chez Swann* (1988). Proust's madeleine moment ("Petites Madeleines", Proust [1917] 1988, 44) is an explicit trigger for a flood of memories, described in great detail. If there is such a device as 'madeleine' in Ishiguro's work, it is a voiceless velar plosive consonant /k-/ at the beginning of his first name, Kazuo. Ishiguro is such a music lover that he wanted to be a musician when he was young, so it is not surprising that he is interested in sound.

The method of analysis adopted in this study is the principle of equivalence, a concept rooted in Roman Jakobson's poetics and equally reflected in Ishiguro's prose. This principle reveals two overarching elements that transcend not only *Never Let Me Go* but Ishiguro's entire literary spectrum. The first is the fact that many episodes in the text are equivalently parallel. The physical journeys of the main

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characters within the narrative are fraught with common, adverse consequences. The second is a phono-lexical pattern in which the names of central characters, such as Kathy, begin with the phoneme /k-/. Within the framework of these two parameters, this article argues that Ishiguro intended *Never Let Me Go* to convey his lament that his pure Japanese youth, left behind in Japan, will inevitably fade away.

## 2      **Theoretical Framework: The Principle of Equivalence in Prose Texts**

The methodology used in this paper is the same as that employed by Roman Jakobson in his “Linguistics and Poetics”, and consists of finding parallel functional similarities in Ishiguro’s prose work *Never Let Me Go*, as realized in the text. This approach is taken because Jacobson’s equivalence principle is an appropriate principle for capturing the characteristics of a literary work. The identification of such characteristics is not always a major concern of studies of literary works, since traditional methods of analysis tend to treat the language used in literary works in the same way as natural language. Literary language, unlike natural language, involves a separation between the author and the narrator. Thus, Charles Bally’s analysis of the linguistic domain encompassing “vocabulaire, syntaxe, sons” (Bally [1913] 1965, 74), seen as an extension of the study of natural language, seems inadequate for elucidating the intricate semantic nuances inherent in a literary composition. In the search for a pragmatic meaning of natural language that goes beyond the limits of formal linguistic analysis, Wilson and Sperber argued that the meaning that requires the least effort of interpretation on the part of the addressee is most likely the secondary meaning that the addresser intended to convey (Wilson, Sperber 2002, 260). However, this pragmatic approach is also inappropriate for interpreting literary texts. In a literary work, the character who ostensibly delivers the message is not the true addresser of the text; rather, it is the author hidden behind the character who is the ultimate addresser of the text. Unlike the search for pragmatic meaning in natural language, a viable method of discerning the author’s intended message to the reader is to engage in a cross-reading of several works written by the same person. This kind of intertextual analysis reveals the functionally common features between different elements in the text, such as those that we find in the phonemic network. The common presence of these elements stronger suggests that these elements are the messages that the author, as the final addresser, has hidden in common in each of his works.

The concept of phonemes based on the idea of functionally identical value can be traced back to Baudouin de Courtenay (Jakobson,

Halle 1971, 22). Jakobson actively used the principle of equivalence realized in sound units in his analysis of poetry, as exemplified in his “Linguistics and Poetics”. Within this paradigm, variants are stored as equivalent along the paradigmatic vertical axis of Y and realized repeatedly along the syntagmatic horizontal axis of X, which represents the text. Michael Toolan claims that the ‘repetition’ of equivalent units “lies at the core of verbal art” (Toolan 2008, 1). Similarly, Masanori Toyota emphasizes the role of repetition in literary texts, stating that it shapes the writer’s distinctive stylistic features:

The management of repetition is one of the requirements of the craft of writing and it seems to reveal writers’ distinctive stylistic characteristics. (Toyota 2018, xxxii)<sup>2</sup>

Claude Lévi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, adopted the concept of functional similarity from phonology and incorporated it into his mythological research, thereby introducing this concept into the field of mythology studies (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 206-31). This raises the question of whether such methods can be applied to literary texts, particularly prose, which lie between sound-oriented poetry and meaning-oriented mythology. Even if it is not possible to pursue well-defined systems, such as those found in phonology and mythology, it is plausible to explore and identify equivalent units within the text in order to unravel the author’s intentions in his works.

