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READING KAZUO ISHIGURO AS AN INTERNATIONAL AUTHOR

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis explores the internationally recognized novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, author of *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*, to mention the most acclaimed books. The start of his career and his initial novels deal with Japan and England, two of his homelands. Ishiguro is originally from Japan, but his family moved to England when he was five. The primary purpose of the thesis is to describe Ishiguro's path from being a “local English/Japanese writer” to becoming a cosmopolitan one. To make this journey understandable, I will briefly describe his novels from the previous century. A deeper analysis is dedicated to his three novels from the 21st century, *Never Let Me Go*, *The Buried Giant* and *Klara and the Sun*, and a short story 'A Village After Dark'. The utmost highlight of any writer's career is earning a significant award. Therefore, the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Ishiguro in 2017 is very important to his “internationality” and this thesis. I will detail the major themes in his stories to emphasize Ishiguro's ability to write for an international audience. Dissecting those themes will outline his intentional avoidance of cultural topics to focus on transcultural ideas, meaning his tendency to rely on themes of basic humanity. Furthermore, exploring different genres is of great concern to this thesis. Those diversions from Ishiguro's original historical realism have allowed him to create unforgettable stories transcending national borders.

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I. Introduction

In the contemporary age of ours, an author does not only need to consider what topic they want to focus on but also the reality of monetary gain. To some extent, publishers and authors prefer to make books as commercially viable as possible. It does not necessarily interfere with the quality nor with the integrity of the book. For this very reason, some authors choose to write their novels devoid of local culture, of ideas and concepts familiar only to a specific, regional group of people. One may find a couple of internationally recognized authors that have taken the path of local writing about regional culture. Being tied by localism perhaps leads to more authentic results. An international author's style can offset their lack of regional connection. As Rebecca L. Walkowitz, an English professor dealing with cosmopolitan style and internationalism in literature, argues: “(an English writer) may have been born outside Great Britain” (Walkowitz, 2006, p.1). This is undoubtedly the case for the author described in this thesis.

I shall attempt to explore an internationally recognized author of Japanese and English origin, Kazuo Ishiguro. He became internationally recognized even before the turn of millennia, but the event that raised him to the status of a “great international author” was the Nobel Prize Award of 2017. It put him in the spotlight and elevated him as an author. The award came during the era of Ishiguro's newer style of writing that came after the “glory days” of his first three novels: *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, and *Remains of the Day*. Those first three novels used stereotypes of Japan and England to create national archetypes.

The following book, *The Unconsoled*, takes Ishiguro's style of inner psychology to the next level. *When We Were Orphans*, his fifth book, returns to the lineage of stereotypes and the historical setting of the first three books. These two did not receive the same critical acknowledgment as his previous efforts. *The Unconsoled* is perhaps Ishiguro's most idiosyncratic novel, possibly being a creative experiment gone too far.

All the books mentioned above take place around the time of the Second World War, either in the era between the World Wars, after the Second World War, or even both (as retrospective and recollection of memories are frequent tools that Ishiguro uses in his stories). The books also partially deal with the consequences of the war on regular people. His newest novels, *Klara and the Sun*, *The Buried Giant*, and *Never Let Me Go*, in addition

to the short story 'A Village After Dark', are the main focus of this thesis. They are used to compare his older style of historical realism set in stereotype-based real places to his newer novels that use sci-fi and fantasy style while being set in more vague places that are still underlined by stereotypes and collective general knowledge of the real world.

Kazuo Ishiguro is an international author not only due to his writing style and global reach. We may trace his internationality to his personal growth. Ishiguro's family comes from Nagasaki. They moved to the United Kingdom when he was only five years old, in 1960; back then, they thought it to be temporary. Wai-chew Sim, an English professor at the University of Singapore who mainly deals with South-Asian literature, states: "His family settled in the town of Guildford, southern England, where he grew up attending British schools but speaking Japanese at home with his parents" (Sim, 2010, p. 6). Here we can see early snippets of his internationalism. He finished school in 1973, then went to work and travel for a while. Later, in 1978, he earned a Bachelor of Art at the University of Kent. After his studies, Ishiguro published his first novel, *A Pale View of the Hills*.

The four main works of fiction by Kazuo Ishiguro used in this thesis for analysis are 'A Village After Dark' (a short story from 2001), *Never Let Me Go* (a sci-fi novel from 2005), *The Buried Giant* (a fantasy novel from 2015), and *Klara and the Sun* (another sci-fi novel from 2021).

"A Village After Dark" is the oldest work with apparent elements of the fantasy or fairytale genre. However, it does not violate conventions of realism as it is without fantastical or magical elements. It is narrated by Fletcher, who returns after a long time to a village, where he meets people he knew or those who knew him for his (mostly bad) reputation. We slowly discover that many people perceive Fletcher as a majestic and inspiring person from an unspecified group of travelling young men (preachers, cult). Nevertheless, we never learn the purpose of this mendicant group. However, we find out that Fletcher (and presumably the others too) was a questionable, even terrible person, manipulating others just for his amusement, benefit, or as a boost to his ego. Even at the story's end, he never comes to reckon with his past actions.

Never Let Me Go is the first novel of Ishiguro's current style of writing, bearing elements of sci-fi style while still staying primarily realistic. It occurs in an alternate past England where people create synthetic, artificial human clones for organ harvesting. The

book revolves around three characters from Hailsham School. Kathy is the protagonist and narrator of the story, who tells of her friendship with Tommy and Ruth. The clones live their lives for the sole purpose of giving up their vital organs for their original human. Before they are harvested, they may work as carers for other clones undergoing operations and recoveries. Though retrospectively, the book is segmented into three chapters that follow Kath's life. The novel grapples with what it means to live with the knowledge of one's mortality, the fact that Kath, Ruth, Tommy, and every friend they had in Hailsham, will be harvested for organs, become “complete” and die young. This first implementation of the sci-fi genre is a practical example of Ishiguro’s newer style of the 21st century.

The Buried Giant is the first Ishiguro’s book to embrace a fantasy setting. It stands out in many ways from his other works. However, it stays true to his style: revealing important plot and world-building information slowly through character observation rather than through direct exposition. The story revolves around an old couple who set out from their village to see their son. They involve themselves with other characters, who slowly reveal the truth behind this mysterious world of forgetfulness. Once the reader becomes familiar enough with the world, they realise that it is a spin on the Arthurian legends, which becomes more apparent at the end of the novel. This book stands out from the others because there is more than just one protagonist. The old couple, Axl and Biatrice, are followed by the omniscient narrator. They set the mood and show us the basics of the world. The protagonists of the story switch to a Saxon boy Edwin and a Saxon warrior Wistan, then to the Arthurian knight Sir Gawain, who guides us through the latter parts of the book. This book may be the author’s bleakest and most depressing one yet. It also nicely underlines the gradual tendency which *Never Let Me Go* has introduced to Ishiguro’s writing: the location can be semi-realistic, even being set in real locations and historical settings, but the main themes are shifting more towards broad concepts of humanity and even more profoundly dealing with memory, here on a nation-wide level.

