

## KAZUO ISHIGURO'S NOVEL NEVER LET ME GO: INTERMEDIAL DYNAMIC BETWEEN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

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### **Abstract**

*The article aims at investigating the phenomenon of intermediality in 2005 novel Never Let Me Go by the British writer Kazuo Ishiguro, whose Japanese origin adds to the inherently laconic, Eastern aesthetics of his writing. Of particular importance is the notion of “literary cinematographicness”, defined as the use of cinematic techniques (or filmic modes) in narrative fiction, thus producing the effect of multimodality. Analyzing Ishiguro's novel, the article focuses on such elements of literary cinematographicness as the prevalent audio-visuality, the use of audio-visual special effects, different shots sizes and shifts in perspective, montage, frame shots, flashbacks, and flexible chronotope.*

**Keywords:** intermediality, literary cinematographicness, audio-visuality, montage, flashbacks, shot, Kazuo Ishiguro.

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### **1. Introduction**

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From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, modern science has shown a growing tendency towards studying interdisciplinary links and interactions of various forms of intellectual and creative activity, articulated in contemporary literary studies through the term *intermediality*, a notion that has become one of the peculiar features of modern art. In essence, the concept of *intermediality* implies the interaction of different “media”, that is, different channels of human communication, where one medium “thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another medium” (Brosch, 2005: 343). Therefore, different forms of art increasingly refer to each other, interacting both explicitly, through direct indications or allusions to the aesthetics and manifestations of another art form, or implicitly, by imitating the techniques of this art (Jensen, 2008: 1).

Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan was among the first theorists to define the notion of *intermediality*. Comparing different means of communication with forces that complement human beings, the researcher argued that “hybridizing or compounding of these agents offers an especially favorable opportunity to notice

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their structural components and properties” (McLuhan, 1994: 60). Except for the opportunities that intermediality provides in terms of artistic and expressive means for different works of art, McLuhan also emphasizes the inherent hybridity of human perception, its dynamic development with the advent of new technologies and, consequently, new media. In his book *The Gutenberg’s Galaxy* (1962), the scholar aptly notes that “if a new technology extends one or more of our senses outside us into the social world, then new ratios among all of our senses will occur in that particular culture” (McLuhan, 1969: 33), which, thus, creates new ways and manifestations of artistic reception, expanding human consciousness and perception in general.

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## ***2. Literary Cinematographicness as a Type of Intermediality***

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A vivid example of intermediality in literature is the phenomenon of literary *cinematographicness*, i.e., cinematic or filmic writing, which essentially involves and imitates a set of cinematic techniques and structural components in a narrative fiction. By means of combining “different sensory modalities of interaction” (Jensen, 2008: 1) and directing the reader’s imagination flow primarily towards the visual-dynamic mode, which is inherent to cinema, these narrative techniques motivate a hybrid, multimodal reconstruction of what is being described in the text. Most often, the cinematographicness of a literary text presupposes the integration of cinematic aesthetics, terminology, plot-constructing techniques, and special artistic effects, which evoke in the reader a subconscious feeling of watching a film. In other words, literary cinematographicness is an example of intermedial transcoding, that is, according to Mikhail Bakhtin (2010: 358), “the ability of a language to represent another language”, which in this case means the language of cinema as represented by means of a written word.

The researchers of intermediality often point to the common origin of both literature and cinema from the natural human thought processes, which essentially comprise a stream of visual images that spontaneously shift like frames in a film (this has led some scholars to identify the montage technique with the stream-of-consciousness technique). For instance, McLuhan (1969: 124) supports the idea by claiming that in the process of reading, the reader undertakes the role of the movie projector, that is, “moves the series of imprinted letters before him at a speed consistent with apprehending the motions of the author’s mind”. As stated by Gilles Deleuze, it is quite natural that literature responds to the emergence of cinema in the system of arts and increasingly imitates it, thus becoming “cinematic”. In his work *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1986; first published in 1983), Deleuze also theorizes about the inherently cinematic nature of human perception even before the advent of cinema, in particular, by analyzing the ideas of Henri Bergson on the natural cinematographicness of human thinking. Deleuze supplements this postulate with the idea that cinema itself can serve as a means of developing thoughts, and

therefore, the influence of human thinking on the formation of the artistic foundations of cinema is in many ways twofold.