In seeking to deduce the author’s intended message to the reader through an analysis of equivalence in prose, the focus of such an analysis must naturally go beyond phonological units to encompass linguistic units at higher levels. This goal of linking units above the level of linguistic sounds in a functionally equivalent network was substantially furthered in M.A.K. Halliday’s “Categories of Grammatical Theory” (1961), which established the groundwork for his systemic functional linguistics (SFL) framework. Halliday applied this linguistic theory to analyse the language and style used in William Golding’s *The Inheritors* (Halliday 1971). While Halliday’s primary focus is on the author’s linguistic and stylistic choices, this analysis indirectly sheds light on the author’s intentions and what the author is trying to convey to the reader. Halliday notes that Golding uses the transitivity and process types to characterize the Neanderthals as embedded in the physical world rather than reflecting upon it.

Not much has been done to approach the theme of a literary work from the textures woven by the units of the Hallidayan linguistic

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**2** I am grateful to Masanori Toyota, Professor Emeritus at Kyoto University, for his illuminating talks on alliteration in English at the Modern English Circle regular meeting.

system. Not only that, but the analysis of literary works also requires a close examination of higher-level units, such as the unit called episode, but this too has not been done much. One of the few valuable examples of macro-analysis of such episodes can be found, for example, in Todorov's analysis.

Todorov analysed *The Swan-geese* in his "The 2 Principles of Narrative" (1971), concluding that in classic fairy tales like this "the situation of equilibrium at the beginning" (Todorov 1971, 39) is disturbed, but in the end "the re-establishment of the initial equilibrium" (Todorov 1971, 39) is realized. Thus in "Cinderella" Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother prevent her from attending the royal ball, leading to her desperate situation, an episode that disrupts the initial equilibrium and drives the narrative towards the restoration of equilibrium.

However, Todorov's analysis of *The Swan-geese* is not an analysis of a group of works by a single author. What emerges from his analysis is a structural framework of a general fairy tale, as was done in Propp's analysis of folk tales. Few, therefore, have applied the concept of functional similarity to the analysis of individual works, let alone prose. In this sense, this analysis of *Never Let Me Go*, though modest in scope, contributes exploring functionally equivalent values in a single text and from which I try to deduce the author's intentions.

When the principle of equivalence, which began with the discovery of phonemes, is applied to a literary work in prose written by a single author, the following steps are taken. If three things resembling themes in the form of A-B-C, A-B-D and A-C-E are found in each of the three works by the same author, then the most plausible main topic shared by the author in all three works is A, a common denominator that can be interpreted as the author's implication, traditionally referred to as 'theme'. These A1, A2 and A3 in three different works manifest different variations in these works, but they are derived from a common invariant, A. The remaining elements, labelled B to E, correspond to what William Downes calls "ghost implicatures" (Downes 1984, 326-7). In other words, these elements are false implicatures. Only by reading several works by the same author in a cross-sectional way can a common denominator A emerge, and from this common denominator A we can now infer a specific meaning as an invariant, for example the latent meaning that Ishiguro quietly put into *Never Let Me Go*. An intertextual reading of the works of different authors will reveal characteristics indicative of a period or genre, while an intertextual analysis of the works of the same author will reveal the hidden implications of the author woven between the lines. It is important to read several works by the same author intertextually, as the interpretation of only one work can lead to the misinterpretation of many false implicatures as important.

In Ishiguro's works there are two significant parameters that characterize them, namely the negation of the geographical movement of important characters and the fact that their names have a voiceless velar plosive /k/ sound at the beginning of their names.

### 3 Two Distinctive Parameters of Equivalence in Ishiguro's Works

Two interrelated equivalent units, or distinctive parameters, common to Kazuo Ishiguro's works were briefly discussed in the introduction. One is the geographical movement of the main characters within the story, which is accompanied by a negative ending, as if to imply the negation of movement. The second is the identical initial sound of the main characters' names.