Klara and the Sun, Ishiguro's newest novel, was released in February 2021. It follows sci-fi elements introduced in *Never Let Me Go*. The protagonist of this novel is a robotic person, an AF (short for Artificial Friend). The story became quite prolific as it resembled our reality, mainly during the COVID-19 epidemic, when children were studying at home under lockdown. In the story, Klara is purchased to become an AF to a fourteen-year-old girl named Josie to be her companion as she, like most other children,

studies at home with online tutors. Later, Klara discovers that Josie is chronically ill, like her late older sister. As a sharp contrast to Ishiguro's other novels, *Klara and the Sun* has a happy ending, though Klara remains oblivious to the actual conditions that make up the world around her. This novel may be viewed as a culmination of Ishiguro's style shift in the 21st century and his continuous exploration of the reality of human existence. Those themes define his whole career, yet they were partially obscured by themes of nationality in his earlier novels.

Using those books mentioned above and ideas, I will dissect Kazuo Ishiguro's strategy for becoming an international author. A strategy that has made him one of Britain's greatest non-Anglo authors, a strategy that has ultimately won him the Nobel Prize. His mixed origin and focus on partially realistic settings in his early career compared to his later novels with semi-artificial settings have brought him to the world's stage. During Ishiguro's early career in the 80s and 90s, he was viewed through the lens of his nationality and grouped with other post-colonial writers. Only later on did he earn his rightful place on the international scene. Nowadays, it is inevitable that Kazuo Ishiguro is a cosmopolitan phenomenon. I would argue that his approach to writing has never truly changed, only how he has been perceived.

II. Local starts, global reach

To clearly dissect an author's path towards becoming an internationally respected author, one needs to understand the initial phase of the author's writing, the humble beginning upon which they built their more famous, better-received work, which certainly applies to Kazuo Ishiguro, particularly to his books released before *Never Let Me Go*. Those books follow a distinguishable pattern I would like to explore in this segment.

The initial books grounded in real locations and set around the Second World War (also dealing with its consequences) can be grouped. They connect as his initial style before the turn of the century (apart from *When We Were Orphans*, a bit of a hinge text, released in the year 2000). We can see many similarities and a connective style connected to Ishiguro's implementation of location and cultural specifics (or the lack thereof). To elaborate upon this idea of commonality among Ishiguro's books from the 20th century, including *When We Were Orphans*, one may reasonably see the usage of real-world events and historical settings as a link between the different stories.

The first two books, *A Pale View of the Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*, are highly connected to Japan and high-stakes historical events, mainly the Second World War and the Suez Crisis. The protagonists are both Japanese, dealing with their complicated past, one of the most prevalent aspects of Ishiguro's books. Even though those were Ishiguro's first two books, he somewhat logically used the fact that he is Japanese as an excellent setting for his protagonists, who are the main focus of those stories. Due to Ishiguro's origin (being born in Japan) and his initial two novels, "Ishiguro's work has been taken up in comparative literature, in Asian diasporic literature, and in the field of US multiculturalism. It has been linked to East Asian cultural analysis conceived in broad terms" (Sim, 2010, p. 138). This setting choice may have attracted Ishiguro more attention than he would have otherwise deserved. As I will argue later, even in the case of these initial novels, he wrote with an international audience in mind.

In the next trio of books, *The Remains of the Day*, *The Unconsoled*, and *When We Were Orphans*, one may find a connecting factor, though they are less similar than the initial duo. *The Remains of the Day* received the highest critical acclaim, arguably the best

book of Ishiguro's career. Only I think the 2021 publication of *Klara and the Sun* rivals *Remains of the Day*, and I will try to explain what *Klara and the Sun* means for Ishiguro's current writing style and how it functions as a marvellous conclusion to his experiments in style, *The Remains of the Day* does much the same for his Twentieth Century style or as Sim argues, "In his first three novels, Ishiguro explores human limitation or finitude as an attendant factor in the development of reactionary political stances: the three books feature protagonists whose illiberal attitudes are challenged by widespread social change" (Sim, 2010, p. 22). This book serves as a masterclass work, the product of his Englishness, an almost fairy-tail-like depiction of the glorious times of a "white gentleman's England" with rotten foundations. With such an impactful work, Ishiguro came to be compared to British authors such as Timothy Mo and Salman Rushdie. These three authors (as well as others), "... brought new, non-Anglo voices to the mainstream literary discussion" (Sim, 2010, p. 124). One can turn to the author's origin to underline the connection among Ishiguro's first five novels. He was born in Japan but moved to England at the age of five. His internationality is reflected in the novels, "...bicultural affiliation and migrant self-fashioning issues have a substantial place in Ishiguro's work" (Sim, 2010, p. 124).

The Unconsoled is considered to be Ishiguro's least appreciated work. It elaborates on the psychological aspects that appeared in the first three novels. However, it deviates from the established theme of using a realistic setting (even if reimagined and not truly reflective of reality). The novel occurs in an unspecified, possibly European city in the Twentieth century. It is commonly compared to the works of Prague German Franz Kafka, "In its use of teutonic character names, its lack of geographical references, and its recurrent depiction of unconsummated action and curtailed agency, *The Unconsoled* echoes the disturbing allegorical worlds of Kafka's *Trial* and *The Castle*" (Sim, 2010, p. 55). This novel certainly deserves more attention than it received, at least from literary critics. For the argument of internationality, it serves as an attempt at an utterly cosmopolitan book, devoid of any regional elements. Sam argues, "... it also plays with our customary notion of time and space. The city described could be home and everywhere, local as well as foreign" (Sam, 2010, pp. 140-141). Furthermore, the novel moves further in Ishiguro's style of not using real places, or at least not their accurate reflections such as imaginary cities, villages, and lordship's houses. "This novel doesn't specify the language, there are 'no translation problems' and 'no maps, street plans, or calendars'" (Sim, 2010, p. 141).

This underlines the author's path towards a “full international writing style”, lacking any regionalism that might be troubling for a foreign audience.

The last book released before the first book of Ishiguro's more recent writing, meaning in the Twenty-First century, those novels I want to focus on thoroughly, is *When We Were Orphans*. It is similar to the novels that came before it, though it also deviates. It still has got the first-person narrator who uses retrospect to explore their complicated past. Ishiguro continues his style of complex, not always trustworthy, main characters. H. Machinal, a French literature professor focusing on English novels, states: “Christopher Banks demonstrates a combination of conviction, uncertainty, and unreliability as he seeks to understand his world, himself, and his past” (Groes & Matthews, 2009, p. 79). Another connection to Ishiguro's previous style, the connective element of *When We Were Orphans* and *The Remains of The Day* is that they both possess narrators obsessed with the idea of professionalism. They also both reflect on their past life and the dark reality of their choices in their chosen profession: Bank on the efficacy of being a detective, Stevens on blindly serving Lord Darlington as he collaborated with Nazis. This novel is also standing out due to its “genre” (though Ishiguro himself does not like to use genres to describe his books), it is a detective story somewhat comparable to Sherlock Holmes, but he elaborates on the narrative form and uses yet another unreliable protagonist and narrator, perhaps even more unreliable than Stevens. Another lens one may use to see the novel is a post-colonial one, “...it rewrites a canonic text in order to highlight the colonial spoils underpinning the social mobility enjoyed by the chief protagonist. By implication, it also stresses the neocolonial arrangement of the current world system” (Sim, 2010, pp.130-131).