Articulating the idea of visual and montage-like nature of human thinking, and that of literature as a form of human thought, it can be argued that literary cinematographicness is to some extent inherent in all works of literature. However, more and more scholars (G. Deleuze, H. M. Puchner, S. G. Kellman, F. Ivaldi, V. Fesenko, A. Pokulevska, N. Dotsenko, I. Martianova) differentiate the works with a comparatively high level of “cinematographicness”, where the authors seem to intentionally imitate the aesthetics and techniques of cinema, thus prompting the reader to unconsciously perceive these literary texts as if through the cinematographic lens. One can agree with Gérard Genette (1983: 73) that, “unlike the director of a movie, the novelist is not compelled to put his camera somewhere; he has no camera”, but nevertheless, modern writers increasingly “pretend to have one” by trying to imitate cinematic elements and techniques in their texts. Under the influence of cinema, there emerges a new kind of narrative fiction, with a more dynamic, montage-like shifts of scenes and a more “mobile” point of view. Aesthetic manipulations with visual images and sounds motivate further complication of the literary rendering of sensory images, while in turn, the technique of montage has considerably enhanced “the tendency of lacunar event display in a literary text and complicated its receptive program” (Martianova, 2017: 138). This transformation of the narrative fiction can be connected with the fact that “cinema, having changed the linguistic competence of the author and the reader, has influenced their pragmatics, introducing into their consciousness the cinematic frames of reality perception” (138). In other words, the artistic methods of cinema have become so ingrained in the minds of modern people that the writers may unintentionally (or purposefully) integrate them in their works, or the readers themselves, in their imagination, may reproduce what they read just as it occurs in cinema, that is, as the flow of cinematically edited visual images and montage-arranged scenes, separated in time and space. In this case, the reader’s perception of events in the text ultimately becomes “cinematic and sequential and pictorial” (McLuhan, 1969: 241).

Studying the use of cinematic techniques in literature, Christine Schwanecke (2015: 268) employs the term *filmic modes*, defining them as “literary forms of expression or discursive structures, which <...> trigger the actualization of the ‘filmic medium’ in a reader’s mind while s\he is actually reading and processing nothing but words”. Analyzing the techniques of cinema and possible ways of their transcoding in a literary text, Schwanecke offers three variables that characterize the filmic mode: *what* is imitated, *how* it is imitated, and *where* it appears in the text (275). The “what” variable is further subdivided into filmic technologies and materiality (such as cameras, projectors, lights, film screens etc.), semiotic symbols (e.g., moving pictures, verbal language, sound, and music), conventionalized language of film (such as cuts, shots, close-ups, camera work etc.), and symbols that were established in post-production (like animation fade-ins/outs, montage, speed, voiceover etc.).

The “how” variable is exemplified by explicit and implicit references to the cinema, with the former being the film mentioned or reflected upon, as well as the use of cinematographic terminology, and the latter encompassing the means that “evoke, simulate or (partly) reproduce filmic elements in literature” (276). The means of implicit referencing and imitation of cinema might be recognized, for instance, in “short paratactic sentences and the quick alteration between the different semantic domains,” which textually “simulate rapid succession of filmic jump cuts” (277). And finally, the “where” variable, as per Schwanecke, presupposes all the levels of text where cinematic techniques may be integrated, such as all the language levels as well as formal and compositional levels (that is, in terms of structure, imagery, plot design, character representation etc.). When combined in the text, such techniques formulate a set of tacit instructions for the recipient, the so called ‘narrative contract’ (in Roland Barthes’s term), which prompts the readers to visualize the narrative on the basis of their literary, cinematic, and cultural background knowledge.

Therefore, analyzing numerous possibilities of intermedial recoding of cinema techniques into a literary text, researchers of literary cinematographicness often agree on the following features:

1) The emphasized audio-visual nature of a literary text, marked by the “drive towards cinematic reconstruction by visual segmentation” (McLuhan, 1969: 138). Thereby, the writers describe various aspects of a story primarily within the plane of their sensory perception, trying to give the writing the properties of the audio-visual series, thus directing the reader’s perception onto the visual code. In other words, the objective of such narrative is “telling for showing” (Kellman, 1987: 474), whereas the more inherent to literature permeability into the inner, psycho-emotional spheres, with direct verbalized indications of human thoughts and emotions, is rarely used. Examples of this are frequent detailed descriptions of the appearance or non-verbal language of the characters, which not simply state but also presuppose that the recipient will be able to imbue them with the necessary psychological and emotional meaning. Another means of audio-visibility in literature is rendering of the inner world through the outer one, where the writer conveys the emotional content through the descriptions of environmental phenomena endowed with a commonly accepted symbolic and metaphorical meaning (Coëgnarts and Kravanja, 2014). Among the examples of such elements are the descriptions of nature, landscapes, weather, streets, peculiar sounds (or silence), and music – that is, all the symbolic sensory images that metaphorically reflect the mental state of the characters in a film.