Relocations of characters, which ultimately have negative consequences, feature in his major works. In *The Unconsoled* (1995), the renowned pianist Ryder abandons his world travels to return to his European hometown. This denial of further international movement leads to surreal, disorienting events that leave Ryder lost. Ryder's encounter with Christoff, an up-and-coming local pianist, shows how Ryder might have become a less famous artist had he not left his hometown, but more remarkably, Christof's current state is presented in relation to what he would have been without Ryder's world travels. The narrative then ends with Ryder taking a tram ride through the city and returning to his seat on the tram for breakfast. This has the underlying implication of being an affirmation of short distance move, but also a denial of larger geographical move:

I filled my coffee cup almost to the brim. Then, holding it carefully in one hand, my generously laden plate in the other, I began making my way back to my seat. (Ishiguro 1995, 535)

Similarly, in *When We Were Orphans* (2000), detective Christopher Banks returns to Shanghai, where he remembers living peacefully with his parents as a child, to investigate their wartime disappearance. This attempt to reconnect with his origins is something he would not have had to do if he had not been separated from his parents in the first place. In "Crooner", which opens *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009), Tony and Lindy Gardner's singing career requires constant travel between cities until their momentum falters. Their departure from their hometown not only fails to bring success, but also costs them the chance to put down roots and have children. In *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), Ono Masuji's son Kenji, who could also be called his young self, would not have died had he not left Japan and stormed through a minefield. And in *The Buried Giant*,

a rootless Celtic couple's move to their current location is linked to the non-existence of their son, a Celtic boy who died long ago.

In Ishiguro's works, names beginning with the same /k-/ sound, such as "Kathy-Keiko-Kazuo", recur in different works, providing the second parameter that distinguishes his works from those of other writers by being related to the first parameter discussed above. These names sharing the /k-/ sound are paradigmatically equivalent and appear in a syntagmatic context, either within the same work or across Ishiguro's various works. In *The Unconsoled*, the name of the young pianist Christoff, who Ryder would have been had he stayed in his birthplace, also has a /k-/ sound; in *When We Were Orphans*, Christopher Banks, returning to his birthplace of Shanghai, also has a /k-/ sound. In "Crooner", the names of the two main characters are Tony Gardner and Lindy Gardner: the surname Gardner begins with the sound /g-/ (a voiced velar plosive), which is faintly reminiscent of a group of names beginning with the sound /k-/ (a voiceless velar plosive), not to mention the sound that opens Gardner's professional name, "crooner". Ono Masuji's young son Kenji, who left his native Japan and was killed in a minefield in Manchuria, far from Japan, also has this sound. The Celtic boy with this sound has already died, left behind. It is fair to say that these names with the /k-/ sound, which play an equivalent role in Ishiguro's works, rhyme alliteratively. In instances of foot-rhyme, where the rhyme is positioned at the end of a word and holds a fixed place within a stanza, it presents not only a phonetic likeness but also a meaningful semantic and syntactic aspect, as noted by Michio Masui in his analysis of Chaucer's rhyme words (Masui 1989, 269). Roman Jakobson also explicitly states that phonological similarity leads to semantic fusion in his analysis of William Blake's "Infant Sorrow" (Jakobson 1962, 322-44).

Jakobson's parallel equivalence approach limited his analysis to short works of poetry, and he defended his approach by arguing why he had limited himself to the analysis of short poetic texts:

The only restriction that I have allowed myself to place on the selection of texts regards their length [...]. The simultaneous synthesis accomplished by the immediate memory of a short poem plainly determines its structural laws and distinguishes them from those which underlie the network of lengthy poems. Such poems, similar in some principles of their construction to long musical compositions with leitmotifs running through the work, offer a separate theme that I try to outline in examining diverse specimens of epic genre. (Jakobson 1981, 770)

Memory limitations make it difficult to structure at the phonological level in longer literary works such as narrative poetry and prose. In longer texts, the challenge is to find correspondences between

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linguistic units, such as rhymes or morphemes, unless guided by a higher structure. This need for higher-level guidance applies not only to individual long poems, but also to the correspondence between linguistic units in prose or across multiple prose texts. Finding units of equivalent semantic value, such as episodes, is crucial to ensuring equivalence in what Boase-Beier calls the “semantic content of individual words” in longer texts:

Repetition, however, does not just involve recurrence of sounds. It may also rest on an equivalence of syntactic structure or of the semantic content of individual words. (Boase-Beier 1994, 405)

In other words, certain episodic, thematically important words rhyme, creating a state of what might be called alliteration, in which they are felt to be psychologically close, even though they are physically far apart. In the rhyming chain of words ‘Kathy-Keiko-Kazuo’, a certain connotation emerges that transcends the boundaries of Ishiguro’s individual works.

