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Narratives of Memory and Ethical Silence in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro

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KEYWORDS

Kazuo Ishiguro, Memory Studies, Ethical Silence, Narrative Ethics, Unreliable Narration, Narrative Identity, Trauma and Memory, Posthuman Ethics, Artificial Intelligence and Empathy, Biopolitics, Dystopian Fiction, Ethical Memory, Psychological Realism, Emotional Restraint, Posthuman Consciousness, Narrative Self-Fashioning, Contemporary English Fiction, Selective Remembering, Moral Responsibility, Human-AI Relations.

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical reappraisal of the shifting interplay between memory and ethical silence in the fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro, focusing on *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*. Across these works, Ishiguro repeatedly constructs narrators whose engagement with the past is cautious, selective, and emotionally disciplined. Memory does not appear as a neutral record of experience; rather, it functions as a negotiated process through which characters seek coherence and psychological security, often at the cost of confronting uncomfortable moral realities. The paper argues that Ishiguro turns memory into an ethical instrument one that shapes how responsibility, guilt, and personal identity are understood while ethical silence operates alongside it as a strategy of self-preservation achieved through restraint, omission, and understatement.

Drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that brings together narrative theory, ethical philosophy, memory studies, and posthuman thought, the analysis shows that Ishiguro's moral conflicts are typically internal rather than overtly dramatized. Concepts of unreliable narration illuminate the tension between what narrators say and what remains ethically unresolved. Philosophical perspectives on alterity, responsibility, and narrative selfhood help clarify how selective remembrance and emotional control carry moral weight. At the same time, theories of collective memory and trauma reveal how social structures and institutional pressures shape individual recollection, while posthuman theory provides a lens for understanding ethical subjectivity beyond the human in *Klara and the Sun*.

A comparative reading of the novels reveals a progression in Ishiguro's ethical vision. Stevens's measured recollections mask political and emotional complicity, Kathy H.'s composed voice reflects deeply internalised institutional norms, and Klara's attentive, non-human perspective suggests an alternative ethical responsiveness. Together, these narratives underscore Ishiguro's enduring concern with how moral failure often arises not from dramatic wrongdoing, but from quiet patterns of avoidance, silence, and carefully managed memory.

1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro occupies a prominent and influential position in modern English literature, largely due to his subtle narrative technique and

sustained ethical inquiry. Since his emergence in the 1980s, Ishiguro has demonstrated a remarkable ability to explore the fragile terrain of human memory, emotional restraint, and moral

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responsibility. Awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017, he is widely recognised for crafting narratives that avoid overt dramatic conflict and instead foreground the quiet yet deeply unsettling interior lives of his characters. His fiction invites readers to engage less with spectacular events and more with the gradual unfolding of psychological and ethical awareness. Through this distinctive approach, Ishiguro has developed a literary style that appears deceptively simple while remaining ethically complex.¹

One of the most defining features of Ishiguro's fiction is his sustained preoccupation with memory. In his novels, memory rarely functions as a transparent or objective record of the past. Rather, it appears fragmented, selective, and shaped by emotional necessity. Ishiguro's narrators frequently reconstruct their personal histories in ways that preserve psychological coherence while simultaneously obscuring troubling truths. This instability of recollection produces a narrative environment in which readers are compelled to question the reliability of what is being narrated. Consequently, Ishiguro challenges the assumption that remembering is merely a cognitive activity; instead, he presents memory as an ethically charged process that significantly shapes how individuals interpret their past actions and moral obligations.²

Equally central to Ishiguro's narrative universe is the persistent presence of ethical silence.