2) Along with the depiction of visual and auidial images per se, the cinematic narrative fiction frequently incorporates the so-called special audio-visual effects (concurrent with Schwanecke’s post-production symbols), the purpose of which is to further enhance the artistic, aesthetic, and emotional effect on the recipient. Such artistic techniques include visual effects like blurring of a picture or colors (fades), the contrast of light and darkness, the emphasis on a specific color/s, blurry

background, focusing on a specific person, object, or small detail, the panorama effect, etc. Among the aural special effects in a cinematic literary work, such phenomena as echo, contrast of silence and sound, background sounds, sudden sharp sounds, rhythm, as well as the special sounding of people's voices indicating their emotional state, are often endowed with additional layers of artistic and psychological meaning (R. Brosch, F. Ivaldi).

3) Another important manifestation of literary cinematographicness that often attracts the attention of literary critics is the use of different shot sizes and perspectives. Accordingly, in a filmic writing, the world is often composed in the clearly defined shots and perspectives, which can be traced in detailed depictions of characters' appearance or facial expressions (close-up), characters' place of interaction (wide shot), as well as detailed descriptions of landscapes or distant objects (extreme long shot), all of which are imbued with emotionally and culturally significant layers of meaning (Lotman, 1973). For instance, the writer might imitate the close-up technique by focusing on character's peculiar facial expressions or gestures, which points to their additional psycho-emotional or symbolic meaning that the reader is to interpret (Brosch, 2005: 10). When combined with other means of literary cinematographicness, these narrative techniques complicate and transform the whole receptive program of the reader into a more 'film-like' mode, making them visually reproduce and "scroll" the described events in their imagination exactly at the pace and size set by the author.

4) Literary cinematographicness can also be traced in the elliptical, fragmented narrative structure, with its artistic effect resembling the compositional techniques of montage and frame shots in cinema. Stephen Kellman (1987: 473) defines the method of montage in literature as an organized "sequence of narrative fragments", the order of which is dictated by a certain narrative and aesthetic idea. In turn, McLuhan (1969: 241) equates the effect of montage in literature to the stream-of-consciousness technique, describing it as a "means of the mental snapshot, of the sequence of the arrested and isolated moments of experience which anticipate the cinema". Furthermore, in a cinematic writing, everything that is not directly described in the text still exists "virtually", bearing the plot-semantic significance, what Deleuze (1986: 16) calls the "out-of-field" presence in cinema, which "refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present". Moreover, the montage approach in literature also manifests through special techniques of constructing its temporality, namely, with numerous elliptical transitions, sudden shifts of the chronotope, vivid time distortions, flashbacks, accelerated or slow-motion pace etc. Just like a film director, the author of a cinematic literary text deliberately edits and shuffles various scenes and timelines, speeds up or slows down the course of events so as to achieve the desired artistic effect and draw the reader's attention to what is most important at this point (Lotman, 1973).

### 3. *Literary Cinematographicness in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro is a contemporary British writer of Japanese descent. He was born in Nagasaki, in 1954, and when he was five years old, the family moved to Britain. Hence, as argued by many critics (particularly B. W. Shaffer, C. F. Wong, W. Sim) Ishiguro's works are examples of the postmodern literature characterized by hybridity, especially on multicultural, multi-genre, and intermedial levels. In particular, the multicultural aspect of his novels is based on a combination of Western ideas and genres with Eastern aesthetics, aimed at contemplation and in-depth symbolism of laconic sensory images.