In what follows, I begin my discussion of equivalence in Ishiguro’s *A Pale View of Hills*, a text in which the two types of equivalent units can be identified with relative clarity. I begin with an analysis of this work because it is structurally relatively easy to discover the two kinds of equivalent units mentioned above, and therefore it is convenient to extend the ‘ladder of inference’ for discovering equivalent units from this work to seemingly mysterious stories such as *Never Let Me Go*.

The first parameter concerns the geographical movement of the main characters and how it is negated in *A Pale View of Hills* and *Never Let Me Go*.

### 3.1 First Parameter: Geographical Movement and its Negation in *A Pale View of Hills* and *Never Let Me Go*

I have noted in the previous section that *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) is of great importance in providing insights into the author’s intentions in his later works. The story of *A Pale View of Hills* is as follows. After the death of her Japanese husband, the protagonist, Etsuko, starts a new life in Britain with an English husband and her eldest daughter, Keiko, the child of her former Japanese husband. However, soon after their arrival in Britain, Keiko commits suicide. Later, Etsuko’s English husband dies and when she tells Niki, the child of her English husband, that she wants to sell their current house and move to a smaller one, Niki is against the idea:

"I was just thinking the other day," I [Etsuko] said, "perhaps I should sell the house now."

"Sell it?"

"Yes. Move somewhere smaller perhaps. It's just an idea."

"You want to sell the house?" My daughter [Niki] gave me a concerned look.

"But it's a really nice house."

"But it's so large now."

"But it's a really nice house, Mother. It'd be *a shame*."

"*I suppose so. It was just an idea, Niki, that's all.*" (Ishiguro 1982, 183; italics added)

If the negation of movement, expressed in the phrase "It'd be a shame", is a feature specific to this work, the implications of the negation of movement remain at the level of the characters and the narrator. However, if it is a common feature that we can find in Ishiguro's other works, then the denial of movement can be considered one of the author's general themes.

Niki, born in Britain to a British husband and Etsuko, does not choose to leave her current home in London to live with her mother Etsuko, or Etsuko, following Niki's advice, does not choose to move from her current residence. Settling down in one place was something she had experienced in Nagasaki before leaving Japan. From this, it can be argued that *A Pale View of Hills* presents a positive portrayal of Etsuko regaining her peace by refraining from further movement within Britain.

As opposed to Etsuko, who had travelled a long way, the second protagonist, Sachiko, was denied an international move because she could not fulfil her dream of marrying an American man and going to the USA. As a result of being denied the long-distance move, Sachiko did not lose her daughter Mariko. As they prepare to leave for America, Mariko wants to take her kitten with her, and after being scolded by her mother Sachiko, she runs away from home. She is found lying on a riverbank, as if to show that she is on the verge of death. Sachiko gets angry with the kitten and puts it in a box and throws it into the river. As mentioned previously, Sachiko's plans to move to the USA are thwarted, and this failure to move and Mariko's escape from death occur in parallel. However, Sachiko and Mariko do make one small move, which seems to coincide with the relatively small sacrifice of the kitten in the river. They move from Nagasaki in western Japan to Kobe in central Japan. By replacing large moves with smaller ones in this way, the author seems to be affirming the value of settling down in one's present place, which does not involve any sacrifice. Consequently, Niki's words below, as she urges her mother not to move, seem to convey a certain meaning implied in the text as a whole, beyond her own intention as a character.

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In discussing *Never Let Me Go*, it is worth noting a difference in narrative perspective: *A Pale View of the Hills* is told from the perspective of Etsuko, the mother who lost her daughter Keiko in the course of her life, from the perspective of the original from which Keiko was created. *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, is told from the perspective of Kathy, a clone created from the original. You could say that the story is told from the perspective of a kind of 'daughter' in search of her 'mother'.

