Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature
An international peer-reviewed open-access journal [ISSN: 0975-8828]
Volume 13 – Number 2 – April 2022

Fragile Memory and Unreliable Narrator: A Narratological Perspective on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Syam Prasad Reddy Thirumalareddy
Research Scholar, Humanities Division, Department of Sciences & Humanities,
Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology & Research, (Deemed to be University),
Andhra Pradesh, India.

Sharada Allamneni
Professor, Humanities Division, Department of Sciences & Humanities,
Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology & Research, (Deemed to be University),
Andhra Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates into the notion of unreliability through a study of the homodiegetic narrator deployed by Kazuo Ishiguro in his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*. The first part of the paper presents an overview and contrasts some of the key theoretical formulations on the aspect of unreliability. Wayne. C. Booth's 1961 work on narrative elements intensifies the whole discourse on narratology. More recently however, some theorists like A. Nunning have objected to Booth's theory and refuted some of his key ideas on the aspect of unreliable narrator. By applying the idea of unreliability proposed by Booth's rhetorical model as well as A. Nunning's cognitive model, the second half of the paper will attempt at an analysis of Ishiguro's 2005 novel. Taking into cognizance different formulations on unreliability, the paper will explore the notion of unreliability and make an analysis of Ishiguro's narrative. The paper will focus on how the foregrounded language, at first instance evokes a sense of incredulity when it comes to the reliability of Kathy. H, the narrator. It prompts the reader to investigate further and plumb the depth of the narrative to discover the hidden meaning that was not at first, immediately evident.

KEYWORDS

Unreliable narrator; Memory; Homodiegetic; Narratology; Rhetoric; Cognitive analysis; Kazuo Ishiguro.

Introduction

Commenting on narrative authority in a work of fiction, Greta Olson in a 2003 article asks, "Why do we fail to trust some narrators, and why do the tales' other narrators tell strike us as incomplete?" (93). Kenan opines that, "A reliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth." On the other hand, "an unreliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and/ or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect" (103).

On the question of the reliability of a narrator, Wayne C. Booth's formulation is considered seminal. Booth's rhetorical

model, later critiqued by Ansgar Nunning. Nunning opines that the role of a reader is paramount in ascertaining the reliability of a narrator (56). He adopts a more cognitive approach, in laying equal emphasis on reader values and their recognition of the discrepancies between a narrator's perspective and the text's broader signals. Since then, there have been other critics who have postulated on the question of reliability in the world of literature.

By addressing some of these aspects, the paper explores Kazuo Ishiguro's dystopian novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), with a particular focus on the narrative element of the unreliable narrator. On the aspect of narrators, in a 1989 interview Ishiguro reveals that he was interested in "…the whole business about following somebody's thoughts around, as they try to trip themselves up or to hide from themselves" (Mason 347); a revelation that conveys to us the functionality of an unreliable narrator in his works.

Some Key Theories in Narratology

While appraising a work of fiction, it is evident from classical literary theory that a reader, is expected to willingly suspend his/her disbelief or awareness of a narrative's fictionality. Authors, commonly adopt different literary devices to create an interesting turn of plot or an intriguing character undergoing a unique experience or a conflict. One such device, adopted by writers whether of the classical or the modern era, is that of an unreliable narrator—a storyteller who presents a skewed or biased version of reality, withholds information, manipulates the narrative or misleads a reader. Such narrators cast doubt on the veracity of their own account.

In his 1961 seminal work, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C. Booth, offers a starting point for analysing narrators. He classifies narrators based on their reliability and intentionality. According to him, authors often use irony, as a means of creating distance between the views, actions, and voice of an unreliable narrator and those of 'the implied author', that there is a secret communion between the "postulated reader" and 'the implied author' (Booth I77). In other words, the reader and the implied author belong to an in-group, i.e., they share values, judgments, and meanings from which the unreliable narrator is ousted. When the readers discern an unreliable narrator, they note certain discrepancies between what the narrator says, (which they initially take at face value), and other information furnished by the text (158-159). When readers note that the narrator has violated the pragmatic principles or communicative norms of a text like relevance and succinctness, they try to fill the narrative gaps by reading against the grain. They perform the interpretive task because they expect the characters, they meet in the world of fiction to act like people in the outside world. Booth reminds that, "We react to all narrators as persons" (Booth 38).