Ishiguro's sixth novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005), which won him the Nobel Prize in 2017, is an example of a literary work incorporating intermedial narrative strategies to engage in a complex, multi-sensory interaction with the reader's consciousness and imagination. Foremost, this is accomplished by involving the wide range of cinematic effects and techniques, key among them being the principles of audio-visuality, different shots sizes, the montage technique, and flexible, non-linear chronotope. Like other works by Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* combines different cultural codes, evoking both Western and Eastern (particularly Japanese) literary traditions. Whereas the British heritage is largely presented at the content level, the Eastern aesthetics manifests itself through the symbolism of minimalist detail, the notion of "meaningful emptiness", and the concept of landscape as a verifier of human psychological state. In particular, such themes and problems of Western existentialism as the meaning of life, absurdity, freedom of choice, self-search, loneliness, and inevitability of death are intertwined with the postulates of certain Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism's ideas of illusory, transient world, psychological subjectivity, detachment from one's emotions, and acceptance of reality (Taketomi, 2018), as well as Confucian idea of fulfilling one's duty in society. Furthermore, as in Ishiguro's other novels, in *Never Let Me Go*, the author also demonstrates a deep interest in the peculiarities of human memory, where the narrative of the main character is marked by an attempt to find the answer to the unspoken question that unconsciously haunts them.

The protagonist of the novel *Never Let Me Go* is Kathy H., a 31-years-old female clone, who tells the story in the first-person narrative. At the beginning of the novel, she is preparing to end her career as a 'carer', i.e., a medical worker who takes care of other clones that have become organ donors. Soon Kathy is to become a donor herself, and after three or four 'donations', she will also 'complete', which is a euphemism for death. Probably, this knowledge inspires Kathy's nostalgic memoir story about her childhood in Hailsham, a boarding school for clones, about her friends Tommy and Ruth, and a fragmented overview of some events years after their graduation from school.

Thus, the events are presented from the clone's point of view; evidently, Kathy writes "a story of herself and others who might be like her" (Teo, 2014: 6), marking

a desperate attempt to engrave her past. Kathy's story, therefore, is aimed at those who would understand her experience, that is, other clones; for instance, her narrative often directly addresses a potential clone-reader: 1) "*I know carers, working now, who are just as good and don't get half the credit. If you're one of them, I can understand how you might get resentful*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 5) – in this passage, Kathy mentions certain carers who do not get as much credit for their work as she does, and in the second sentence, she directly addresses the reader ("*If you're one of them*"), presuming that they might be a carer as well; 2) "*I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 12) – here, Kathy addresses a clone reader who might have been raised in a boarding school that is different from Hailsham ("*I don't know how it was where you were*").

Furthermore, Kathy and other clone characters do not fully understand what some human characters are trying to convey about the injustice of the clones' position; however, these occasional remarks of truth are perfectly understood by the reader, as seen, for instance, in the following cases: 1) "*Something else she said I can't quite figure out. <...> She said we weren't being taught enough, something like that.*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 24) – in this quote, Tommy retells the words of the teacher, Miss Lucy, criticizing the school's approach to teaching clones, which he as a clone cannot comprehend; 2) "*We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all.*" <...> "*Why did you have to prove a thing like that, Miss Emily? Did someone think we didn't have souls?*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 191) – in this piece of dialogue, Miss Emily, the head guardian at Hailsham, explains that the paintings of the clones at school were to prove that they had souls, while Kathy, in response, sincerely wondered why anyone would doubt it at all.

Therefore, one of the main ideas of the novel is that the clones are not fully aware of the unjust conditions of their existence, taking such state of affairs for granted. Indeed, Kathy's tranquil narrative of her childhood and youth acts rather as a camouflage that contrasts sharply with the true, tragic story hidden behind the text. Literary critic Shamim Black (2009: 791) explains that "this positive vision of Kathy's generous impulse is undercut by many elements of her own story, which suggest the darker narrative that shadows the surface tale of her life as a caretaker". For a while, this calm and peaceful tone of the story lulls the suspicions of the reader, who only in the middle of the novel begins to realize a horrible truth that Kathy and other clones do not seem to recognize. Thus, as noted by Nataly Morzhenkova (2008: 33), the specificity of the narrative of Ishiguro's novel "is due to the contrast between the touching humanity of the images of clone people and the terrible inhumanity of their novel destiny", which is recognized by the emphatic reader. The novel never speaks directly about how clone students perceive their lives as carers and donors. Even if they subconsciously feel the inequality of their position, they never verbalize it and accordingly, do nothing to avoid such an unjust fate, repeating only that it is

“right” and “what they are supposed to do”. When discussing their plans for the future, the clones try on different professions or imagine where they would like to travel, but never take it seriously, knowing they are not destined to do so. Even Kathy’s nostalgic memories do not appear as a real act of counteracting the status quo, but rather as a “symbolic clone of experience” that substitutes the dystopia of her real life (Black, 2009: 799). The only hints of the unspoken and not fully realized feelings of the characters are small details and scenes that do not describe but rather demonstrate their emotions visually and audibly. This technique is the first manifestation of the cinematic nature of Ishiguro’s novel *Never Let Me Go*.