Understanding the broader themes and writing styles of the books mentioned above is crucial to dissecting the peculiar notion of what it means to be an international writer. The globe-spanning setting of Ishiguro's novels, the intentional use of language which avoids regionalisms and English-specific phrases, and the focus on a profound psychological reckoning are the main factors that elevated Ishiguro towards becoming a cosmopolitan writer. To create a realistic setting and characters, Ishiguro uses general knowledge of the audience to his advantage, “...generalisations are audible in Ishiguro's novels as the echoes of nationalism and cultural stereotype. Ishiguro shows how cultural stereotypes work by presenting his novels as national allegories, allowing the characteristic

of his texts to stand for the characteristics of the cultures they seem to describe” (Walkowitz, 2006, 112).

To summarise and emphasise, Ishiguro started as a regional, non-Anglo British author, noticed for his masterful writing style and appealing depiction of almost believable but not entirely realistic settings. His first two books played on the stereotypes of Japan, *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*, play on stereotypes of Englishness. The first depicted a stiff-upper-lipped butler, while the other focused more on the colonial relations in the British Empire and on its hinges of influence. *The Unconsoled* is a cosmopolitan novel that does not concern itself with having a specific setting, “Reyder's behaviour brings across to readers the 'urgency of worldly (cosmopolitan) responsibility'. ... the novel is so abstract and so unconnected to any 'national or historical context' ” (Sim, 2010, pp.141-142).

To conclude Ishiguro's writing style before the novel *Never Let Me Go*, I would state that he mastered the style of realism in an ambiguous setting. His writing style moved on, exploring new ideas and frontiers of genres. Later, in the Twenty-first century, he moved towards fantasy and sci-fi settings, though still staying true to the psychologically complex style that made him so well known.

III. Change of style

In the previous chapter, I dissected Ishiguro's rise from a great British non-Anglo author who was thought to be very promising, mainly being understood as a version of a post-colonial author. As the millennia turned, one may see a noticeable shift in settings and how the international audience and critics perceive him.

On the note of setting and partly genre change, I would like to use the short story 'A Village After Dark' and the novel *Never Let Me Go* to emphasise how Ishiguro moved toward experimental genres. Those two stories represent his future choice of setting and genre. 'A Village After Dark' has elements of fantasy that were more embraced in the novel *The Buried Giant*, and successful sci-fi elements of *Never Let Me Go* were once again used in *Klara and the Sun*. Those genre divisions help distinguish books. However, the author himself may not prefer them: "I don't particularly like labels, and I don't like labels as a reader, and I don't like labels as a writer. When I'm writing, I try not to think of these labels at all" (The Agenda, 2015). The expectations going with a fantasy or sci-fi genre label are restricting, and they may lead to the readers being puzzled by the novel not being a traditional representation of their given genre.

'A Village After Dark'

Firstly, I want to focus on 'A Village After Dark', a short story published in *The New Yorker* in May 2001. Wai-chew Sim nicely states the significance of the short story: "...it hints at the direction in which Ishiguro's writing is headed" (Sim, 2010, p. 97). It follows a protagonist and first-person narrator, Fletcher, who is an enigmatic figure, following Ishiguro's style of an unreliable narrator, one who actively deceives themselves to keep the illusion of their grandiose past real. Fletcher arrives in a small village he does not remember ever being in, though we later find out he spent significant time there. He tries to make his way to find a house to stay in or a villager to talk to. A young lady approaches him just as he is about to knock on a seemingly random door and tells him she knows about him and his previous significance. He is flattered by the admission, mainly due to his egotistic need to be recognized as an impactful figure. Readers can see here the first hints at Fletcher's past, his involvement in an unspecified "lot", and the fact that he was part of a famous or infamous group. There are also hints at possible infighting within the group. However, I would personally interpret these hints as yet another nod to Fletcher's contentious personality: (talking about another figure from the "lot", Maggis) "You know, he wasn't one of the really important figures. You mustn't get carried away with such an idea" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.3). Fletcher is an egocentric person. He thinks that he made a difference and is no less significant than others of his kind.

During the previous exchange, Fletcher somewhat abruptly rejects her offer to come to her place, where he could give a talk to her and her friends. Instead, he knocks on that random door nearby in the dimly lit, narrow village street. A Peterson family reluctantly welcomes him and lets him in. The old man Peterson's first words show his distaste for Fletcher, "It's not Fletcher, is it?" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.3). Readers find out that Fletcher shares a history with this family and this village. His self-centeredness shows once again in his answers. From a meta-analysis viewpoint, this is also nicely visible because we are told that he replied to their question only from his first-person perspective and not in direct speech: "Voices came from behind me, inquiring if I was well, if I had come far, if I was hungry, and I replied as best I could, though I was aware that my answers were barely adequate" (Ishiguro, 2001, p. 3).

After a moment, Fletcher realises that he used to live in this cottage while he stayed in the village. The realisation comes quite late as he has already spent much time inside the cottage. He sees a corner that used to be his corner, the one he slept and read books during his time in the village. Once again, he rudely ignores their questions and tells them he will talk to them after getting some sleep. During his non-continuous sleep, Fletcher overheard a woman saying: "I don't know how I was ever under his spell. He looks such a ragamuffin now" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.4). This statement starts to make sense once the reader finds out that the woman used to love Fletcher, they used to make love together, and she devoted her life to him, but he cared not for her. She reminds him of their shared past and how he aged so poorly while she remained still reasonably beautiful. Fletcher claims in his defence that even if he was mistaken about some things, he still tries to make amends for those mistakes, even nowadays. This is yet another aspect that is typical of Ishiguro's stories. Some seemingly vital information is missing. We know not of Fletcher's "lot" or what they represented. Was it a religious group? Revolutionary left? We do not know the answer, but we do not need to. Fletcher also knows that he did some wrong, spreading ideas that he now understands as false, and tries to undo the damages caused by his actions. He does not admit that he may be a terrible person and that the whole "lot" was a horrible mistake. We may see similarities to the characters from Ishiguro's prior novels, such as Stevens from *The Remains of the Day*.

Once Fletcher starts to converse with the Peterson family, they are concerned that he may influence the village's young people just as he did years earlier. The group that Fletcher used to be part of is also known to have very different ideas from what they preached in the "old days": "They don't know themselves what they believe" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.7). Nevertheless, he is still a danger to the young people because: "... there's so little for them to believe in now" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.7). Fletcher did not hear the family say all those arguments mentioned. He just imagined they had to have such a conversation while he slept. This also shows his self-belief as a critical, influential, and irresistible force to young minds. He leaves the family and calls them "a pathetic bunch" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.7).

Miraculously, the young lady was still waiting for him, so Fletcher followed her, though he had difficulty keeping up with her. During this walk, he met a man he actually recognized from his past, Roger Button. Through their conversation, the readers learn that

Fletcher used to bully Roger when they were pre-teenagers, but Roger admired him regardless. Due to their conversation, Fletcher loses the young lady leading the way, and both men find themselves outside the village. Roger then leads Fletcher to a bus stop where he can catch a bus to transport him to the lady's cottage. Even though it is late into the night, Fletcher agrees. He is promised a compelling picture for his mind to pass on: "It'll be brightly lit up, and it's always full of cheerful people, laughing and joking and pointing out the window. Once you board it, you'll feel warm and comfortable, and the other passengers will chat with you, perhaps offer you things to eat or drink" (Ishiguro, 2001, p.11). This charade to make Fletcher leave is a fascinating yet anticlimactic conclusion. It undermined the readers' expectations, their want to find out what Fletcher did in the past or how it may resolve with the young people willing to listen to him.

