

Narrative Technique and Psychological Realism in the novels of Never Let me Go and The Buried Giant by Kazuo Ishiguro

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Abstract: This paper will take a focus on different narrative techniques that Kazuo Ishiguro deploys in his novels “The Buried Giant” and “Never Let me Go.” It is an exploration of how memory plays an important role and how Ishiguro expresses the psychological narrative in both the novels. The paper will also explore the influences of Japanese narrative in the novels and how the then Japanese tradition has made an impact that showcases through the childhood of Kazuo Ishiguro. The paper explores the techniques of some narratives that are seen in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro. The paper makes a study of the two novels with the help of a set of traditional narrative theories, viz- that of Victor Frankl, Roland Barthes, Peter Brookes, and Alexander Greimas. The paper expresses how a person could dwell through the past to its current life with a feeling of regret. The paper explores the psychological realism that is evident in both novels. Kazuo Ishiguro presents the protagonist through typical craftsmanship that reflects the past. The characters in both novels are of psychological and emotional drama. The paper explores the forms of life from past to present that has been remembered throughout the characters. (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216) (Frankl 104)

Keywords: Emotion, Victor Frankl, Narrative Technique, Memory, Psychological Realism, Kishotenketsu, Rakugo, Benshi, Haiku, Roland Barthes, Peter Brookes, Greimas (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216) (Frankl 104)

Introduction

The style of narration in the book “The Buried Giant” reveals a feel of the ancient wisdom that demands a reader’s attention. The Buried Giant takes place in Arthurian England which describes a form of mist that causes all lose their memory (vague) about the past of England. The memory is dismissed like a hazy fog. People around Arthurian England could not remember any more. The book speaks about the elderly couple called Axl and Beatrice who also do not remember about their past. They had a son who is thought that he is moved into some village. The couple does not even remember the name of their son. They indeed remember having a son and want to find him again. The couple decides to go on a journey to try to find the son. They meet some other people along the way. They also begin to explore the mystery of why there is this mist shrouding everyone’s memories. The quest to find their son becomes also represents a quest to find their memories and to find lost memories of all their countrymen. The Buried Giant is a book depicting the nature of memory and whether the relationships which people have been reliant upon memory or an independent memory. in such a way that one takes away the memory by the fact that you are loving someone still remain. The book tells that by forgetting some things in life produce new love and relationships that are strong. The book examines the ideas of a relationship what is that binds people. The Buried Giant is an old historical and legendary emotional Arthurian feeling. There is a sense of mystery that is persuasive throughout. “Never Let me Go” is a first-

person narrative. It is a story about 3 young people amidst the whole perspective of Kathy, the one who remembers her childhood at a school called Hailsham who spends with her two friends Ruth and Tommy. Kathy remembers about what is it like being in school with her friends and during teenage and thereafter. *Never Let me Go* is a dystopian science fiction book that tells a story of humanity, memory, reflection and human connection along with it a dystopian element. Human connection, regret, and purpose in life are complex enough along with the added element of tragedy and drama. The book gives a chance to the discovery of the memories of childhood. The book is a feeling of distant emptiness. The story is incredibly personal while reading and a combination of a flood of feelings. The book is a slow and emotional tale. (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216) (Ingersoll 40)

Summary of The Buried Giant

The elderly couple goes on a journey in search of their son. Along with it, Beatrice decides to meet a woman who can treat bodily pain. Though the pain is not so gruesome Beatrice makes sure that there is nothing seriously wrong. So she wants to meet the woman who could examine her and prescribe some medicine. As Beatrice is very well convinced about the place of the son, she takes the initiative during the journey. Rain obstructs their journey in the middle and the couple goes to stay in an old villa. The couple meets a boatman who sails people to the island. They also meet another old widow. Axl and Beatrice start their journey and reaches the woman from Saxon Village who can treat the pains. They come across Edwin who is out for fishing. There is an attack from Ogre. The uncle of Edwin survives in the attack and returns to the village. Nothing is known about Edwin. It presupposed that he is kidnapped by Ogres.