In his 1978, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Seymour Chatman dwells on the concept of 'focalisation.' Focalization, according to him denotes the degree of mental access a reader can have to a character's thoughts or feelings, implying that a limited or unreliable focalisation creates the effect of an unreliable narrator. For instance, when a story is told entirely from the perspective of a character with a limited understanding of events, it creates a situation where the reader begins to question the veracity of the narrator's account.

Tamar Yacobi's model of readerly strategies discusses how readers reconcile textual inconsistencies. She puts forth five principles: 'genetic', 'generic', 'existential', 'functional', and 'perspectival' (1981). The readers tend to adopt the first four principles to naturalize any textual problem encountered by attributing it to

authorial intent, genre conventions, real-world knowledge, or the text's overall purpose. Yacobi avers that it is only when these strategies fail that readers consider the narrator as unreliable.

In his 1995 work *Unlocking the Text: Elements of Reader Response Criticism*, Ansgar Nunning critiques Booth's rhetorical model by highlighting the reader's role in interpreting a narrator's reliability. According to Nunning, Booth's model gives an undue importance to the obscure aspect of the "implied author." He explains unreliable narration: "…as a projection by the reader who attempts to resolve ambiguities and textual inconsistencies by attributing them to the narrator's unreliability" (Nunning 54). He proposes a cognitive model, and suggests that in engaging with a text, most readers rely on their pre-existing knowledge. They bring a wealth of knowledge about human behaviour and a highly developed capacity to make all sorts of inferences that are critical to understanding literature. When faced with cognitive dissonance, the readers begin to doubt the narrator's reliability and look for information gaps, inconsistencies in the logic and other textual cues and start to adjust their interpretations.

James Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin distinguish six types of unreliability, based on three key criteria: "the axes of facts/events, of values/ judgments, and knowledge/ perception" (2006 93-96). The types of unreliability are: 'misreporting', 'misreading', 'misevaluating', 'under reporting', 'under reading', and 'under regarding', which appear in different combinations in individual texts. Like Booth, Phelan argues from a rhetorical perspective. The emphasis is on "somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened" (Phelan 298). His focus is on how a narrative can influence a reader's understanding and values, and how the reader receives what he/she is being told. When someone tells someone else that something happened, the telling part becomes more compelling in terms of meaning-making than the happening part. It is not the story but the telling part that allows interpretive alternatives. Phelan suggests that a narrator, especially a first person, introspective narrator could unintentionally provide inaccurate information due to his/her limited knowledge or faulty memory, or due to a misperception of events or characters owing to his/her bias or limitation.

The above observations indicate how different interpretive strategies have evolved over time to throw light on the aspect of unreliable narration. It foregrounds how readers resolve textual signals when faced with an unreliable narrator in the course of reading a work of fiction.

'Memory' as a Central Theme

Ishiguro's narrative technique and stylistic choices have been a source of intense interest to contemporary scholars. His 2005 novel, *Never Let Me Go* is told from the perspective of Kathy H., a caretaker who works in the health care system of the late 1990s England. Recounted in the retrospective mode, as the narrative progresses, the readers become aware that the narrator, Kathy is a human clone, entrusted with the inhuman responsibility of taking care of other clones undergoing organ donation. By employing a homodiegetic narrator in Kathy, Ishiguro engages us with the novel's ethical dilemmas.

As a writer, Ishiguro is preoccupied with how one remembers one's past experience in response to one's present needs, also how one fulfils one's present desire by reconstructing past experience. In a 1989 interview, Ishiguro reveals his abiding interest in memory, "…things like memory, how one uses memory for one's own purposes, one's own ends, those interest

me more deeply" (Mason 14). Like his other novels, *Never Let Me Go* also dwells on the recurrent theme of 'memory'.

Ishiguro's adopts the first-person narrative, to represent how fragile human memory is and how unstable narrators can be, as they remember or reflect on their past. Ishiguro says, "What I'm interested in is not the actual fact that my characters have done things they later regret, I'm interested in how they come to terms with it" (Graver 33). In fact, the thematic focus of his works is not on the past remembered events but on the present process of remembering, or more specifically, how the present self, distorts the memory in the process of remembering the past events. Ishiguro says, "Memory is this terribly treacherous terrain, the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception" (Swift 23). What one remembers may or may not be accurate to a lived experience. The subjectivity of individual memory is affected by the variability of time and space.