Some researchers, like Brian Shaffer and Cynthia Wong, have repeatedly pointed to the peculiar “stinginess” of emotion in Ishiguro’s texts; and yet, the author makes some simple, seemingly insignificant details and situations emotionally meaningful due to the hidden psychological content that empathetic readers can reconstruct. Employing the method of psychological parallelism to show the characters’ feelings without naming them directly, Ishiguro develops the poetics of imagery with an in-depth semantics of various audio-visual images and effects, which is reminiscent of the Japanese haiku poetry. Using this principle in the novel *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro constructs its plot primarily with simple scenes of characters’ interaction, laconic dialogues, descriptions of non-verbal language, and photographic detailing of images of nature or the environment, comprising its prevalent visibility approach. In addition, his depictions of the characters in the novel often lack the descriptions of their appearances, which the author, apparently, does not consider important or decisive for revealing their personalities. However, much attention is paid to the external manifestations of characters’ feelings and personality traits through their actions, gestures, posture, facial expressions, sounding of their voices, etc.

Overall, in *Never Let Me Go*, the ways of communicating the inner, psycho-emotional phenomena through the external, sensory ones can be subdivided into three categories: 1) depictions of the non-verbal language of characters (equated with the close-up technique); 2) symbolic images of nature or environment that traditionally bear certain emotional connotation across generations and cultures; and 3) scenes-situations that can be interpreted as manifestations of certain unspoken emotions or internal conflicts in characters.

A vivid example of the first approach is the scene of Tommy’s reaction to the fact that he was not included in the football team:

*...all the different expressions that went across Tommy’s face: the bright eager one at the start; the puzzled concern when four picks had gone by and he still hadn’t been chosen; the hurt and panic as it began to dawn on him what was really going on. <...> Then he began to scream and shout, a nonsensical jumble of swear words and insults. <...> He was just raving, flinging his limbs about, at the sky, at the wind, at the nearest fence post. (Ishiguro, 2017: 9-10)*



This scene, through the scrupulous detail in depicting the dynamic variety of the character's facial expressions, gestures, and reactions, shows Tommy as an emotional and sensitive boy, who is prone to emotional outbursts. Such focus on the non-verbal language of the character is analogous to the close-up and medium shot sizes in cinema. Further examples of this approach are the passages that describe Ruth as a strong-willed and self-confident person, with a clear tendency to control others: 1) "*Ruth led the way through them very purposefully, always a pace or two in front*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 37) – this quote describes the character's manner of walking, whereby she takes the leadership position 'in front' and 'purposefully' leads others; 2) "*Ruth looked up at me and I saw something like triumph flash across her face. You see it in films sometimes, when one person's pointing a gun at another person, and the one with the gun's making the other one do all kinds of things. <....> Well, that was how suddenly Ruth was looking at me*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 169) – this passage describes the manner in which Ruth looks – with 'something like triumph flash across her face', which Kathy compares to 'pointing a gun at another person' in a film, forcing others to do what she says.

One more peculiar way of depicting the characters' emotional states in Ishiguro's novel is the frequent use of 'like'-similes, through which Kathy constantly interprets the feelings and thoughts of other people, as, for instance, in the following remarks: "*he'd quietly shrug, or react like he hadn't noticed a thing*" (Ishiguro, 2017: 18); "*Then she'd stand there, eyes closed, a frown on her face like she was trying to puzzle out the answer*" (34); "*It was like she was too ashamed of the matter*" (48); "*She's looking back in a friendly, not too sexy way, like she might be flirting just a tiny bit*" (52). In this way, the protagonist makes assumptions about the emotions and thoughts of other characters based on their facial expressions and gestures, thus taking a position similar to a spectator in a movie, who can guess the feelings of the characters only through their bodily manifestations.