What genre is the short story? Generally said, all the previous novels and stories of Ishiguro were realistic. This story follows the same style but contains strong hints of the fantasy or fairytale genre. The elements typical for fantasy novels, such as "the quest", frequently structure these stories, and quests that go wrong due to changing ideals can also pass into this category. Furthermore, the village and the villagers seem almost mediaeval, even if Ishiguro intentionally puts in modern elements like jeans and buses. The fantasy genre was fully embraced later in the novel *The Buried Giant*.

In conclusion, to the point of meta-analysis of the story, it represents, as mentioned above, a visible shift and a direction in which Ishiguro's stories were headed afterward. This also connects to the lack of a specific location. The general location is England, which is irrelevant for the short story, unlike in *The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*. The anywhere, England location makes it easier for non-English or non-British readers to approach the story. This approach to writing is visible in Ishiguro's previous stories, but I would argue that from here on out, he never uses exact locations in his writing. "The village in the story is equivalent to the global village..." (Sim, 2010, p.99).

Never Let Me Go

Secondly, to understand Ishiguro's move toward a more internationally oriented audience, I should examine *Never Let Me Go*, a book from 2005 and the first actual digestion from realism. The novel, as well as the film from 2010, is categorised as a sci-fi dystopia. During an interview for Film Independent to promote the film, Ishiguro mentioned that the main point of his novel was to tell a story of friendship and love, “particularly as they started to realise that time is short and that mortality was (was) a fact” (Film Independent, 2010). The dystopian sci-fi element was just an afterthought, “the last piece of the jigsaw” (Film Independent, 2010). This also correlates with Ishiguro's viewpoint on genres in general. As stated earlier, he does not prefer to use genres to restrict or categorise his writing. He only uses them as a “device to make the thing work” (Film Independent, 2010). The sci-fi aspect of the novel is that clones are common in the story's world. The main characters are clones created to be used as organ donors for their human of origin. The organ harvesting and the abuse of the clones are the hallmarks of the dystopian genre used in this story.

The characters and their relations are the main focus of *Never Let Me Go*. Kathy H. tells her life story retrospectively through memories of her shared past with Ruth and Tommy. They are cloned, artificial humans. Before being used for their vital organs, the clones may serve as carers for other “donating” clones. Regardless of being a carer or not, one day, usually before their 30s, the clones donate until they “complete”, meaning they cease to live. By the end of the first part, the readers know that the main characters will not live a long, fulfilling life. They will not be able to follow their dreams, such as becoming a film star, as some students in Hailsham dream of becoming. The theme of mortality is the novel's main point, understanding one's mortality and relations to friends, lovers, and the world around us. Liani Lochner, a university professor writing about political and ethical topics in literature, argues: “... Ishiguro's interest in universal humanist themes such as individual agency and fate, and the individual's social responsibility” (Groes & Lewis, 2011, p.226). This novel might seem to be the first of Ishiguro's creations to bring those philosophical topics up. However, if one looks deeper into Ishiguro's earlier work, they may see these themes in the solemn recollections of the main characters' past. An entreating connection between Ishiguro and existentialism does make for a thought-provoking study. As Matthew Beedham, a writer and a prevalent journalist,

pointed out: “the reviewers have called the novel 'an existential fable' and 'a parable about mortality' “(Beedham, 2010, p.139). Philosophical themes are much more prevalent in his newer style, and the exact points will be stated later. For now, we should concentrate on the fable/parable quality of *Never Let Me Go's* construction.

The main connecting feature of Ishiguro's books is present once again. The first-person narrator tells the plot retrospectively through memories, including their commentary on the past events. Again, the narration somewhat connects the idea of professionalism and personal devotion to a system. The clones work to help the system, and they take care of the other clones after harvests. Kathy even takes some pride in it, though this is also shifted because later on, she partially realizes how tragic the system is and how humans do not view the clones as real people. With this knowledge, it is much easier to understand the plot and the importance of the three main characters.

In the initial part, readers learn about the childhood years of the clones, called students, during their time at Hailsham. This sort of boarding school is unique, as the readers find out much later. It is an experiment to show that the clones are not just organ baskets; they have souls, they feel, and their lives have value. This project ultimately fails. Kathy and Ruth are good friends. Their friendship is an interesting contrast, as Kathy is a well-adjusted, quiet person while Ruth is temperamental and outspoken. Tommy sometimes throws a tantrum and is considered not creative, which is very important in Hailsham. It becomes apparent later that the art collected by the Madame was used to show evidence that the clones had souls. Madame is also terrified of the clones. She once saw Kathy dancing with a baby doll to the song “Never Let Me Go” by Jane Monheit, which made her cry. The guardians, something like teachers and parental figures at the school, are there to teach about the world and donations. The teaching is done on the surface level, as the students are not destined to live for long. One of the guardians lashed out in anger at the system. She told the students more about the reality of their existence than she was supposed to: that they exist only to be used for their organs and die. She left the facility after she had an exchange with Tommy when she had told him that he should, in fact, focus on art. It is also needed to mention sex and how it was perceived there. The clones were allowed to have sex and even encouraged to do so before they left the school. Nevertheless, it still fitted into the bigger picture of them not being perceived as humans. They also could not reproduce as they were sterilised.

In the novel's second part, the central trio moves to temporary housing called the Cottages. They try to adjust to living on their own. Ruth copies the veterans, the students who have lived in the Cottages the longest. There we learn about “possibles”, the people from whom the clone may have originated. Looking through porn magazines, Kath hopes to find her possible in them. Later, they went for a trip to Norfolk with two veterans, who may have seen Ruth’s possible. Amongst clones at the Cottages circulated a rumor that those clones who are deeply, properly in love may ask for more time together and start to donate a year or two later. Hailsham should be connected to this, but Tommy and Kath never heard about it. Only Ruth pretends to know something. Ruth hopes she has seen her possible, but she realizes it to be a foolish idea. Tommy admits to drawing again. His inability to draw at his earlier age changed. His drawing lets him connect Madame’s collection and the deferrals. Ruth and Kathy stay on bad terms for the rest of their time in the Cottages. Ruth even admits to keeping Tommy for herself. For those reasons, Kathy chooses to apply for carer training.

The final part takes place during Kathy’s career as a carer. She is told that Hailsham does not operate anymore. Due to Ruth’s terrible first donation that Kath learns about, she decides to become her carer, disregarding their complicated shared past. The trio visits an abandoned fishing boat near Tommy’s recovery centre. Ruth’s facade crumbles, and she admits regret for her past behavior. She tells Tommy and Kathy that they should be together and try to obtain a deferral. Ruth completes after her second donation. Kathy cares for Tommy after his third donation, which allows them to express their love freely. They want to spend more time together, so they pursue the rumor of deferrals and find Madame's house. Ruth gave them the address, which turned out to be accurate. Madame listens to them, but Miss Emily emerges from the next room and tells them that referrals are a myth. The whole exhibit was there to show the public that the clones have souls, but people did not care enough, and Hailsham had to be closed down. On the trip back, Tommy lashes out in his violent style from childhood, screaming like a maniac. After a while, Tommy dies with his next donation. The novel finishes with Kathy in a car driving to Norfolk. She daydreams about spending more time with Tommy there.