The narrative then, becomes a representation; a "construction, based on a sequence of events in the past, that communicates something from the memory of the narrator" (Linde 2). It is a way, by which the self structures its memory. Memories of what is understood to be the same event change over time, as the person changes…" (Linde 2015). Birke avers that a narrative serves to stabilize one's identity. "Narrative allows us to forge meaningful links between past events and our present life, to define our present selves in relation to our past selves, and to assert a development" (Birke 3). An important thing to consider is that, both, narrative and memory are constructed.

Fashioning a persona out of one's undisguised self, however is never easy. In the novel, Kathy's reconstruction of her past involves repressing her inchoate desires, inappropriate longings and defensive embarrassments, all without complaining, through constant soul searching, self-justification, and all this carried out in a detached tone.

The Experiencing Self Vs. The Telling Self

Kathy H., the homodiegetic narrator of *Never Let Me* Go reflects back on her childhood, spent in an idyllic English boarding school called Hailsham. Instead of telling us about the successful students who have gone on to become celebrated achievers or prominent social figures, Kathy reveals the activities of her school alumni, many of whom are now 'carers' and 'donors.' It gradually dawns on the readers that Kathy at 31, does not have much time to live.

It becomes evident that as a clone, Kathy H., has a limited awareness of her own reality. Her naive perspective gradually reveals the tragic truth of her curtailed existence. The readers' attention is continuously drawn to her mental state, as she narrates her past, and her process of remembering: What was Kathy's experience like? What exactly was it? And where was it? Experience, again is a large territory. How was Kathy to enter it? From what angle? Towards what end? What does she want to remember? What does she want this remembrance to exemplify? These are some questions that the readers ponder over, as they appraise the text.

As a homodiegetic narrator, Kathy has composed her thoughts to recall the person she had once been. She imagines herself vividly to bring her past to life. She reminiscences on her younger years, how they had gossiped about their teachers and enjoyed music on Walkman. After leaving Hailsham, whilst staying at the cottages, she recalls how her adolescent friends were hormone-crazy, keen to experiment with sex, and strived to be cool. In that sense, they had all been typical teenagers.

At school, their guardians for all their professed concern had kept them in the dark about what awaited them in the world outside. Most students at Hailsham were

oblivious of any thoughts of the future. Only Kathy and her friends, Ruth and Tommy had the intellectual curiosity to ponder over the parameters of their future. Her efforts to recall with exactness how things had been between her and her friends who had completed –her open need to make sense of a strong but vexing relationship –prompts her to say much, but readers soon become aware of what she leaves unsaid, or what she could never bring herself to say. The gap between the enormity of what Kathy, Tom and Ruth have had to forfeit as donors and carers and the relative shallowness of Kathy's account of their day-to-day concerns gives her narrative a certain poignancy.

Kathy's narrative, it appears, is her way of coping with her miniature crises when she is faced with the tragic realisation of her pre-shortened life. She says,

> I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most; I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them" (Ishiguro 136).

Kathy spends her days pensively, looking backwards, recounting her memories of the friends that she lost. Her reflections are, thus, a struggle on her part to preserve the memory of her friends, Tommy and Ruth, both of whom have already 'completed'.

Narrating for Kathy is a means of making a larger sense of things. Her narration, however reveals that the present colours the past or that the past is always filtered through the present. Kathy clings to her memories, because they give meaning to her life.

> "It's like with my memories of Tommy and of Ruth. Once I'm able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away." (136).

Her narration, thus represents the intricate and interactive process between the present and the past.

In the context of an autobiographical narrative, F.K Stanzel says that it is the tension between two selves, the experiencing self and the narrating self that shapes the narrative reliability (212). Ishiguro avers that authenticity is closely associated with the representation of unreliable memory or how the present mental state of the narrator deforms the past events in the remembering process.

How Reliable is the Narrator?

Contrary to traditional notions of reliability, Ishiguro's use of the first-person method seems to suggest that introspection may not always yield to epistemically secure knowledge. The protagonist in the novel, Kathy is a clone. Her constrained upbringing in a boarding school, limits her perspective and skews her understanding of her life condition. Her frequent misinterpretations and emotional suppression tend to confuse the readers.