A similar recurring technique of the audio-visual rendering of characters' emotions in the novel is the constant emphasis on peculiar facial expressions, manner of speaking, or intonation of the characters during their dialogues, as showcased by further examples: "*she said calmly*" (46); "*Tommy thought about this, then said only half jokingly*" (56); "*said with a dead straight face*" (64); "*said it in a throwaway manner*" (76); "*he said sheepishly*" (100); "*she said this almost sarcastically*" (118); "*Rodney said quietly, with a tremor of excitement*" (118); "*Chrissie said, perhaps a little too eagerly*" (119); "*he said with a grin*" (128); "*Ruth said in a mock whisper*" (143). That is, the abundance of such remarks in the novel urges the reader to constantly picture those non-verbal cues from the characters, much like in cinema, and subsequently interpret their meaning as based on one's emotional intelligence and social experience of the same.

Notably, although the whole story is told from Kathy's first-person perspective, even her own feelings are described through their external manifestations, which indicates

the contemplative and alienated nature of her self-narrative: “I said, quite sternly” (11); “I’d said it in a jokey tone, and Tommy responded with a little snigger” (39); “A big mystery,” I said, then gave her a smile to show her I wasn’t trying to be nasty to her” (49); “I think I turned away so I didn’t have to look at her” (69); “I said it dead straight, with a bit of weariness” (113); “I said this gently, without a hint of sarcasm” (158). As evidenced by the above examples, instead of directly naming her emotions, which would be more natural for a first-person literary narrative, Kathy primarily describes her nonverbal language and intonation, much like with other characters. This, on the one hand, demonstrates a kind of dissociation of the protagonist from her own emotions, hence alluding to the Zen-like, Japanese worldview; and on the other hand – again, this positions the reader’s imagination within the audio-visual plane, making the novel cinematic in effect.

The second approach to convey the psycho-emotional meaning in *Never Let Me Go* is through the culturally and socially established meanings embedded in sensory images, particularly landscapes. In such instances, the narrative in the novel imitates the effects of background and panorama in a film, also known as wide and long shots. Examples of these are such visual metaphors as: “a dark fringe of trees ... it was like they cast a shadow over the whole of Hailsham” (39), “watching through the misted-up windows” (92), “the dark winding lanes” (109), “empty countryside” (162), “flat fields of nothing and the huge grey skies” (210), which indicate the feelings of anxiety, confusion, and hopelessness of the characters. As the novel progresses, such metaphors of gloom and confusion become more and more frequent, gradually displacing the pleasantly nostalgic memories of the protagonist’s childhood and youth. In particular, such shift in the novel is marked by comparing the changes in the characters’ lives to the advent of night: “I’ve got an impression of things changing rapidly around then, like day moving into night” (59). Furthermore, what pervades Ishiguro’s novels is a landscape covered with mist, one of the common motifs of Japanese art, symbolizing the vagueness, uncertainty, and the illusory nature of the visible world. Besides, it acts as a metaphoric veil that covers the memories of the past, which the characters strive to uncover; in cinematic terminology, this is represented by special visual effects like blurring, fades, and black-and-white picture. For instance: “a misty field” (7), “there was **fog** and **drizzle** that day” (46), “we stood there together staring at the **fog** and rain” (47), “stared at the **blank fog** on the other side” (206), “the sound of the traffic somewhere beyond the **fog**” (206). Such landscape sketches in the novel also imply a Buddhist notion of the “meaningful emptiness”, with the main idea lying not in what is shown, but in what is missing, which is a principal narrative strategy in Ishiguro’s writings.

Illustrative with regards to the third approach, i.e., scenes-situations that tell much more than is actually described in the text, is the episode where Kathy, as a child, melancholically dances to the song titled “Never Let Me Go”, hugging a pillow and imagining that it is her baby (Ishiguro, 2017: 55-56). This seemingly simple and rather common scene of a playing child can be considered really emotional and even

tragic in the context of the story told, since the clones cannot have children and normal human life as such.

Another example of the strong psychological significance of the described situation is the scene at the end of the novel, where Tommy asks Kathy to stop the car, and running out of it, screams and swears in the middle of the field at night (Ishiguro, 2017: 200-201). This relatively short episode can be seen as a psychological climax of the novel, whereby without explaining the reasons for this action, the author simply demonstrates the profound emotional pain of the character, who finally realizes that he is deprived of a chance to have a normal human life with his loved one. With regards to this scene, and the novel in general, the researchers often point out the idea that instead of pitying the clones for their tragic fate, we, humans, need to understand that our own approach to death, suffering, and limitations in life might not be that different. As literary critic John Harrison notes, the novel is “about why we don’t explode, why we don’t just wake up one day and go sobbing and crying down the street, kicking everything to pieces out of the raw, infuriating, completely personal sense of our lives never having been what they could have been” (quote in Black, 2009: 792). As such, this “underlying tension and sense of existential angst that pervades the story” (Yeung, 2017: 4) might be considered as the “secret message” of Ishiguro’s novel to its reader.