The novel pulls its weight when it comes to emotions and characters. They feel genuine, their relationships authentic, and therefore their fate even more cruel and tragic. Ishiguro used this as a device to reflect our predicament of living with the knowledge that

one day we will cease to live: “I just concertina-ed the time span through this device. A normal life span is between sixty to eighty-five years these people (in *Never Let Me Go*) artificially have that period shortened. But basically they face the same questions we all face” (Shaffer & Wong, 2008, p. 197). As a result, it is conclusive that Ishiguro completed his departure from culturally specific topics or those influenced by local settings.

Therefore, I dare not judge whether Ishiguro uses this global, “cultureless” style easily approachable for any reader in any country to make his novels more illustrious and profitable. As Tim Parks, a novelist and a writer for *The New York Review*, argues on the state of modern global writing: “there is a growing sense that for an author to be considered “great”, he or she must be an international rather than a national phenomenon” (Parks, 2010). I would personally argue in the defence of Ishiguro, as he is English, even if not initially, and he sometimes uses non-specific locations to avoid the need for accuracy. The complete departure from cultural aspects partly restricting his books has proven successful, as *Never Let Me Go* is considered one of, if not the best, of Ishiguro’s.

To sum up, Ishiguro started a shift after the turn of the century towards less culturally and locally relevant settings and even stories. His focus lays more on relations and dealing with one's past than on professionalism and being engulfed by one's occupation. Walkowitz nicely summarises his initial phase: “Committed to change but also to conflict, Ishiguro commits to treason: his floating worlds betray their narrators, and they everywhere betray “us” ” (Walkowitz, 2006, p. 130). Those elements are still present in Ishiguro's later fiction, but they seem to be moving more in the background. His subsequent two novels complete this shift toward globalism and cosmopolitan writing, which ultimately attracted the recognition and appreciation to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

IV. On the world's stage

This third and last chapter will delve into Kazuo Ishiguro's two latest novels, *The Buried Giant* and *Klara and the Sun*, which will be the main focus. I shall partly touch on his period between *Never Let Me Go* and his next novel, *The Buried Giant*, and, as a glorious climax of any author's career, the winning of the Nobel Prize for literature. After this award came the latest book (during the writing of this thesis), *Klara and the Sun*. To that end, I would also like to theorize about Ishiguro's possible future directions.

The Buried Giant

Firstly, it is necessary to comment on the fact that it was a decade between *Never Let Me Go* and *The Buried Giant*. We may see the first embers of the author's intensity dimming or a desire to shift focus onto other work. Ishiguro described this process himself in a video about *The Buried Giant*. As for why the next novel took so long, Ishiguro explained: "I blame my wife" (Knopf/doubleday, 2015). He stated that it was mainly due to his wife telling him that the early version of the book had been unusable. He then refocused on songwriting for Stacey Kent and released a collection of short stories, *Nocturnes*, in 2009. Its stories focus on musicians and how this career may affect one's life. This collection is inspired by the author's previous aspiration to be a songwriter, as he has entwined himself with music for his whole life. This pause period between novels was well worth it, as Ishiguro continued to grow as a stylist and experiment with settings.

Thus, it is no surprise that Ishiguro's seventh novel was as revolutionary as the previous one, if not even more so. The first significant diversion in style was the story's narrator. It is the first novel using an er-form, an omnipresent narrator that follows the main characters and tells the readers what the characters think and plan to do. This is undoubtedly the most noticeable departure from his other books. Another observable but not entirely shocking aspect is the full embrace of the fantasy genre and medieval historical settings. The story is set in Britain, in the words of the author himself: "Not England, Britain. It can't be England because the English hadn't arrived at this point" (Knopf/doubleday, 2015). This describes the time after the Romans left Britain (by the time of the early 5th century) and before the Anglo-Saxons fully settled Britain and established their kingdoms. There is a logical gap between those two events in which the rule of legendary King Arthur took place. On that note, the critics did not receive the novel's

setting well: “That the fifth and sixth centuries in Britain, as historical settings, continue to be perceived as uninteresting is seen in the negative reviews of Kazuo Ishiguro's recent novel *The Buried Giant* (2015), whose Arthurian subject seems to alienate its potential highbrow audience” (Brins, 2016, p. 45). Consequently, the novel uses the Arthurian legend to a great extent to enhance its themes, mainly the one of memory and remembering and whether it is best to remember or move on.

The novel follows five main characters, but there are two pairs, Axl with Beatrice and Wistan with Edwin. The last main character is Sir Gawain with his stallion Horace. Readers come across those characters throughout the story, but once the characters' lengthy and organic introduction finishes, the story's central conflict becomes apparent. The initial part follows an old Briton couple, Axl and Beatrice. In the beginning, the readers are introduced to Britain, the land of bogs and ogres. The landscape is barren and frequently lacks castles. Only a few settlements are sprouting up from the terrain. Readers are introduced to one of the main concepts and hooks, the mist that makes people forgetful. People forget important things; those one should never forget, like their children and their shared life with their partner. The couple lives as outsiders in their community. One night, Axl tells Beatrice they should embark on a journey to their son's village, even if they have trouble remembering him. On their long walk during heavy rain, they encounter a boatman who has trouble with an older woman slaughtering a rabbit in his home. The couple finds out that the lady was separated from her husband, who was taken across the river to an island by the boatman, but she was refused. The island is a metaphorical place, possibly. It is described as a place where one may live peacefully, but if they go alone, they may never meet another person there. Only couples deep in love may cross together. This element will be relevant by the end of the novel. Here is a classic example of foreshadowing being used, though not just to be there for future plot elements. It works as an emotional scene on its own. Beatrice is intrigued by it and wants to go there after they complete their visit.

Afterward, they leave the boatman and continue with their journey. They reach a Saxon village where Beatrice wants to visit a medicine lady due to her pain. There they meet the other two main characters, a young boy Edwin and the warrior Wistan. Edwin was kidnapped by ogres, according to the villagers. The mayor, a Briton named Ivor, invites the couple to stay in his home. There they discuss the ever-present mist. Ivor theorizes that God made it because he is ashamed of something the people did. During the

night, Edwin returns to the village, but his family rejects him as he is bitten by a creature that is thought of as an ogre. Master Wistan remembers Axl, but he does not know from where. Ivor asks the couple to take care of Edwin, as it would not be safe for him to stay in the village. Wistan joins them as he is on a similar path. They all go to a monastery, where Beatrice wants to see Father Jonus, who may help her with her pain. On their way there, the group encounters Briton soldiers guarding a bridge. Wistan reveals that he is on a mission by a Saxon king to gain insight into whether the Britons and Saxons live together in peace. He asks the couple to pretend that he is Edwin's mute and mentally challenged older brother. They manage to pass through. Afterward, they come across the last main character of the novel, Sir Gawain. He also seems to remember Axl from somewhere but does not admit it. Before they conclude, an old knight from the Briton soldiers interrupts them. He serves Lord Brennus, confronts Wistan, and challenges him to a duel. Sir Gawain is asked to help the old knight, but he refuses, and Wistan wins swiftly. During the burying of the old soldier, readers find out that Wistan's quest in this land is to slay the she-dragon Querig. Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur, says he is on his own quest to slay the beast and pleads for Wistan not to attempt slaying the beast. There we may also see heavy foreshadowing, as those two characters eventually clash over Querig.