Having been raised in a controlled environment as a clone, Kathy and the other children are conditioned by their guardians at Hailsham to accept their future roles as donors without question. As she narrates her past, it becomes evident to the readers that she lacks critical insight into the true nature of her existence. She indulges in a make-believe in the nobility of her role as a carer and a prospective donor. When their guardians at Hailsham advise them on the importance of keeping physically robust and protecting their bodies from any injury or harm, Kathy naively says, "It had to do with knowing how to protect yourself. I'm sure you agree. Being able to protect yourself, knowing how to do it, is a good thing" (37).

Kathy has a highly selective memory and idealises her past, particularly her time at Hailsham. For instance, while describing their childhood art lessons, Kathy fondly remembers one of their guardians, Miss Lucy for encouraging them to express their feelings through art. However, she conveniently omits to mention her subsequent realization that their artwork was likely collected to assess their potential for 'completion'. Kathy's focus only on the positive details, agrees with Nunning's notion of how an unreliable narrator can manipulate a reader's perception through selective presentation of information.

Ruth is Kathy's closest childhood friend, with whom Kathy lives at Hailsham and later at the Cottages. Kathy becomes Ruth's carer when the latter begins her donations. At Hailsham, Ruth is outspoken and hot-tempered. She is a natural leader among her friends, often domineering and a foil to Kathy's quieter and more guarded personality. The two argue quite frequently. As a teenager, Ruth begins a longstanding romantic relationship with Tommy. This becomes an underlying source of tension in their friendship, as Kathy also harbours romantic feelings for Tommy.

Unlike Ruth, Kathy represses her feelings. She lacks openness, and seems reticent and guarded when it comes to admitting her real emotions. For instance, she never explicitly shares the depth of her true feelings for Tommy, though her love becomes increasingly evident as the narrative progresses. Even as she recalls her memories, she shows reticence, silence and indirection. It is evident that she is envious of Tommy and Ruth's developing intimacy. Unable to recognise her own feelings for Tommy or admit it openly, even to her own self, Kathy expresses her angst to Ruth, by walking away rather than explicitly confronting her.

Kathy is reluctant to confront painful truths about her origin and destiny. Her avoidance results in an incomplete and sometimes misleading portrayal of her inner world. Her account is mostly subjective. Several times, she confesses that she might be misremembering some details: "Or maybe I'm remembering it wrong. Maybe even then, when I saw Tommy rushing about that field, …, maybe I did feel a little stab of pain." (5). Many a time, her memory of a recalled incident or a particular conversation is at variance with that of Tommy and Ruth, who remember things differently to her. Kathy admits, "This was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong; but my memory of it is that my approaching Tommy that afternoon was part of a phase I was going through …" (7). Through such idiosyncrasies, Ishiguro probably wishes to convey the unreliability of memory itself, which is generally incomplete or mostly episodic.

As Kathy's understanding of her situation evolves through the novel, it leads her to moments of retrospective clarity which highlight her earlier misunderstandings.

> Thinking back now, I can see we were just at that age when we knew a few things about ourselves—about who we were, how we were different from our guardians, from the people outside—but hadn't yet understood what any of it meant (18).

This realisation and her gradual evolution create a narrative that is fragmented and filled with gaps. She reflects, "I've been thinking how none of us was prepared for this, and how it's not even like we've learned anything much" (106), which reveals her gradual awakening to the grim realities of their lives.

As a narrating self, Kathy is often unsure. Her uncertainty is evident from her account. She often idealizes her time at Hailsham, romanticizing her experiences and the relationships she had there. But even her recollections of Hailsham are

highly coloured and inaccurate as evident from her conversation with Tommy below:

> What do you mean?" I whispered back. "There's no pond. It's just a bit of countryside. "No, the pond's behind you." Tommy seemed surprisingly irritated. "You must be able to remember. If you're round the back with the pond behind you, and you're looking over towards the North Playing (119).

These bias skews her narrative, making it less about objective truth and more about her subjective memories. She remembers Hailsham as a peaceful and idyllic place with happy memories. Her friend, Ruth's memories, however paint a picture of a more restrictive and unsettling environment at Hailsham, suggesting that Kathy might be romanticizing her past.

Kathy's veracity is doubted because of her interpretations of people and situations appear to be biased, and indicate her lack of complete understanding of her circumstances. Despite the idyllic picture she paints of her childhood, at Hailsham, she exercised considerable restraint and self-consciousness in her interactions with people. She appears paranoid about being seen or overheard, especially in conversation with Tommy. In her recollections, she frames herself as a careful observer and often stands outside the action in her memories.