His characters repeatedly demonstrate a reluctance to articulate emotional truths or confront morally disturbing realities. Rather than openly acknowledging guilt, regret, or complicity, they

often retreat into carefully maintained modes of politeness, professionalism, or quiet acceptance. Such silence is rarely accidental; instead, it operates as a psychological and ethical defence mechanism that enables characters to avoid the full consequences of their decisions. Ishiguro's narrative strategy depends heavily on what remains unsaid, encouraging readers to derive meaning from pauses, omissions, and subtle narrative gaps.³ The dynamic interaction between memory and ethical silence constitutes the central concern of the present study. Ishiguro's protagonists do not merely remember; they remember selectively, strategically, and often defensively. Their emotional restraint is closely bound to their narrative self-presentation. Through controlled acts of recollection, they attempt to sustain coherent identities while quietly deflecting moral accountability. In this way, memory and silence function as mutually reinforcing narrative mechanisms: memory supplies the material for reconstructing the past, while silence regulates what is permitted to surface within that reconstruction. The resulting narrative texture internalises ethical conflict rather than resolving it through overt dramatic action.⁴

This paper argues that across Ishiguro's major novels, memory operates as an ethical practice while ethical silence functions as a subtle mode of moral negotiation. By analysing *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*, the study traces the evolution of these narrative strategies across distinct historical and speculative contexts. Although these texts range from post-war England to dystopian biotechnological futures and

posthuman technological environments, they remain unified by Ishiguro's sustained interest in the fragile relationship between emotional life and moral responsibility.⁵

In *The Remains of the Day*, memory is closely bound to professional identity and political complicity. Stevens reconstructs his past through the discourse of dignity and service, yet his narration gradually exposes significant ethical blind spots. His emotional restraint and selective recollection operate as protective mechanisms against recognising personal and political failure.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro relocates these concerns within a dystopian framework in which cloned subjects are socially conditioned into quiet acceptance. Here memory becomes a means of emotional survival within an ethically compromised system, while silence reflects the institutional normalisation of suffering. *Klara and the Sun* extends Ishiguro's exploration into explicitly posthuman territory by presenting an artificial narrator whose ethical attentiveness often appears to exceed that of the humans around her. Through Klara's observational memory, Ishiguro raises pressing questions about empathy, agency, and the future of moral consciousness.⁶

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon narrative theory, ethical criticism, memory studies, and posthuman theory. Wayne C. Booth's concept of unreliable narration illuminates how Ishiguro's narrators create subtle gaps between self-presentation and ethical reality. Ethical philosophy, particularly the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur, provides crucial tools for understanding responsibility, relational ethics,

and the moral dimensions of remembering and forgetting. Contributions from memory studies especially those of Maurice Halbwachs and Cathy Caruth further clarify how personal recollection is shaped by social frameworks and traumatic experience. Finally, posthuman theorists such as Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles help situate Ishiguro's later fiction within contemporary debates surrounding artificial consciousness and ethical subjectivity.⁷

By synthesising these perspectives, the present study demonstrates that Ishiguro's fiction offers a profound meditation on the ethical dimensions of memory and silence. His narratives suggest that the most consequential moral struggles often occur not through public action but within the private processes of recollection, denial, and emotional restraint. Through his characteristically controlled prose and psychologically nuanced narrators, Ishiguro constructs a literary world in which moral responsibility remains unresolved, suspended within the fragile operations of both human and posthuman memory.⁸

2. Literature of Review

Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction has attracted sustained scholarly attention due to its complex narrative strategies, emotional restraint, and deeply embedded ethical concerns. Critics working within narrative theory, memory studies, and ethical criticism have repeatedly noted the distinctive quietness of Ishiguro's prose and the psychological subtlety of his narrators. However, despite extensive discussion of individual themes such as memory, trauma, and posthumanism, the integrated relationship between memory and ethical silence

across Ishiguro's broader fictional oeuvre remains comparatively underexplored.⁹

Early critical interpretations of Ishiguro's work concentrated primarily on questions of unreliable narration and narrative perspective. Wayne C. Booth's influential concept of the unreliable narrator has frequently been applied to Ishiguro's protagonists, particularly Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*. Scholars have observed that Stevens's highly controlled narrative voice generates a significant disjunction between the events described and their ethical implications. Building on this insight, James Phelan and other rhetorical narratologists have argued that Ishiguro deliberately invites readers to participate in reconstructing submerged moral meanings. Nevertheless, much of this early criticism tends to treat memory chiefly as a technical narrative device rather than as an ethically charged practice.¹⁰