Also in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro employs the geographical movement of the cloned characters as a narrative technique to underscore that such movement is closely paired with their tragic fates. Over the course of the novel, Kathy, Tommy, Ruth and the other clones each make key moves that act as turning points, disrupting their equilibrium and initiating new tragic phases that show one-way steps toward death.

The first major move occurs when Kathy, Tommy and Ruth leave Hailsham, where they are safe as long as they stay there, to live in the Cottages. The children of the novel, clones brought up in a remote boarding school, are unaware that they are destined to be organ donors, but they gradually come to realize the truth. At a certain age the children leave the boarding school for the first time in their life and move to other institutions called the Cottages, the White Mansion or Poplar Farm. From there, one after another, they are called upon to donate their organs, with the exception of one of the carers, Kathy H., who is given a reprieve from donating for a while, and who looks after the other donors. After all, moving away from the boarding school leads to sacrifice, i.e., the donation of organs, so if there were no move, there would be no sacrifice.

Next comes another small move: Kathy and Tommy's visit to Madame and Miss Emily in Littlehampton. This geographical move brings them face to face with the truth of their existence, revealing the sacrifices and limitations imposed on them. The visit itself does not have any particularly negative consequences, but its role in making them aware of the tragedy that awaits them is in keeping with the narrative structure of Ishiguro's works.

The third move is the relocation of donors to recovery centers. As the donors complete their donations, they are moved to recovery centers, signifying a geographical move toward the final stages of their lives. This transition embodies the negative outcome of their entire existence as they approach their 'completion', a euphemism for death. Each subsequent move for Tommy's donations further deteriorates his health, leading to his own 'completion'. In *Never Let Me Go*, these moves lead to the inevitable end that awaits these characters as the 'shadows' left behind by their originals.

As the story progresses, Kathy takes on the role of "carer" and travels long distances to care for the donors as they go through the

donation process. Kathy's visits to the recovery centers as she travels around the country are linked to the donors moving into these centers and moving closer to their 'completion'. Her constant movements then become mechanisms for bringing other clones closer to donation and death. Nothing, then, is more obviously linked to the death of the shadows of the originals than the geographical movements of Kathy.

In sum, the geographical movements of the characters in *Never Let Me Go* serve as powerful narrative devices that underscore the first central themes of loss and the acceptance of an inexorable fate on the part of the 'shadows'. These movements, which symbolize the shadowy, transient young lives of the clones until the inevitability of disappearance, play a central role in shaping the novel's first thematic parameter.

Here are some of my thoughts on Hailsham. There is a scene in *Never Let Me Go* where Kathy looks back on Hailsham with nostalgia:

There have been times over the years when I've tried to leave Hailsham behind, when I've told myself I shouldn't look back so much. But then there came a point when I just stopped resisting. (Ishiguro 2005, 4-5)

Kathy's reflections show a complex emotional attachment to Hailsham that goes beyond mere experience or memory. Speculatively, one may detect a faint echo of Hiroshima in the name Hailsham. Hiroshima is a place name that resonates with Ishiguro's hometown of Nagasaki. By depicting Ruth's search for her original, Ishiguro implies that Kathy also has her original. Given Ishiguro's use of this indirect allusion technique, and given Ishiguro's technique of using the names Keiko and Kathy to indirectly allude to his own Kazuo, which rhymes with them, one might cautiously suggest a phonetic echo between Hailsham and Hiroshima, and even as an indirect allusion from Hiroshima to Nagasaki. Thus Kathy, leaving Hailsham for her own destiny to fade away, is a mirror image of Ishiguro leaving Nagasaki. Both are destined to fade away. Ishiguro mourns his own lost past through imaginative fiction. Kathy's grief echoes Ishiguro's in the following interview:

*the Japan that existed in my head* might always have been an emotional construct put together by a child out of memory, imagination and speculation. And perhaps most significantly, I'd come to realise that with each year I grew older, *this Japan of mine* - this precious place I'd grown up with - *was getting fainter and fainter*. (Ishiguro 2017a, 13; italics added)

This theme of belonging to a place and lamenting the loss of that sense of belonging appears not only in *Never Let Me Go* but also in

other works by Ishiguro, and the fact that the same theme appears in such an intertextual way in other works suggests that this theme is not just the narrator's but the author's own. Kathy from *Never Let Me Go* embodies this grief for his vanishing young Japanese self, which he surely had in Nagasaki.