Sir Gawain joins the group on their way to the monastery but does not stay there with them. The monastery itself is very suspicious. There seem to be devices used to torture people; even Father Jonus was tortured. Father Jonus helps Beatrice and also Edwin, whom Wistan tells that the monastery seems to be an old Saxon fort with traps, the chimney tower being the main one. During the night, they are awoken by Father Brian and told that soldiers are looking for Wistan, who fights in the chimney tower. The group leaves through a secret tunnel, into which they are shut and trapped by the monks. A monk notices Sir Gawain, so he awaits the group to protect them from a monster in the tunnel. Fortunately, they manage to beat it, but Edwin immediately runs back to the monastery.

Once they leave the monastery, Axl and Beatrice continue on their way to their son's village, and Sir Gawain goes his own way. The old couple convinces a merchant by the river to help them cross. While in barrels tied to the boat, they are attacked by pixies, who try to make Axl leave Beatrice behind. He fights them ferociously, not wanting to let anything happen to her. Later, they stumble upon a house with three little children, where they acquire a poisoned goat which they want to use to kill the she-dragon. The children

tell them that the mist will cease once the Querig is dead and people's memory shall return. Thanks to the narrative perspective, it is possible to follow more than just one set of characters. During those events of the old Briton couple, Edwin and Wiston meet again, Wiston injured but victorious. He wants to train Edwin to be a warrior. Edwin is also capable of tracking, especially tracking the she-dragon. Wistan tells Edwin that once they slay Querig, Edwin must remember to hate all the Britons, and he needs to kill them, even women and children. Edwin does not yet understand the reason, but he agrees to it.

The climax of the story is the conglomeration of the characters' paths. Axl and Beatrice meet Sir Gawain, heading up to Querig's lair. He reluctantly agrees to help them up with the goat. They tie it down to a giant's cairn, a monument that reflects the tremendous importance of the location. Sir Gawain admits to Axl that he remembers him. Axl agreed with the Saxons not to attack the home villages while Britons and Saxons were at war. King Arthur broke the treaty. Sir Gawain was part of the group sent to slaughter the Saxon women and children during the great battle. Axl was angry with King Arthur and left his court after realizing Arthur was responsible for the slaughter. Axl holds no grudges against Gawain; he only wants to remember his past with Beatrice. Wistan and Edwin approach, and Sir Gawain prepares to fight the Saxon warrior. Wistan wants to kill the she-dragon and proclaim the misdeeds of King Arthur. Sir Gawain opposes that, saying there was already enough slaughter to achieve this peace. They clash, Sir Gawain openly stating that his mission is to protect Querig. Her magical breath, forged by Merlin, makes people forget. Wiston kills Sir Gawain and slays the old, weak she-dragon. Wiston urges the old couple to leave the country quickly.

The last section shifts the narrator to the first person and follows a boatman who agrees to ferry Axl and Beatrice to the island from before. He enquires about them and discovers details about their past. Beatrice had an affair, which made Axl regretful. On the other hand, he refuses to take her to their son's grave. Beatrice sets on the boat to be ferried while Axl is to wait. Once the boatman embarks, Axl starts to walk away. There may be more interpretations as to why: he does not think they would be allowed to stay together there, he resents her for what she did, resents himself for his past actions, or he simply is not ready to die and cross the river Styx.

Hence, the novel's story is complex and deals with personal dilemmas and grand ideas and events forming nations. To analyse the first, glaringly obvious source material of

this story: the Arthurian legend is a genre mainly reserved for medieval texts about past glory. As Hetta Howes, Senior Lecturer in Medieval and Early Modern Literature, says: “Damsels in distress. Doomed and forbidden love. Epic battles and quests in pursuit of strange creatures. This is the world of Arthurian legend and, at the centre of it all, there is the ‘once and future king’ – Arthur himself, who, according to the stories, pulled a sword from a stone to become the greatest king that Britain has ever known” (Howes, 2018). It becomes quickly apparent that this is not the case for this novel. Ishiguro takes a king of legend and makes him into a morally questionable character with flawed ideals. His quest to defend Britons and cease the cycle of hatred is a noble one, but it leads to the slaughter of the innocent and brings a curse on the whole land. Was Arthur right to do so? Most likely not, but his decision is understandable and logical, at least from his perspective. In other terms, this concept follows the trend set by *Never Let Me Go*: philosophical concepts concerning the whole population. This concept of Plato's noble lie to create a functioning society and improve it is on par with the ideas of the other two of Ishiguro's novels from the Twenty-first century.

The internationally understood topic is the one of memory, remembering one's past, and whether some things are better left forgotten. Thanks to this element, the novel combines high philosophical topics on a national level with a personal and human need to deal with one's past, as we are familiar with in Ishiguro's older novels. This is yet another aspect of Ishiguro's writing that has made him an approachable author whose novels may be read by people around the world.

The Nobel Prize in Literature

Ishiguro might not have achieved tremendous critical acclaim after the release of *The Buried Giant* when Ishiguro was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. However, the Nobel Prize is an award for an author's life work, and it lifts the writer to celebrity status. The award is perceived to be the highest acclaim an author may receive. In 2017, Kazuo Ishiguro was awarded this honor and thus became one of the world's most notable authors. The announcement was presented by Professor Sara Danius, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy. The official “for what quote” given by the Academy is very much on point, describing the underlining theme for all his work: “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world” (Danius, 2017). In the following interview to the award announcement, Professor Danius gave an amusing yet oddly functional recipe to Ishiguro” If you mix Jane Austen and Franz Kafka, then you have Kazuo Ishiguro in a nutshell. But you have to add a little bit of Marcel Proust into the mix, and then you stir...” (Danius, 2017). The essential element working as a connective piece for all Ishiguro's writing was remarkably pointed out there, too:” ... he (Ishiguro) is exploring what you have to forget in order to survive in the first place, as an individual or as a society” (Danius, 2017). The last remark on society is definitely about *The Buried Giant*, as the novel is the first one working with the theme of forgetting on a higher-than-personal level.

In his Nobel Lecture, Ishiguro reflected upon his early years of writing and his detachment from his Japaneseness, which he ultimately chose to use for his first novel. His connection to writing and imagining worlds came from his need to imagine a place mystical yet personal and familiar to him, Japan. A significant comment is impactful for his modern writing, as he describes the following problem: “My first novel and my first TV screenplay were too similar, not in subject matter, but in method and style... But my wish now was to write fiction that could work properly only on the page. Why write a novel if it was going to offer more or less the same experience someone could get by turning on a television. How could written fiction hope to survive against the might of cinema and television if it didn't offer something unique, something the other forms couldn't” (Nobel Prize, 2017). To that, he found a way to move his writing further. His second novel played heavily with retrospective and stream of thought, logical for an individual, how one remembers and jumps in their memory from one event to another.