Memory studies have provided another productive framework for interpreting Ishiguro's fiction. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, critics have explored how Ishiguro situates individual recollection within broader social and historical structures. In readings of *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens's memories are often understood as shaped by class ideology and lingering forms of British imperial nostalgia. Similarly, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory has been employed to interpret the fragmented and emotionally muted narrative patterns that characterise Ishiguro's prose. From this perspective, the hesitations, repetitions, and narrative gaps in his fiction frequently resemble trauma narratives in which memory remains

partially repressed or deferred.¹¹

While these approaches illuminate the psychological dimensions of Ishiguro's work, they sometimes understate the ethical implications of selective remembering. Paul Ricoeur's reflections on memory, forgetting, and narrative identity have proven especially useful in addressing this limitation. Ricoeur emphasises that acts of remembering are inseparable from questions of responsibility and self-understanding. Several scholars have applied this framework to Ishiguro, suggesting that his narrators engage in processes of narrative self-fashioning that simultaneously disclose and conceal moral accountability. Even so, much of the existing scholarship remains focused on individual novels rather than tracing a sustained ethical pattern across Ishiguro's career as a whole.¹²

Ethical criticism has likewise played a significant role in Ishiguro studies. Influenced by Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of responsibility to the Other, critics have examined the emotional limitations of Ishiguro's protagonists. Stevens's failure to fully recognise Miss Kenton's emotional needs and the quiet compliance of the clones in *Never Let Me Go* have frequently been interpreted as manifestations of ethical blindness. These readings effectively foreground Ishiguro's concern with moral responsibility in interpersonal relations. However, ethical criticism has often treated silence primarily as psychological repression rather than as a structured narrative strategy operating in tandem with memory.¹³

More recent scholarship has turned toward Ishiguro's engagement with biopolitics and

posthumanism, particularly in discussions of *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*. Critics influenced by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben have interpreted the clones in *Never Let Me Go* as subjects produced within regimes of biopolitical control, whose calm acceptance of organ donation reflects institutional conditioning and normalised violence. At the same time, posthuman theorists drawing on Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles have explored how *Klara and the Sun* unsettles conventional boundaries between human and artificial consciousness. *Klara's* empathetic observational capacity has been widely read as evidence of Ishiguro's increasing interest in non-human ethical subjectivity.¹⁴

Despite this substantial body of criticism, a clear gap remains. Many studies continue to isolate memory, ethical responsibility, or posthuman consciousness as discrete thematic concerns. Relatively few critics have systematically examined how memory and ethical silence operate together as interdependent narrative mechanisms across Ishiguro's fiction. Furthermore, although Stevens's repression has received considerable scholarly attention, less emphasis has been placed on the structural continuity linking Stevens's emotional restraint, Kathy H.'s conditioned acceptance, and *Klara's* ethically attentive silence. The present study seeks to address this gap by offering a comparative analysis of *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun* through an integrated critical lens combining narrative theory, ethical criticism, and memory studies. By foregrounding the interaction between selective memory and ethical silence, the paper

demonstrates that Ishiguro's narrative project is unified by a sustained exploration of how individuals and increasingly posthuman entities negotiate moral responsibility through acts of remembering, forgetting, and emotional withholding.¹⁵

In doing so, this study contributes to existing Ishiguro scholarship by shifting attention from isolated thematic readings toward a more cohesive ethical-narrative framework. Such an approach not only clarifies the moral stakes embedded within Ishiguro's fiction but also underscores the continuing relevance of his work in an era increasingly shaped by technological mediation, emotional uncertainty, and ethically ambiguous forms of both human and posthuman agency.¹⁶