The final landscape scene in the novel is that of Norfolk, Britain, though some scholars compare it to the post-war Nagasaki, symbolizing the ecological ruin and doom both for separate individuals and humanity in general (Kato, 2021). This vividly described wasteland, a “lost corner”, is no less illustrative of the novel’s audio-visual approach:

*...all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled. It was like the debris you get on a sea-shore: the wind must have carried some of it for miles and miles before finally coming up against these trees and these two lines of wire. Up in the branches of the trees, too, I could see, flapping about, torn plastic sheeting and bits of old carrier bags. That was the only time, as I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields <...> and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn’t sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be. (Ishiguro, 2017: 211)*

In the given fragment, the images of rubbish also symbolize the attitude of people who perceive clones only as waste materials. Furthermore, the picture probably symbolizes the realization of this truth by Kathy herself, as well as her despair over the loss of her friends and her own irrevocable doom. However, again, she does not express her feelings directly, depicting instead the external manifestations of these unspoken emotions (*‘though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn’t sobbing or out of control’*). Thereby, like in a moving picture with shifting frame shots, perspectives, and angles, the reader imagines a scene where a woman looks at a

deserted landscape (wide and long shot), restraining her tears (close-up), then turns around, gets in the car, and leaves (medium and full shot). At the same time, behind this visibly simple scene, the emphatic reader will comprehend the whole tragic story of the clones and the true feelings of the protagonist. Furthermore, the final sentence also indicates the protagonist's ultimate acceptance of her fate and her duty, i.e., the Eastern philosophies' approach, while simultaneously igniting the reader's resolve to rebel against such injustice, which is Western in essence.

The use of montage technique and non-linear, flexible chronotope peculiar to *Never Let Me Go* may serve as another trace of literary cinematographicness in Ishiguro's novel. In particular, the defining feature of the narrative structure here is the technique of flashbacks and even "flashbacks within flashbacks", with the main timeline being continuously interrupted by Kathy's memories of her childhood at Hailsham and the subsequent years up to the present moment, where she captures her story.

As Morzhenkova (2008: 33) observes, "the artistic reality of the work is constructed around the conflict between the inner chronotope of the narrator and the outer chronotope of the world". Indeed, the reality described in the novel exists only in Kathy's memories (exemplified by lexemes of the semantic field of memory), which are also intermittent, blurry, and unreliable, as Kathy herself constantly emphasizes by using vocabulary that expresses uncertainty and doubt: "*the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his*" (7); "*or maybe I'm remembering it wrong*" (8); "*things became a fog*" (34); "*I only have the one vague memory of Ruth from that early part of our lives*" (36). This also implies psychological subjectivity of the narrative, prompting the reader to constantly question the protagonist's words.

With regards to the narrative flow, the scenes in the novel often replace each other as based on the principle of associations, when the memories of the past suddenly interrupt the events of the present, as shown in the following scene:

*Not long ago I was driving through an empty stretch of Worcestershire and saw one [pavilion] beside a cricket ground so like ours at Hailsham I actually turned the car and went back for a second look.*

*We loved our sports pavilion, maybe because it reminded us of those sweet little cottages people always had in picture books when we were young. I can remember us back in the Juniors, pleading with guardians to hold the next lesson in the pavilion instead of the usual room. (Ishiguro, 2017: 7)*

Here, in the first sentence, we can observe how Kathy's noticing a random sports pavilion during her drive ('saw one beside a cricket ground') makes her remember the similar pavilion at Hailsham ('like ours at Hailsham'). Thereby, her narrative suddenly shifts to the memories about the mentioned pavilion ('We loved our sports

*pavilion*'), thus beginning the story of her childhood. The montage-like nature of this fragment consists in a sudden change of the spatio-temporal coordinates, caused by certain associations that evoke a memory in the protagonist. For the reader, this means an immediate and complete replacement of the "frame" in their inner movie, automatically redecorating the new *mise-en-scène* with necessary details and images.