In narrating events, Kathy does not retain chronology. Quite frequently, she interrupts the narration of an event to switch over temporally to the sharing of another related memory from another period of her life. While caring for her friend Ruth at Dover, after she starts making her donations, Kathy shies away from the painful truth that Ruth must be in great physical pain. Instead, she dwells on banal details like: "I like my room at Dover. I think of it now as my first truly my room" (Ishiguro 45). In the course of her narration, whenever she is faced with the prospect of discussing uncomfortable truths about her existence, Kathy becomes evasive and conveniently switches the topic to discuss something less disturbing about her life: "But that's not really what I want to talk about just now. What I want to do now is get a few things down about Ruth, about how we met and became friends, about our early days together. Such discontinuity and shuffling of chronology tends to weaken the level of her credibility, as it delays the audience's realisation of the truth.

Kathy also withholds key pieces of information, choosing to reveal only what she finds necessary. For most of the time, her narrative glosses over the darker aspects of their existence, such as the true implications of being a donor. Instead, she is seen dwelling on the more mundane and sentimental memories from Hailsham. Kathy's decision to delay revealing the full extent of the students' fate at Hailsham until later in the novel keeps the reader in the dark. It, mirrors her own gradual realization of her grim reality.

These instances, reveal Kathy's act of narration "as a highly constructive and self-serving activity" (Birke 83). The constructed nature of such unreliable memory, however bears a resemblance to "the workings of 'real' memory" (83). In response to a reader's query in an interview to 'The Guardian,' Ishiguro explains:

> I just wrote my narrator's up in the way I felt authentic—the way I felt most people would go about telling a story about themselves. […] any of us, when asked to give an account of ourselves over any important period of our lives, would tend to be 'unreliable'. That's just human nature' (Ishiguro 2015).

Kathy's Unique Use of Language

Language is another thing that adds to Kathy's unreliability. Her language often tends to obfuscate rather than convey

meaning transparently. A prime example lies in Kathy's consistent use of the euphemism 'completion' to refer to the clones going for organ donation, culminating in death. Other words are, 'carer' and 'deferral.' Viewed through Wayne. C. Booth's lens of selection and evasion, we can say that Kathy chooses such sanitized terms to downplay the finality of death. Ansgar Nunning suggests that readers rely on pre-existing knowledge and expectations when interpreting a text. Here, the reader's awareness of death as a finality clashes with Kathy's sanitized term, creating a cognitive gap that raises questions about her perspective. The term 'completion' is devoid of the emotional weight of death, and it reflects Kathy's limited understanding of it or possible emotional detachment from the situation. All through, while reflecting on the past, Kathy appears more interested in recounting events rather than exploring their emotional impact. She adopts a calm, and almost a clinical tone. The readers at times, find it difficult to properly grasp the emotional weight of her experiences. She has an understated way of conveying emotions, "It had never occurred to me that our lives until then so closely interwoven, could unravel and separate over a thing like that" (63).

Such indirect approach adds layers of complexity to her character. When faced with the prospect of completion, Kathy recalls Tommy's words uttered in desperation, "I keep thinking about this river somewhere, with the water moving fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but in the end, it's just too much." (134). This indirect way or understated way of conveying things, prompts readers to read between the lines, and infer meaning from what Kathy leaves unsaid. Further fuelling readers' suspicion is Kathy's constant use of the word 'galleries' – supposed collections of artwork created by 'completed' clones. Despite their significance, Kathy offers little to no explanation of their purpose or how they function. This deliberate omission creates a sense of mystery and compels the reader to question the true nature of these galleries and their role in the clones' lives.

Through such examples of 'foregrounded language,' the novel presents a narrator whose limited perspective and potential emotional detachment casts a doubt on her reliability. This, in turn, as stated by Nunning fosters a dynamic reading experience where the reader actively seeks hidden truths within the narrative. Kathy's narration is like a puzzle, that prompts readers to piece together the fragments of information and reconcile them with their own understanding of the world.