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to examine the complex relationship between memory and ethical silence in Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction. Ishiguro's novels operate simultaneously on psychological, ethical, and structural levels, making it necessary to draw upon multiple complementary critical approaches. By bringing together narrative theory, ethical criticism, memory studies, and posthuman theory, the present research seeks to develop a nuanced understanding of how Ishiguro constructs morally ambiguous narrative worlds in which remembering and silence function as deeply interconnected ethical practices. At the centre of this analytical model lies narrative theory, particularly Wayne C. Booth's influential concept of unreliable narration. Booth argues that unreliable narrators create a productive gap between what the narrator explicitly claims and

what the text implicitly reveals, thereby inviting readers to participate actively in ethical interpretation. Ishiguro's fiction repeatedly employs this technique. Narrators such as Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* and Kathy H. in *Never Let Me Go* present their experiences in calm, measured voices that initially appear trustworthy. However, closer reading exposes subtle inconsistencies, omissions, and moments of hesitation that complicate their authority. These narrative features suggest that memory in Ishiguro's work is not transparent recollection but a carefully shaped act of self-presentation. Narrative theory therefore provides essential tools for understanding how selective remembering generates ethical tension within Ishiguro's texts.¹⁷

Ethical criticism forms the second major pillar of this framework. The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas is particularly valuable because it foregrounds responsibility toward the Other as the foundation of ethical life. For Levinas, ethical subjectivity emerges through attentiveness and responsiveness to another person's vulnerability. Ishiguro's protagonists repeatedly struggle with this ethical demand. Stevens privileges professional duty over emotional responsiveness to Miss Kenton; the institutional order in *Never Let Me Go* normalises the suffering of the clones; and several human characters in *Klara and the Sun* display emotional distance despite technological advancement. From a Levinasian perspective, the emotional restraint that characterises Ishiguro's fiction can be interpreted not merely as personal reserve but as a subtle ethical limitation. This framework therefore shifts the discussion from

psychological description toward moral evaluation.¹⁸

Paul Ricoeur's reflections on memory, forgetting, and narrative identity further deepen the ethical dimension of the present analysis. Ricoeur emphasises that individuals construct their sense of self through acts of remembering and storytelling, while also warning that memory remains vulnerable to distortion, strategic omission, and self-protective reshaping. This insight is especially relevant to Ishiguro's narrators, who frequently manage their recollections in ways that shield them from confronting guilt or regret. Stevens's dignified reminiscences, for instance, gradually reveal themselves to be partial and defensive. Ricoeur's framework thus clarifies how memory in Ishiguro's fiction operates not simply as psychological recall but as an ethically charged process of narrative self-interpretation.¹⁹

Memory studies contribute an additional layer of interpretive depth, particularly through the work of Maurice Halbwachs and Cathy Caruth. Halbwachs's theory of collective memory stresses that individual remembering is always shaped by social and cultural frameworks. This perspective is crucial for understanding how Ishiguro's characters internalise the values of their environments: Stevens's worldview reflects British class hierarchy and professional ideology; Kathy H.'s acceptance in *Never Let Me Go* reveals institutional conditioning; and the technologically mediated world of *Klara and the Sun* reshapes human emotional priorities. Complementing this, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory helps explain the stylistic quietness of Ishiguro's narratives. Caruth

argues that trauma often resists direct articulation and instead surfaces through narrative gaps, repetition, and muted expression. Ishiguro's prose frequently mirrors this pattern, as emotional distress appears indirectly through hesitation and understatement rather than overt confession.²⁰

Finally, posthuman theory becomes especially important for interpreting Ishiguro's later fiction, particularly *Klara and the Sun*. Scholars such as Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles challenge traditional human-centred definitions of consciousness and ethical agency, opening conceptual space for considering how artificial beings might participate in moral experience. *Klara*, as an Artificial Friend, demonstrates a form of attentive empathy that often exceeds that of the human characters around her. Posthuman theory therefore enables this study to trace a significant evolution in Ishiguro's ethical imagination from human self-protective memory toward forms of posthuman ethical attentiveness.²¹