Furthermore, Ishiguro addressed his international appeal and writing style: “I have been careful not to assume, as I felt many of them (old English writers) did, that my readers were all English with native familiarity of English nuances and preoccupations... I wanted, like them (Rushdie, Naipaul; writing internationally, post-colonially), to write international fiction that could easily cross-culture and linguistic boundaries” (Nobel Prize, 2017). To achieve this stylistic cosmopolitanism, he used stereotypes easily familiar to anyone, even people outside of England who may have never even visited the country. Additionally, he mentions his will to explore themes of memory and if something is worth remembering.

In the Academy Class of 2017, Ishiguro directed his viewpoint on awards, his freedom from needing to chase recognition of judges, which would inevitably influence his writing choices. As the author himself puts it: “I feel it was a real blessing that I got the prizes out of the way, because I never expected to with the Nobel so by the time I won the Booker at the age of thirty-four I thought: well I have done the prizes, now I can just forget about the prizes” (Academy of Achievements, 2018). Furthermore, in the official Nobel Prize interview, Ishiguro answered the question of “What does the Nobel Prize mean to you” by saying that he thought it to be something for “great people... (and) older people” (Nobel Prize, 2019). He never believed that he might win it himself. Interestingly, Ishiguro states that he respects a prize only if he respects the institute giving it and the previously awarded people: “they (the prizes) are sometimes propaganda, they are sometimes promotional tools...” (Nobel Prize, 2019). Ishiguro deeply respects the Nobel Prize, as well as its past winners. The most impactful part of this interview for my arguments of Ishiguro's change of style from his novel before *Never Let Me Go* and those following ones, including this one, is his answer to the question of his recurring themes: memory, quilt, and illusion. He stated that early in his career, he had been interested in looking at individuals through the lens of the previously mentioned topics. But later on, “As I got older as a writer, I became interested in that same question, but applied to societies and nations” (Nobel Prize, 2019). It is very much true to his last three major books, all of them following the themes from his initial stories but lifted to a societal level.

Later, Ishiguro was appointed Knight Bachelor for services to literature, raising him to knighthood. From then on, being known as Sir Kazuo Ishiguro. This was not the only title Ishiguro obtained in 2018. By the Japanese ambassador to the UK, Ishiguro was “bestowed the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star..., in recognition of his

outstanding contribution to literature and the promotion of deeper mutual understanding between the UK and Japan” (The Embassy of Japan, 2018). As of now, those were his last given awards up to date, but I hope that I may confidently state there will most likely be more recognition in the future.

Klara and the Sun

Ishiguro's latest book was released on the 2nd of March, 2021. It would have been inconsequential if it had not been for the COVID-19 pandemic. The book contains concepts that could be seen as visionary and foretelling. This was not the author's original intention, though, as he mentions in an interview with *Fresh Air's* Terry Gross: "I finished the book before the pandemic..." (Gross, 2021). The aspect that may most resemble our world during the pandemic is homeschooling. Children do not attend regular schools, at least to the readers' knowledge. They are taught online by instructors, somewhat reminiscent of our recent experience, though in the story, a teacher presumably does not have more than one child during a class.

The innovative elements of *Klara and the Sun* invoke exploration of new avenues. As the author puts it, "In the novel, I'm talking about a society that is undergoing changes, and it doesn't quite know how to reorganize itself" (Gross, 2021). It deals with a society using genetic manipulation to improve children to be more intelligent, making non-altered children almost unable to compete. This is reminiscent of the moralistic problems on a societal level in his two other stories from the Twenty-first century.

The narrator is an "Artificial Friend" for teenagers and children to keep them company, an android with sophisticated skills, though still wholly considered to be only a machine by the public. Klara is one of the most extraordinary narrators Ishiguro has ever created. The prominent part of this character is her being a robot, a non-human entity. To this choice, Ishiguro said in an interview: "She's like a tabula rasa at the beginning, and she's quite childlike and very open. ... I wanted something of that childlike freshness and openness and naivety (Gross, 2021). The same as characters in the story struggle with understanding how to interact with "AFs", the readers may find it complicated to cope with her not being human. To that, Ishiguro reacts with a thought-provoking comment: "... characters in books are artificial... When we read books, and you get weepy over the fate of some character, we're not weeping over a real person" (Gross, 2021).

The story starts in a store where AFs are sold. There is Klara and her friend Rosa. There we learn that there are different versions of AFs, even newer models than Klara. B3 models do not want to interact with or stand next to lesser models. They also have a parallel to a parental figure, the Manager. She encourages them to do their best to be chosen. The AFs run on solar, so Klara, and maybe even other AFs, interprets the Sun as

an omnipresent, god-like entity. This theological and child-like aspect is worthy of further exploration.

On the aspect of childish naivety, Ishiguro was queried in an interview for *Waterstones*. There he let out an aspect of the story's origin that reflects this still-present element. He reused a children's story to fit more for the adult audience: "It was a world of small children's books... That story is more or less the kernel for *Klara and the Sun*" (Waterstones, 2021). This shows that Ishiguro is unafraid to explore new areas and styles. As he mentioned in the same interview on the topic of using different genres: "It is also kind of a ploy on my part because actually, I usually repeat myself quite a lot in my novels. Some novels are just kind of rewrites of the previous book because I wanted to revisit that same terrain and explore it a little bit more..." (Waterstones, 2021). To disguise this practice, Ishiguro uses different genres or settings, and the audience perceives it as a different concept. It then exists as a follow-up to *Never Let Me Go*.

Moreover, the aspect of childhood and being a parent is at the forefront of the novel. Klara becomes Josie's personal AF, chosen in agreement with her mother, Chrissy. Even during the final choice in the store, the readers may see Klara's other purpose. Chrissy wants her to become a replacement, continuation of Josie because she is terminally ill and usually has problems leaving her bed sometimes. This fact slowly dawns on readers, much like in other Ishiguro novels, though the fact is never a secret. The possibility of continuing Josie through Klara is contested among Chrissy and Paul, Josie's father and Chrissy's ex-husband. To this end, Chrissy uses a "portrait creator" Mr. Capaldi. He argues that human life and mind are nothing special and could easily be simulated and continued by artificial intelligence. The theme of humanity is similar to the thematic concerns of *Never Let Me Go*. The name instantly evokes recent star Lewis Capaldi and his song "Before You Go". This parallel once again underlines Ishiguro's musical background. In the end, Josie becomes miraculously well, and the "portrait" is discontinued. But how did she become well, and why was she sick in the first place?

Indeed, this question is an ever-present part of the story. It is never fully answered, but that is purposely left vague. The critical question is not what exact illness Josie suffers from, but what it may be caused by and how people around her react to it. Firstly, the reactions: Josie herself tries to move on with her life; she tries to live life to its fullest but has a childish plan with her best friend Rick to be together. A similar viewpoint is visible

in Josie's father, Paul, who just wants his daughter to have an everyday life and strongly disagrees with Chrissy. She does hope for her daughter to be better but is also prepared to use Klara to “continue Josie”, to replace her once Josie succumbs to the illness. Secondly, the cause of the illness: is presumably the result of genetic engineering done on children to improve them. It sometimes results in illness like Josie has and potentially leads to death, which is how Josie's older sister most likely died. These improvements are referred to as “being lifted”. (Josie’s friend Rick is referred to as “unlifted” and thus is healthier than Josie.