If we were to apply Phelan's model to the novel, we could say that Kathy's narration demonstrates potential instances of all three unreliable functions identified by him. a) Misreporting: Her frequent use of 'completion' as a euphemism of death suggests a lack of her understanding of the true finality of the process. b) Misinterpreting: Her idealized memories of Hailsham, particularly regarding their guardian's encouragement for self-expression, might overlook the underlying purpose of their artwork (assessing their suitability for donation). c) Misevaluating: Kathy's focus on romantic relationship with Tommy as a path to deferring completion could be seen as a misjudgement of the reality of her situation within the system.

Kathy's Omissions and Misguided Perceptions

Kathy and her peers are raised in institutions like Hailsham, where they are conditioned to believe that their purpose is to be 'carers' and then donors to contribute to society's medical needs. Kathy initially misinterprets her role as a carer and

prospective donor, viewing it as a noble and meaningful contribution without fully comprehending the implication of organ donation and their shortened lifespans. She says, "The way I see it, being a carer is the most important job you can do" (Ishiguro 12). This statement reflects Kathy's personal perspective and belief about the importance of being a carer. It showcases her subjective interpretation of the events in her life, aligning with Booth's concept of unreliable narration based on personal biases. Her misinterpretation highlights the manipulation and indoctrination that suppresses the truth about the true purpose of people like her, who as clones are bred for organ harvesting.

Throughout the novel, Kathy suppresses her personal history and emotions, avoiding confrontations with painful truths about her origin and inevitable fate. Kathy's misinterpretation extends to her understanding of love and relationships. She suppresses her emotions for Tommy and Ruth, choosing to maintain a facade of normalcy and compliance rather than addressing her desires and feelings. The misinterpretation and suppression of truth have profound consequences for Kathy's identity, agency, and sense of self-worth.

The novel's climax forces Kathy to confront the truth, leading her to the tragic realization of the extent of deception and manipulation she has endured. The illusion, that she had been partaking in a noble profession begins to gradually fade, as she admits, "Carers aren't machines. You try and do your best for every donor, but in the end, it wears you down. You don't have unlimited patience and energy (3).

At the end, Miss Emily's shattering reminder that, even at Hailsham, they were not regarded as humans, "…, they tried to convince …you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. […] Here was the world, requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human" (125), brings home to Kathy the stark reminder of her existence as a clone. Miss Emily says rather regretfully, "We'reall afraid of you. I myself had to fight back my dread of you all almost every day I was at Hailsham. There were times I'd look down at you all from my study window and I'd feel such revulsion..." (128). On realising that her life was dispensable, Kathy grapples with feelings of emptiness, disillusionment, and a longing for meaning, "I've been thinking how none of us was prepared for this, and how it's not even like we've learned anything much" (106).

The bleak ending of the novel is rather poignant, as Kathy ponders over her life:

> …, 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, …, that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, …and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him. I was thinking about the rubbish, the flapping plastic in the branches, the shore-line of odd stuff caught along the fencing, and I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, … (137).

These gaps and omissions ultimately contribute to the complexity of Kathy's character and the reader's experience. By piecing together, the fragments of information and confronting the silences, the reader becomes actively engaged in uncovering the hidden truths of the narrative

Ishiguro's Authorial Design

Unreliable narrators offer writers the opportunity to delve into the depths of human psychology. By presenting a

narrator with hidden motivations, conflicting emotions, or psychological instabilities, authors like Ishiguro are able to explore the complexities of the human mind and the blurred boundaries between reality and perception.

Ishiguro's use of an unreliable narrator clearly has a psychological dimension to it. Kathy's narrative engages readers to delve deep into the complexities of the human psyche. As Kathy wanders through long discursive passages from one likely association to another, it is evident that there is a blurring of lines between truth and fiction, memory and imagination. Ishiguro invites the readers to contemplate on the subjective nature of knowledge, the fallibility of human perception, and the multifaceted nature of identity.

As a narrative mode, Ishiguro employs both diegesis as well as mimetic methods. Narrating from her perspective, Kathy H. tells the story of her idyllic girlhood spent at the boarding school, Hailsham and her life as a clone. This 'telling' aspect is characteristic of the diegetic mode. However, Kathy's narration is not omniscient. She shares her memories and observations from her point of view. By virtue of being a clone, there's a limit to her knowledge and understanding. This 'limited' perspective adds to the intrigue and emotional weight of the narrative.

While the story is primarily told by Kathy, there are also moments in the narrative where Ishiguro incorporates elements of the mimetic mode. This happens through the dialogue between the various characters like Ruth or Tommy. The readers get to experience the thoughts and emotions of the characters directly in their own words. Kathy's descriptions of sights, sounds, and smells tend to immerse the readers in the story, creating a more mimetic experience for them.