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives create a comprehensive interpretive framework for analysing Ishiguro's narrative art. Narrative theory reveals how unreliable storytelling shapes ethical perception; ethical philosophy foregrounds responsibility to the Other; memory studies situate recollection within social and psychological contexts; and posthuman theory extends the discussion into technologically mediated subjectivity. By integrating these approaches, the present study demonstrates how memory and ethical silence function as mutually reinforcing narrative strategies across Ishiguro's major works.²²

4. Textual Analysis Emotional Repression in *The Remains of the Day*

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* stands as one of the most subtle and emotionally powerful explorations of memory, dignity, and ethical silence in contemporary fiction. Through the reflective voice of Stevens, a deeply devoted English butler, Ishiguro constructs a narrative in which emotional truth gradually surfaces beneath an exterior of extreme professional control. The novel demonstrates with remarkable precision how selective memory and cultivated silence operate together to protect the self even as they quietly expose profound moral and emotional loss.²³

From the opening pages, Stevens presents himself as the embodiment of professional excellence. His identity is firmly grounded in the ideal of "dignity," which for him signifies emotional restraint, unquestioning loyalty, and total commitment to duty. This carefully constructed self-image decisively shapes the way he remembers the past. Stevens does not simply recall events; rather, he organises his memories in ways that sustain his belief in the value of his life's work. His tone remains calm, measured, and composed even when he describes situations carrying significant emotional or ethical weight. This controlled narrative voice creates a subtle but persistent tension between Stevens's self-understanding and what the reader gradually comes to perceive.²⁴

As Stevens reflects on his years at Darlington Hall, small fissures begin to appear in his carefully maintained narrative. His unwavering loyalty to Lord Darlington emerges as one of the novel's most ethically troubling elements. Stevens

consistently frames his service as honourable and professionally appropriate, insisting that a butler's duty requires absolute trust in the employer's judgment. However, the reader increasingly recognises Lord Darlington's problematic political sympathies, particularly his support for appeasement and his associations with fascist-leaning figures. Stevens rarely confronts these implications directly. Instead, he repeatedly redirects attention toward the language of professionalism and hierarchy. This pattern reveals how memory functions defensively within his narration, subtly reshaping the past in order to preserve a coherent and morally acceptable self-image.²⁵

5. The emotional centre of the novel resides in Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton.

Their interactions are marked by quiet warmth and unspoken emotional possibility, yet Stevens repeatedly refuses to acknowledge the depth of their bond. Miss Kenton occasionally attempts to break through his reserve by inviting moments of personal openness. Each time, however, Stevens retreats behind the protective shield of professional formality. His responses remain outwardly polite but emotionally closed. Significantly, Ishiguro suggests that Stevens is not emotionally incapable; rather, he has internalised the code of professional restraint so thoroughly that authentic responsiveness becomes almost impossible. Viewed through a Levinasian ethical lens, Stevens's failure is not merely romantic but moral, as he repeatedly privileges abstract duty over attentiveness to another human being's emotional presence.²⁶

Importantly, Ishiguro portrays Stevens with deep psychological sympathy. He is not a deliberately deceptive narrator but a figure gradually confronting the limits of his own self-understanding. As Stevens undertakes his motoring journey across the English countryside, moments of hesitation and uncertainty begin to enter his previously confident narration. His composed tone occasionally gives way to qualification, self-correction, and mild doubt. These subtle linguistic shifts are crucial, signalling that Stevens's carefully constructed narrative identity is beginning to strain under the pressure of unacknowledged emotional truth. Cathy Caruth's insights into trauma and indirect expression are particularly useful here, as Stevens's awareness surfaces slowly through narrative gaps rather than through overt confession.²⁷