In other cases, Kathy's memories tend to mingle, spontaneously shifting into one another; for instance, when the distant memories are suddenly replaced by the more recent ones, and vice versa. This can be clearly seen in the further example passage:

*...how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at "creating."*

*Ruth and I often found ourselves remembering these things a few years ago, when I was caring for her down at the recovery centre in Dover. (Ishiguro, 2017: 14)*

Here, the more distant memory about Hailsham ('*how you were regarded at Hailsham*') is interrupted by the rather recent one ('*remembering these things a few years ago*'), when Kathy and Ruth were already grown-ups, hence showcasing the multilevel chronotope in the novel.

As shown in the above examples, much like in films, there are no explicit cause-effect relations between the two "frames", that is, any definitive explanations that would mark the connection between the shifting scenes. Rather, the readers are supposed to construct the missing narrative themselves, as well as deduce all the logical and temporal connections between the two disconnected scenes. Notably, the fragmented discourse in Ishiguro's novels employs this "gap strategy" not only for the separate scenes or even chapters, but also for the novel as the whole, whereby "what does not appear – what lurks on the fringes of the narrative – is often the most important specter in the story" (Black, 2009: 803) that is to be reconstructed by the recipient, comprising its absent but no less important "out-of-field" presence.

As a result, Ishiguro's novel largely appears as a kaleidoscope of separated scenes and frames, where the reader's task is to reconstruct the necessary spatio-temporal relations and see the whole, true story behind them, which likens his work to the art of cinema.

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#### **4. Conclusions**

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Overall, Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* is an example of the postmodern fiction, which by actively interacting with the recipient's consciousness, employs the principle of intermediality, that is, incorporates the aesthetics and techniques of other art forms. In addition, due to the writer's Japanese descent, the novel is considered

an exemplar of multicultural literature, combining Western and Eastern components, such as the genre of the novel with Eastern contemplative poetics, and existentialist ideas of absurdity and free will with Buddhist and Confucian notions of accepting one's fate.

The phenomenon of intermediality in Ishiguro's work mainly consists in applying a range of cinematic techniques, thus making it a sample of the so-called cinematic or filmic literature, characterized by the audio-visual approach, the priority of simple descriptive scenes and dialogues, frequent depictions of characters' non-verbal language rather than directly indicating their emotions, different shot sizes, montage-like fragmented narrative, and flexible, non-linear chronotope. In combination, these techniques motivate a hybrid perception of such writing, imitating the effect of watching a film while reading due to the multimodal reproduction in the reader's imagination.

The audio-visual nature of Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* is represented by prioritizing the external manifestations of the characters' psychological states, that is, by revealing their emotions and temperaments through the descriptions of their facial expressions, gestures, or peculiar meaningful actions, often reminiscent of the close-up technique in cinema. Moreover, the author employs visual and audial images-symbols that are traditionally interpreted as expressions of certain emotions and psychological states: these are recurring metaphors of fog, darkness, night, and rain, which reflect the confusion and despair of the characters. Besides, the novel's audio-visual approach is embodied at the level of certain scenes-situations that, being concise and descriptive in form, appear significantly emotional and meaningful in their content, which only an emphatic reader can fully interpret based on their social experience.

In addition, literary cinematographicness of Ishiguro's novel is exemplified by its fragmented narrative, reminiscent of the montage technique, whereby scenes with different space-time coordinates suddenly shift and intertwine with little to no descriptive links to mark this change. Sometimes, it is based on the principle of associative connections, which largely resembles the stream-of-consciousness technique, often equated with montage by literary scholars. Another essential feature of Ishiguro's novel is its pronounced "gap strategy", namely, the whole dimension of the story that is not directly described in the novel, but is implied and easily reconstructed by recipient. Therefore, the involvement of the reader's own receptive mechanisms and background knowledge becomes particularly important, foremost, to understand all the causal and spatio-temporal connections between the various disconnected scenes in the novel, as well as towards the full reconstruction of its unspoken, true message.

Consequently, the use of the mentioned cinematic techniques in *Never Let Me Go* makes the writing more dynamic, multidimensional, and closer to the recipient due

to actively interacting with their consciousness, allowing them to fill in the skeleton of the text with their own images and emotions. This approach enables the author to tell much more than described in the text, utilizing the reader's ability to decode simple sensory images and fragmented scenes into a complete, multilayered story.

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