Wistan, a Saxon warrior helps the two uncles of Edwin to go out in search of Edwin. At last they find Edwin and gets him to the village back but unfortunately, Edwin is not accepted by the villagers as they are afraid of the wounds that he incurred. An elder villager called Ivor advice Edwin a Wistan to go with Axl and Beatrice and stay in their son's village. Now the four start their journey again and reaches to another destination point of the monastery. They have to meet a monk there called Father Jonus by whom, upon the recommendation of the medicine woman, Beatrice would get treatment.

They also meet Sir Gawain, an old Knight of King Arthur. Unfortunately, Wistan admits at that point that he has come there to kill Querig. Even as a coincidence Both Wistan and Gawain seem to recognize Axl, but Sir admits that his mission is to kill the same Querig. Now the couple along with Wistan and Edwin go to the monastery and meets Father Jonus. He examines the wounds of Edwin and also treats Beatrice for the pains. Here is where the couple comes to know that the reason for their memory loss is due to Querig. So Beatrice requests Master Wistan to kill Querig. Suddenly the soldiers of Querig attack the group. Wistan fights with the soldiers and simultaneously the monk rescues the other group escape through a tunnel which happened to be the shelter of a beast. They defeat the beast there and comes back to the monastery in search of Wistan who has fought with the soldiers. (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216)

But Axl and Beatrice start their journey alone as a couple with a goat. The couple wants to leave the goat towards Querig territory so that he may feast on it. The couple puts poison into the goat. Sir Gawain assists the couple to do this. In the end, Wistan and Edwin meet the couple in Querig's territory. They all join together to attack Querig. There is a twist here in the novel about Sir Gawain who finally reveals that his goal is not to kill Querig but to protect him. Wistan is angry now with Gawain and fights with him and kills him. Master Wistan later kills Querig. Now Axl and Beatrice gain the memory which they have lost. Though the couple is so loving till then, when memories are regained, they learn that Beatrice cheated Axl and that is why their son left the village and that which caused the death of their son. Axl is so cruel in not allowing Beatrice even to visit the son's grave. The couple gets separated and stays on different land. The one on the mainland and the other on the island. (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216)

Summary of Never Let me Go

The novel speaks about Kathy who remembers her childhood and friends Ruth and Tommy. Kathy being a carer which later takes her to become a donor. The last part is “Completes.” The novel begins in England during the 1990s where Kathy is a first-person narrator who is thirty-one years old. She spends her life as a carer. She uses to help donors by traveling to recovery health centers. She later takes a donation that is mysterious. While doing this job as a carer, Kathy could remember her childhood memories a lot. The time she spent with friends in Hailsham. She tries to reconnect herself with Ruth and the other friend Tommy. Hailsham is known for its art gallery. Students are very much taken up by drawing and they feel not to leave Hailsham as it gives an opportunity to select fine arts drawn by students and places in the gallery. Kathy feels emotional towards Tommy and she is in pure love towards him. (Ingersoll 40) (Fonioková 112)

Though Tommy seems to be awkward in actions, Kathy could connect his soul. .Kathy is also a good friend of Ruth. They both connected to Tommy. So three of them become best friends. Kathy listens to songs and one of the songs is Never Let me Go. While she plays it from a cassette tape, Madame sobs catch Kathy for the action. Sadly Kathy has to lose the cassette tape which later she could find it back in Norfolk. Kathy has feelings for Tommy. Unfortunately, Tommy settles his emotions with Ruth. Both start dating each other which again lasted less. Kathy, with her friends and along with other Chrissie and Rodney makes a trip to Norfolk. Here is where Kathy gets her another music cassette sung by Judy Bridge water. Now that it has been so long that Kathy has seen Ruth, she decides to see Ruth.