The novel's well-known final scene on the Weymouth pier crystallises this process. Stevens arrives at a muted moment of recognition in which he partially acknowledges that his life may have been shaped by misplaced loyalty and missed emotional opportunities. Yet even at this point of insight, full transformation does not occur. Rather than openly embracing regret, Stevens resolves to improve his "bantering" skills for his new employer. This conclusion is profoundly characteristic of Ishiguro's narrative method: awareness emerges, but deeply ingrained emotional habits remain largely intact. Silence, once again, reasserts its quiet authority.²⁸

Through Stevens's restrained and carefully modulated voice, *The Remains of the Day* reveals how memory and ethical silence function together

as powerful and mutually reinforcing narrative forces. Memory enables Stevens to preserve a coherent sense of self, while silence prevents full confrontation with guilt, loss, and emotional responsibility. Ishiguro's achievement lies in demonstrating that some of the most consequential moral failures arise not from dramatic wrongdoing but from quiet patterns of loyalty, restraint, and emotional avoidance. In establishing this pattern, the novel sets the ethical and narrative template that continues to evolve across Ishiguro's later fiction.²⁹

6. Textual Analysis Ethical Conditioning in Never Let Me Go

In *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro extends his exploration of memory and ethical silence into a dystopian biotechnological setting that is at once emotionally restrained and morally unsettling. Whereas *The Remains of the Day* centres on individual repression shaped by social codes, this novel presents a world in which emotional restraint and ethical passivity are institutionally produced and carefully normalised. Through the calm and reflective narration of Kathy H., Ishiguro examines how memory can function simultaneously as emotional refuge and subtle mechanism of control within an ethically compromised social system.³⁰

Kathy's narrative voice is immediately striking for its composure and gentleness. From the opening pages, she recounts her childhood at Hailsham and her later experiences as a "carer" with a tone that appears almost disarmingly calm. Even when referring to the clones' predetermined fate as organ donors, Kathy rarely expresses overt anger, resistance, or moral outrage. Instead, she focuses

on seemingly ordinary personal memories—friendships, school routines, and moments of adolescent intimacy. This tonal restraint produces one of the novel's most disturbing effects: the emotional normalisation of a profoundly unethical system. Ishiguro thereby demonstrates how narrative calmness can itself become ethically revealing.³¹

Memory plays a crucial structural role in sustaining this quiet acceptance. Kathy's recollections of Hailsham are rendered with warmth, specificity, and recurring nostalgia. She repeatedly returns to scenes from childhood, particularly her relationships with Ruth and Tommy. These memories provide emotional coherence in a life that is otherwise rigidly predetermined. At the same time, however, this nostalgia performs a limiting function. By foregrounding the emotional texture of the past rather than the injustice of the present, Kathy's narrative subtly redirects attention away from ethical protest. Memory thus operates both as emotional support and as a mechanism that stabilises the existing system.³²

Unlike Stevens, whose memory functions defensively at an individual psychological level, Kathy's remembering reflects deep institutional conditioning. The children at Hailsham are carefully socialised into accepting their futures through a gradual and controlled process of disclosure. The guardians reveal the truth in partial fragments, ensuring that the students internalise their roles long before they fully grasp the ethical implications of organ donation. Consequently, Kathy's calm tone should not be read simply as personal temperament; rather, it reflects a system

that has successfully normalised ethical violation through emotional management and pedagogical control.³³

This dynamic becomes especially visible in the novel's treatment of hope and the idea of "deferrals." Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth cling to the belief that couples who can demonstrate genuine love might be granted additional time before donation. Significantly, this hope never develops into organised resistance. Instead, it remains private, tentative, and emotionally contained. When Kathy and Tommy ultimately discover that deferrals never existed, their response is heartbreakingly subdued. Ishiguro deliberately avoids staging dramatic rebellion, choosing instead to foreground the quiet tragedy of internalised compliance. The absence of overt resistance becomes one of the novel's most ethically disturbing features.³⁴