Conclusion

By deliberately crafting Kathy as a narrator with limitations and potential biases, Ishiguro is thus, able to explore two key themes, memory and subjectivity. Kathy's narration highlights the subjectivity of human memory and the potential for biases to warp our understanding of the past. Her selective memories and the idealized view of Hailsham demonstrate how individual experiences and predilections can shape our perception of reality. By presenting Kathy as a narrator whose perspective is flawed, biased, or influenced by personal motivations, Ishiguro is able to depict the intricacies of perception, memory, and self-deception. This narrative device helps him challenge the idea of an objective reality, as he invites readers to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions.

Deploying the literary tool of unreliable narration, Ishiguro unveils the emotional depth of his characters. While Kathy appears to be emotionally detached, her unreliable narration could be interpreted as her coping mechanism. Her selective memories and euphemisms might be a way of shielding herself from the harsh realities of her existence. By analysing her omissions, as readers, we can gain a deeper understanding of the emotional complexities hidden underneath the surface of her narration.

As discussed, Ishiguro's technique of using an unreliable narrator also serves to amplify the ethical dilemma presented through his text. It makes readers ponder over the question of treatment of the clones and the society that governs them. Most importantly, an unreliable narrator creates a sense of mystery and compels the reader to actively participate in piecing together the truth of the story.

WORKS CITED

Birke, Dorothee. *Memory's Fragile Power: Crises of Memory, Identity and Narrative in Contemporary British Novels*. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008.

Booth, W. C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1961
Chatman, Seymour. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990.
Graver,L., "What the Butler Saw." *The New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 8, 1989, p.33.
Ishiguro, K. "Kazuo Ishiguro Webchat - As It Happened". *The Guardian*, 20 January 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/books/live/2015/jan/16/kazuo-ishiguro-webchat-the-buried-giant-the-unconsoled.
___. *Never Let Me Go*. Knopf. 2005.
Kenan, Shlomith Rimmon. *Narrative Fiction*. Routledge, 2005.
Linde, Charlotte. "Memory in Narrative." *The International Encyclopaedia of Language and Social Interaction*, edited by K. Tracy, T. Sandel and C. Ilie. 1st ed., 27 April 2015, pp. 1–9. Wiley Online Library. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi121.
Mason, Gregory, and Kazuo Ishiguro. "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1989, pp. 335–47. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/1208408. Accessed 9 Sept. 2024.
Nünning, Ansgar. "Unreliable, Compared to What? Towards a Cognitive Theory of Unreliable Narration: Prolegomena and Hypotheses". *Transcending Boundaries: Narratology in Context*, edited by W. Grünzweig and A. Solbach, Tübingen, 2006, pp. 53–74.
Olsen, Greta. "Reconsidering Unreliable Narration." *Narrative*, vol. 11, no.1, 2003, pp. 93–109.
Phelan, James, and Mary Patricia Martin. "The Lessons of 'Weymouth': Homodiegesis, Unreliability, Ethics, and The Remains of the Day." *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, edited by David Herman. Ohio State UP, 1999, pp. 88-109.
___. "Hero or Heroine? Daisy Miller and the Focus of Interest in Narrative." *Style* 19, 1985, pp.1-35.
Stanzel, F. K. *A Theory of Narrative*. Translated by G. Goedsche, G. Cambridge University Press. 1984.
Swift, Graham, and Kazuo Ishiguro. "Kazuo Ishiguro." *BOMB*, no. 29, 1989, pp. 22–23. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40423890
Yacobi, Tamar, "Fictional Reliability as a Communicative Problem," *Poetics Today*, 2:2, 1981, pp.113–126.

Shyam Prasad Reddy Thirumalareddy is a Research Scholar at Vignan's Foundation for Science Technology and Research with the Department of English and Other Indian & Foreign Languages. His research interests are Postmodern literature and Postcolonial Studies.

Dr. Sharada Allamneni is a Professor of English at the Department of EOFL at Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology & Research, India. She has three decades of rich experience in teaching language and literature. Her research interests include Postcolonial Literature, Literary Theory, Gender Studies, ELT and Education Theory. She is currently guiding seven PhD scholars in the areas of language and literature.