Now Kathy, fortunately, becomes Ruth's carer too. Ever Kathy gets her donation from Ruth. They both start to flourish their friendship back. While both of them think of meeting Tommy, Ruth confesses that she was once a reason for being a hurdle over the crush of Kathy towards Tommy. Ruth is sorry about that. Both Kathy and Ruth wants to meet Madame and save Tommy from donating organs. Now there is a tragic taking place by a situation where Ruth ‘completes.’ Kathy is now a girlfriend and as well as a caretaker. They meet up with Madame and Miss Emily, from Hailsham. But there was no other way to save themselves. They have to live life in such a way to grow and become a carer and donor and complete. This is how life is and it is depressing. Out of so much frustration, Kathy and Tommy have to willingly take up their fate and Tommy has been a donor for the fourth time. Tommy has to say last words and Kathy has to accept the end of Tommy. At the end of the novel, it is learned that Kathy's turn has come to donate and complete.

The identity of the narrator (Fonioková 112)

‘Buried Giant’ by Kazuo Ishiguro is about remembering and finding out about the past. The novel's protagonist, Beatrice, and Axel are an elderly couple who are residents of post-Arthurian landscape and it has a population of ogres, dragons and other menacing creatures. The narrator of the story is a ‘slippery fellow’ who comes into the picture of the story and then sets out of the view, in fact, his flickering presence gives dramatic quality to the novel as it is supported by the presence of supernatural creatures also (Holland, 1). The identity of the narrator is not revealed till the last chapter of the novel and in the end, we discover that he is the boatman who ferries Beatrice across the water to a mysterious island that may represent death. (Fonioková 112)

Existence devoid of Mortal time

The temporality of the novel The Buried Giant is subject to speculation as a boatman exists outside of mortal time and his ‘in and out’ presence in the novel is symbolic of his existence out of mortal time. The most striking aspects of the novel’s opening are the narrator’s emphasis on the ‘historicity’ of his story’s setting, the difference between the present-day England and the distant past that is the novel’s setting (Walkowitz, 216). The novel begins with the words, “you would have.....winding lane or tranquil meadow.....became celebrated.” (Ishiguro, 3). (Fonioková 112)

First person's narration

The second novel that is a critique for the narrative technique is “Never Let me go” by Ishiguro. The story is written in the first person, “My name is Kathy H. I am 31 years old” (Ishiguro, 3). The story is told from the narrator’s point of view. The view of the narrator has room for biases as the action and characters are perceived through Kathy’s viewpoint (Bizzini, 65). The opening page of the novel has the assumption on Kathy’s part that the reader has a certain amount of prior knowledge in the society in which he lives and if the reader does not have the knowledge that is quite obvious because why then he will read the story if he knows beforehand. (Fonioková 112)

Unclear Opening of the novel Never Let me Go

The stance of the narrator makes the opening quite confusing but certain details become apparent as the novel progresses (Quach, 10). The reader, in the beginning, remains unclear about the fact that why Kathy does not give her full surname, what the role that she is endowed with that is of carer actually entails and what being a donor is all about it.” Things remain unclear until the novel takes shape through narration (Ingersoll, 4). (Fonioková 112)

Traces of Victor Frankl’s Man’s Search for Meaning (Frankl 104)

Never Let me Go reminds about the book by Viktor Frankl. Man’s search for meaning is a book that tells about how one can understand the meaning of life when the thing falls apart in adversity. When the future becomes bleak, hope rises and engrosses out of nothing. This is the similarity of narration taking place with the Never Let me Go where Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth search for a new life though there is no such life ahead. It is the hope of living that sustains and occupies. In the end, all have to sacrifice their lives for the sake of a cause. Victor Frankl speaks in terms of holocaust and Kazuo speaks in terms of donation of organs. In both the novels, the hope of survival is what that leads by keeping intact with the memories of the past and hope of survival in the future (Frankl 104)

Forgetting as a source from reality

Ishiguro’s mother experienced the bitterness of bomb explosion in Nagasaki. She needed some time to forget the bad event. Further, the family moved to England when Ishiguro was 5 years old. Here in the UK, Ishiguro’s parents were in a state of forgetting those bad incidents of the bombing. They were slowly wiping off the mind the memories of excruciating and painful feelings. Kazuo Ishiguro grew under the mind set up of such parents. When he intended to write a novel, he was very well tuned with the term forgetting. This was where The Buried Giant a novel came up in his writings in the year 2015 where Ishiguro still ran the theme of forgetting that throughout the novel as a cause for inappropriate happenings in the story. This type of story is in no way different from what his parents might have experienced in reality and forgetting the past. Kazuo Ishiguro clearly makes up his personal life situations that happen indirectly with Axl and Beatrice by bringing a fiction style work. Axl and Beatrice are parents and who forget the past. The reality of family background has become a fiction mixed with forgetting in the novel The Buried Giant