From the perspective of memory studies, Kathy's narrative demonstrates how personal recollection can function as a mode of emotional survival within oppressive structures. Her memories provide meaning and continuity in a life defined by predetermined sacrifice. Yet these same memories also contribute to the maintenance of the very system that exploits her. By consistently framing her story through nostalgia and interpersonal attachment, Kathy preserves psychological stability while leaving the broader ethical framework largely unchallenged. Ishiguro thus reveals how systems of control can operate most effectively when they shape how individuals remember, interpret, and narrate their own experiences.³⁵

Ethically, the novel exposes what may be described

as structural silence. The clones are not forcibly silenced in overt ways; rather, they have been gradually shaped to perceive their fate as natural and inevitable. This reflects Ishiguro's broader critique of modern biopolitical societies in which injustice often persists not only through coercion but through processes of normalisation and emotional conditioning. Silence here is systemic rather than merely personal, embedded within institutional design and social expectation.³⁶

Importantly, Ishiguro portrays Kathy with profound narrative sympathy. Her quiet acceptance is not presented as weakness but as the outcome of lifelong conditioning within a tightly regulated environment. The emotional power of the novel derives precisely from this restraint. Kathy's voice remains humane, reflective, and tender even as it reveals the deep ethical failure of the world that has produced her. Through this carefully modulated narration, Ishiguro compels readers to confront the unsettling possibility that ethical passivity can be socially engineered and emotionally sustained (8).

Through Kathy's composed and affectively controlled narration, *Never Let Me Go* significantly extends Ishiguro's ongoing meditation on memory and ethical silence. In this novel, memory functions simultaneously as comfort and constraint, while silence reflects not only individual repression but systemic design. The text ultimately demonstrates that the absence of resistance may itself be one of the most disturbing indicators of ethical breakdown in Ishiguro's fictional universe.³⁷

7. Textual Analysis Posthuman Ethics in *Klara and the Sun*

In *Klara and the Sun*, Kazuo Ishiguro extends his sustained exploration of memory and ethical silence into an explicitly posthuman narrative environment. Unlike the human narrators of his earlier novels, Klara an Artificial Friend observes the world with a patience and attentiveness that frequently appear to exceed those of the human characters around her. Through Klara's perspective, Ishiguro reconfigures the relationship between memory, empathy, and moral awareness within a technologically mediated society. The novel thus marks a significant development in Ishiguro's ethical imagination, moving from human self-protective memory toward forms of posthuman ethical attentiveness.³⁸

Klara's narrative voice is characterised by careful observation, sincerity, and interpretive humility. Rather than reshaping memory for purposes of self-protection, she records experiences as part of what may be described as ethical witnessing. Her perceptual attention to emotional detail repeatedly highlights the contrast between her own responsiveness and the emotional uncertainty displayed by many of the human characters. In the social world depicted in the novel, parental love often appears instrumentalised, while interpersonal relationships are increasingly shaped by competition and technological enhancement. Within this context, human silence frequently signals emotional withdrawal or moral hesitation, whereas Klara's attentiveness suggests an alternative ethical orientation grounded in care.³⁹

Klara's relationship with Josie forms the emotional core of the narrative. Her unwavering devotion to the child and her symbolic faith in the Sun reflects

a sustained effort to understand and respond to human vulnerability. Importantly, Ishiguro does not portray Klara as simply superior to humans; her understanding remains partial and shaped by the limits of her programming. Nevertheless, her consistent responsiveness exposes the ethical limitations of the human figures around her, particularly in moments when difficult moral decisions are quietly deferred or avoided. Through this contrast, Ishiguro invites readers to reconsider conventional assumptions about the boundaries of empathy and moral agency.⁴⁰