As a closing thought, the Ishiguro’s pays more attention to the settings, backgrounds, sideline plots, and periphery information, and mentions many strange aspects of the story's world, most likely an imaginary, near-future USA. That would qualify the book as a dystopian sci-fi novel, but the author does not embrace this categorization, as explained above. The novel would thus deserve a deeper analysis of its depiction of political and ethical issues. Those are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this essay. The same is true for the religious elements mixed with children's innocence represented in Klara. Her beliefs were ultimately unchanged, and she never discovered that the way she sees the world might be flawed and her actions inconsequential. Nonetheless, they allow Klara to stay on her righteous path and remain motivated and hopeful. I consider this to be the most outstanding choice of philosophical focus in Ishiguro's stories, even if the topic of memory and the need to remember or conversely forget is a close second for me.

Finally, I would like to explain the confusion arising from Ishiguro’s mixed origin and his initial books being set in locations connected to his homelands. This general confusion was identified by Tomo Hattori while addressing Ishiguro in terms of Asian-American literature: “Ishiguro is a baffling and enigmatic case of a writer who neither writes about his own ethnicity nor about ethnic theme” (Sim, 2010, p. 145). This would be logical from the viewpoint of the Twentieth century, as this comment was made in 1998, but with the current knowledge, I may confidently state that Ishiguro was never meant to be seen as Asian, nor as English. At the foremost, he is a humanist who deals in his works with the predicament of being human and general problems connected to our limitations. This would mean that Ishiguro was always an international writer, a cosmopolitan mastermind, avoiding cultural specificity to deliver a very human story to any person willing to peel the layers of his carefully constructed novels. His later novels

since *Never Let Me Go* have found increasingly inventive ways to avoid questions of regionalism and identity politics in order better focus on the philosophical questions concerning what it means to be human.

V. Conclusion

It takes a lot of hard, careful work and no small good fortune to be a Nobel Prize winner and an internationally acclaimed author. Potentially every author strives towards being awarded and well established as Kazuo Ishiguro. In the thesis, I analysed his life's work: from the books released in the previous century to the more careful and in-depth dissection of his newer book, mainly the short story "A Village After Dark" and novels *Never Let Me Go*, *The Buried Giant* and *Klara and the Sun*. In those stories, I attempted to outline the key elements that indicate the style of cosmopolitan writing.

Additionally, I used the analysis of his earlier novels to decipher how his style changed and what characteristics remained. To that end, I may conclude that his usage of actual locations connected to the Second World War was the connective tissue for his stories before, including the hinge text *When We Were Orphans*. This element did not carry over to his Twenty-first-century work. The topic of a significant, nation-changing event remains present. However, Ishiguro has managed to free himself from the restriction of our real world and started fabricating his alternative realities to explore complicated topics.

Undoubtedly, Ishiguro still uses his signature themes of memory, longing for the past, dealing with its passing, and how it might have gone differently. His use of unreliable narrators also remains, at least somewhat. In *Never Let Me Go*, Cathy H. intentionally feeds us information in smaller bits in retrospect from her memory. This still resembles the style of his previous books, mainly *The Remains of the Day*. In contrast, the following novel diverts from this style of intentional withdrawal by a person not only from the readers but also from themselves. *The Buried Giant* uses this theme of obstructed memory, not just for an individual. There is an ever-present mist obscuring the memory of everyone in the author's post-Arthurian medieval Britain. Lastly, *Klara and the Sun* replaces the unreliable narrator with a different, fresh notion of an uninformed and innocent narrator who remains optimistic and somewhat unaffected by the gruesome reality around her.

Consequently, to explore those new areas and shift from historical settings and realism, Ishiguro started to shape his novels into different genres, even if he does not like to use those labels, as mentioned above. *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* are categorized as dystopian sci-fi. These books use typical themes in sci-fi, like human

cloning in *Never Let Me Go* or genetic manipulation and human-like robots in *Klara and the Sun*. On the other hand, 'A Village After Dark' introduced mystical elements of fantasy that were more fully embraced in *The Buried Giant*. The alteration of Arthurian legend combined with a thrilling backdrop of the age between the Roman rule and the full settlement of Anglo-Saxons in Britain. Fans and critics alike were disappointed in this effort, as perhaps historical realism is a genre overused, and Ishiguro's version was underwhelming for many readers. Still, by experimenting with style, Ishiguro has caught the attention of a broader range of readers, thus making him even more of a cosmopolitan author.

To conclude, Kazuo Ishiguro is an international author of mixed Japanese and English origin. He does not focus in his writing on ethnicity or dilemmas of nationality, even though this kind of fiction gained him notoriety early in his career. He has used generally known national stereotypes to create shortcuts in drawing characters and to be able to focus more on his central themes of memory, humanity, and the limitations of human relationships. Readers enjoy his masterfulness at marshaling information, carefully outlining plots, and providing world-building details fed his readers in tiny portions. This technique made him into one of "the world's greats", therefore earning him the Nobel Prize for literature in 2017. Afterward, Sir Kazuo Ishiguro has remained a prolific writer who continues innovating his style and exploring new frontiers.

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Shrnutí

Kazuo Ishiguro je mezinárodně uznávaným spisovatelem a také tématem této práce. Je autorem knih jako *Soumrak dne* (*Remains of the Day*), *Neopouštěj mě* (*Never Let Me Go*) nebo *Klára a slunce* (*Klara and the Sun*). Ishiguro je původem z Japonska, ale jeho rodina se přestěhovala do Anglie, když mu bylo pět let. Tyto země měly velký dopad na jeho literární začátky. Hlavním záměrem práce je popsat cestu Ishiguro od jeho “lokálně anglických/japonských” spisovatelských počátků k přeměně na kosmopolitního autora. K pochopení této cesty stručně popisují jeho beletrii z minulého století. Hluběji rozebírám jeho tři knihy z 21. století, *Neopouštěj mě* (*Never Let Me Go*), *Pohřbený obr* (*The Buried Giant*) a *Klára a slunce* (*Klara and the Sun*) a povídku 'A Village After Dark' (nepřeloženo). Vrcholem kariéry jakéhokoli autora je získání významné ceny. Pro Ishigura tím bylo udělení Nobelovy ceny za literaturu roku 2017, což je podstatné pro jeho mezinárodnost. Pro zdůraznění Ishigurových schopností psát pro mezinárodní publikum se zaměřuji na hlavní témata jeho příběhů. Rozebírám je s cílem zdůraznit úmyslný odklon od kulturních specifík a naopak, soustředění se na mezikulturní myšlenky, jako například lidskost a vzpomínky. Dále je pro práci zásadní přechod Ishiguro do jiných knižních žánrů, tedy odchýlení se od historického realismu. To mu umožnilo vytvořit nezapomenutelné příběhy přesahující národní záležitosti.