### 3.2 Second Parameter: Characters with a /k/ Sound at the Beginning of their Name Denying their Geographical Moves

The second parameter refers to the main characters with the sound /k/ at the beginning of their names who deny or try to deny geographical movement.

In both *A Pale View of Hills* and *Never Let Me Go*, there is a tragic protagonist whose name begins with a /k/ sound: Keiko and Kathy, and their tragedies are linked to some relocations of these characters away from their homeland or the place where they were born and raised.

In both novels, there is a relationship between the originals and their copies, with the younger copies (Keiko and Kathy) destined to be left behind and sacrificed for the benefit of the originals (Etsuko and Kathy's original). In *A Pale View of Hills*, Keiko's relationship to her mother, her original, is obvious. In *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, Kathy is interested in her own original, although this is only hinted at in the description of a woman who appears to be the original of her friend Ruth ("Ruth's possible", 138):

But she just kept walking, a dozen or so steps ahead, then went in through a door—into 'The Portway Studios' [...]. But now, in that gallery, the woman was too close, much closer than we'd ever really wanted. And the more we heard her and looked at her, the less she seemed like Ruth. (Ishiguro 2005, 159-61)

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ruth, Kathy and their friends follow a woman they believe to be Ruth's original into an art gallery called "The Portway Studios" (159). However, after observing the woman's conversation with the gallery owner and her appearance, Ruth begins to doubt whether she is her original or "possible" (138). The significance of this passage lies not in whether the woman is Ruth's original, but in its implication that Ruth - and, by extension, Kathy - has an original. It introduces the possibility of the existence of Kathy's original and her perspective on her original.

Whether the story is told from the perspective of the mother, Etsuko, or the clone, Kathy, it seems that Ishiguro's intention is to convey to the reader the theme of a disappearing young self of

pure Japanese, a memory-self formed in Japan, as a Japanese child. As time passes, the fading young Kazuo, or Ishiguro's pure young Japaneseness, is "completed" in *Never Let Me Go*. He will never "go to America", "become" a film star, or "work in supermarkets", as Miss Lucy's talk to the children about their impending fate shows (80), and just as Kathy somehow knows that "none of us could have babies" (72), Ishiguro as a pure Japanese boy too is suddenly denied his future at a certain point in his life. Kathy and Tommy visit Madame Marie-Claude, a co-founder of the school, who tells them that she remembers Kathy dancing and singing with a pillow pressed against her. This image of Kathy "with a pillow to stand in for a baby" (71) embodies the young Kazuo who, as a pure Japanese, has no hope for the future:

And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go. (Ishiguro 2005, 267)

Tommy, a close friend of Kathy's, also exhibits a sense of defiance against his predetermined fate. Takahiro Mimura's interpretation of Tommy's act of painting in 2018 is revealing. Mimura claims that Tommy's attitude of continuing to paint while awaiting his final sacrifice quietly conveys his belief that people should resist social oppression for as long as they live. In other words, through Tommy's obsession with painting, Mimura comes to see it as a "means of resistance against the system of power" (99). I want to locate this resistance within the author's grand design realized in *Never Let Me Go*, beyond his individual works. In *Never Let Me Go*, the /t/ sound in Tommy's name represents his explicit resistance to the fate of those represented by the /k/ sound in Kathy, Keiko, and the young Kazuo: all of whom are destined to fade away at a young age. Tommy appears to be resisting the fate presented by Kazuo Ishiguro, which is depicted as a chain of /k/ sounds linking his characters. Tommy's distinct form of resistance is evident in the fact that, whereas Ishiguro depicts his characters' fate through words, Tommy expresses his resistance to that fate through a different art form: painting.