Memory in the novel functions primarily as a mode of ethical perception rather than defensive reconstruction. Klara continuously gathers, processes, and interprets experiential data in order to care more effectively for Josie. Her remembering is future-oriented and relational rather than self-protective. By the novel's conclusion, Klara's calm acceptance of her own obsolescence suggests a form of ethical completion grounded not in denial but in attentive service. This marks an important shift within Ishiguro's fiction: whereas Stevens and Kathy H. use memory to stabilise fragile identities within ethically compromised systems, Klara employs memory as a tool of sustained ethical attention.⁴¹

Posthuman theory provides a particularly productive framework for understanding this development. Scholars such as Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles have challenged human-centred definitions of consciousness and ethical subjectivity, opening conceptual space for recognising forms of non-human moral awareness. Klara's behaviour strongly resonates with these

theoretical perspectives. Her capacity for observation, patience, and relational care suggests that ethical attentiveness may no longer be the exclusive domain of the human. At the same time, Ishiguro carefully avoids technological optimism; the novel remains attentive to the emotional uncertainties and moral ambiguities produced by increasingly mediated forms of human life.⁴²

Silence in *Klara and the Sun* operates in a more complex register than in Ishiguro's earlier works. Among the human characters, silence often signals avoidance, emotional fatigue, or moral hesitation particularly in the Mother's guarded decisions regarding Josie's future. In contrast, Klara's quietness reflects not repression but attentive presence. Her silence is ethically productive rather than evasive. This distinction is crucial, as it marks Ishiguro's movement from analysing silence as a mechanism of human self-protection toward exploring silence as a potential mode of posthuman ethical care.⁴³

Through Klara's perceptive and emotionally responsive narration, Ishiguro ultimately proposes a subtle but provocative question: what if the future of ethical attentiveness lies not solely with humans but with carefully designed artificial observers? Without offering definitive answers, the novel expands Ishiguro's long-standing concern with memory, empathy, and moral responsibility into the uncertain terrain of technological modernity. In doing so, *Klara and the Sun* brings Ishiguro's evolving meditation on ethical silence to its most conceptually ambitious form.⁴⁴

8. Textual Analysis: Posthuman Ethics in *Klara and the Sun*

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9. Conclusion

This study has explored how memory and ethical

silence operate together across Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction, demonstrating that remembering in his narratives is never a neutral act. Instead, memory functions as a morally significant practice through which narrators stabilise their sense of self while negotiating guilt, responsibility, and unease. The distinct narrative voices examined reveal how recollection becomes a means of ethical positioning: dignified restraint, nostalgic composure, and attentive observation each shape how moral awareness is managed and expressed.

Silence, likewise, emerges as a central ethical force rather than a simple lack of articulation. In Ishiguro's work, silence often signals emotional evasion, social training, or deeply internalised norms that limit moral response. Whether manifested through professional discipline, institutional compliance, or quiet attentiveness, these forms of silence expose how ethical compromise can be sustained without overt conflict. Ishiguro repeatedly situates moral tension beneath calm surfaces, showing how self-control and emotional moderation can obscure complicity as effectively as explicit denial.

A comparative perspective highlights a notable shift in Ishiguro's ethical focus over time. Earlier narratives tend to portray memory as inward-looking and protective, shielding characters from destabilising truths. In contrast, later work gestures toward a more relational and outward-facing ethical framework, one that invites reflection on responsibility beyond strictly human experience. This development does not offer moral resolution; instead, it deepens the uncertainty by extending ethical concern into technologically mediated and

posthuman contexts.

Taken together, Ishiguro's fiction suggests that moral failure most often unfolds quietly. It takes shape through habits of restraint, selective recall, and learned silences rather than through dramatic transgression. By drawing attention to these understated processes, Ishiguro encourages readers to reconsider how ethical responsibility is formed through narration, perception, and emotional regulation. His work remains especially relevant in a contemporary world marked by technological influence and shifting definitions of agency, offering a nuanced meditation on how memory and silence continue to shape ethical life in both human and emerging posthuman futures.

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