Arthurian Landscape of Characters

It was a fifth or sixth century’s Britain when as soon as King Arthur died, the landscape that Kazuo Ishiguro brought in to the scene. Ishiguro depicts the end of Arthurian rule and the effects of such rule. The Arthurian period is a period of the combination of folklore and literary invention though not clearly indicated in the historical aspect. Kazuo Ishiguro has taken this period as a landscape where he wishes to build characters in the novel The Buried Giant. The mere understanding of how King Arthur could

defend England from Anglo Saxons is the reason for a certain form of fiction in the novel *The Buried Giant*.

Use of Syntax in the novel *The Buried Giant*

The arrangement of some words in the novel *The Buried Giant* is still under Japanese influence. By such words like “rough-hewn” “bleak”, it is clear that they are overused and repetitive. This normally happens with those who are under Japanese background and Ishiguro is one of such authors. There is also no use of qualitative adjectives around the novel that makes one readable. The novel took the shape of premeditated words rather than the words pertaining to the original context of the novel that demands relevant contextualized text. This creates rather a boredom puzzle while reading the lines of the novel. Kazuo Ishiguro puts too many symbolic realities that may not be readable to certain types of audience. For instance, the mention of dragons. For some, it may sound uncomfortable. There are certain characters which are just come and go types. There is a doubt on the part of the reader whether certain types of characters have anything to do with the story. For instance, the mention of She-dragon, Ogres, Pixies, and Warriors and to a certain extent the monks. Finally, in the last chapter, it is clear about a boatman who is unnamed in the novel himself makes negotiations with Axl to let Beatrice take to the other side of the river first. Kazuo has structured this one situation logically telling the reader that Axl has to travel alone further. There is no predictive future where she really travels or not.

Influences of Virginia Woolf in the novels

Virginia Woolf while starting with “Jacob’s Room” and proceeding with acclaimed works like “Mrs. Dalloway,” brings about a shape of narrative that resembles subjective impressions. This narrative technique implemented by Woolf is quite different from conventional objectivism. Woolf’s novels indicate the slow progression of a narrative combining those interior monologues of memories and remembrances. Woolf is very particular about Stream of Consciousness that forms the narrative as characters’ thoughts occur on the go. Virginia Woolf has her inspiration from William Faulkner and James Joyce in terms of Stream of Consciousness. Woolf has very much started Jacob’s Room when James Joyce has delivered Ulysses. Usually, Kazuo Ishiguro’s novels form the part of all such combinations when we read the novels *The Buried Giant* and *Never Let me Go*. Both novels reveal forms of subjective impressions. Kathy remembering her own self during childhood and Axl staring herself in search of the truth about her son.

Conclusion: Ishiguro has diversified the techniques of narration from the age old plot and action into plot-free fiction by bringing in such concepts like memory and past. Ishiguro’s novels are very thinkable in regard through how a character dwells through some incidents that occurred in the past and lives there after. This type of narrative technique also influences readers of all genres where the reader is taken in to psychological realism through the actions of the past and creates a suspense and anticipation filled with curiosity. This is very unique with all the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro. The notion of action is no more existing rather there is a meditation and reflection that allows the protagonist recollect some events that focuses on primary imagination. The then effects of some incidents are very much interesting to the reader. While reading Ishiguro’s novels, there is a depth of inner experience and beauty. This is called the inter-colloquial ideas that stick together in one’s life that will lead to live in a state of confusion. The life of a person brings confusion at a later stage that will make one feel lose a sense of identity. Kazuo Ishiguro brings the aspects of emotion and feelings of bitterness and regret at one place that makes every novel unique and thoughtful. (Teo 2014; Walkowitz 216)

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