Towards the end of the narrative, Kathy takes on the role of a "carer", a responsibility that requires her to travel around the country to look after donors. Her journeys often involve travelling considerable distances, such as her visit to a farm in Norfolk to look after a donor called Laura. Regardless of the distance traveled, each of Kathy's journeys highlights the poignant reality that young donors are losing their lives and gradually fading into oblivion. At the 97th meeting of the Modern English Circle on 15 March 2020, held at Kyoto University, Masanori Toyoda, Professor Emeritus at Kyoto University, commented on my talk on *Never Let Me Go*, advising

me to focus on the initial sound of Kathy's occupation, "carer". It is noteworthy that the term "carer" also begins with a voiceless velar plosive consonant /k-/, although it is not a character's personal name. Toyota's observation supports my argument that Ishiguro has created a deep connection between the initial sound /k/ and the mobility of individuals, emphasizing the thematic significance of the movement of the character who possesses the sound.

Does the idea of resisting one's fate to disappear mean for Ishiguro an obsession with his vanishing younger self? The existence of such an obsession seems to be confirmed by the alliterative association between some of the characters in his works and Kazuo as a pure Japanese boy.

It is partly true, as the extract from the Nobel lecture shows, that Ishiguro was concerned with "the Japan that existed in my head" (Ishiguro 2017a, 13). However, given the relationship between the original and its young copy, he seems to be interested in the relationship between his present self and the purely Japanese self in the past, that he was before he came to Britain. This commitment to his young self can be seen in the alliteration of the following sequence of names. In other words, the following three have the same functional position in his grand design, indicating their functionally equivalent relationship to each original (Kathy's original, Keiko's original, i.e., her mother Etsuko, and Ishiguro now):

Kathy —	Keiko —	Kazuo
/k-/	/k-/	/k-/

To this could be added Mariko's kitten (/k-/), which was described earlier as a small sacrifice. However, this kitten dies without growing up, so there is no adult cat to look back on this kitten from the future.

In Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), there is another instance of a character whose name begins with the sound /k-/, echoing Kazuo, and in which the change of place is negated. Miss Kenton (now married and known as Mrs. Benn), who once worked alongside Stevens in the same mansion, never leaves her new home, and Stevens, the butler, never leaves the mansion where they worked together (both instances of negated movement):

Miss Kenton  
/k-/

This suggests that Stevens, like Ishiguro who now lives in Britain, is at peace in the manor house where he works as a butler. Stevens' life is quiet, but without the shadow of his youth, for he is no longer in the

company of Miss Kenton, with whom he spent his youth, and has only memories of her. The direction of the narrator Stevens' gaze towards Miss Kenton mirrors that of Etsuko towards her daughter Keiko in *A Pale View of Hills*. Miss Kenton, who represents Stevens' younger days, alliterates the names Kathy, Keiko and Kazuo, and could be said to be a variant of an invariant called the 'young Kazuo'.

#### 4 Conclusion

By analyzing Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* using the principle of equivalence described above, this paper has revealed the author's deep fascination with his own diminishing Japaneseness. In order to substantiate a sustained preoccupation with his fate, I have drawn attention to two parameters. These are the negative geographical movements of the main characters and the /k-/ consonants that their names share, like alliteration. And since these two parameters are present not only in *Never Let Me Go*, but also intertextually in Ishiguro's other works, it can be inferred that they are responsible for the author's implication that the author wants to convey. What they suggest is that the main characters whose names alliterate with "Kazuo", Ishiguro's first name, appear in a context where geographical movement is seen as a source of lament, and that this may be what Ishiguro wanted to imply. In fact, what Ishiguro is implying is his lament for the fate of his young self that accompanies his move from Japan to Britain.

After the death of the Celtic boy in *The Buried Giant*, many wondered what Ishiguro's next novel would be like. I had predicted the existence of a protagonist whose name begins with the sound /k-/, and this long-awaited novel was published in 2021 under the title *Klara and the Sun*, as I had predicted. The narrative opens with a newly created AI doll uttering the phrase "When we were new" (Ishiguro 2021, 3). Klara, a humanoid and artificial friend for human children, serves as the narrator of the story. In this story, the young Kazuo no longer exists. He is reborn as an AI child.

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