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Memory and Ishiguro's musical method in *Never Let Me Go*

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro's book *Never Let Me Go* have been praised for its ability to trigger the readers emotions, especially empathy. When discussing the significance of this book, people often base their discussions around the use of a single narrator and memory to explain the story's effectiveness in affecting the readers mood and feelings. Silvia Caporale Bizzini in *Recollecting memories*¹, Keith McDonald in *Days of past futures*², Titus Levy in *Human Rights Storytelling and Trauma Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*³, and many more have reflected on this subject. However, one fact that is often overlooked is that Ishiguro started off as a singer-songwriter before becoming an author. He has stated in interviews that his past as a songwriter still influences his way of writing novels today.⁴ As Barry Lewis points out at page 133 in *Kazuo Ishiguro*, sequent repetition-with-variation is a distinctive attribute of Ishiguro's stylistic technique. Lewis suggests that one of the musical methods Ishiguro often use in his novels is basing transitions between episodes on a memory, which either the content or context of is revised after a digression, which then again sparks

¹ Bizzini, S.C. (2013). Recollecting memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's "When We Were Orphans" and "Never Let Me Go". *Atlantis vol 35. No 2*.

² McDonald, K. (2017). "Days of past futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go" as "Speculative Memoir". University of Hawai'i Press.

³ Levy, T. (2011). Human Rights Storytelling and Trauma Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go. *Journal of Human Rights Volume 10*,.

⁴ Gross, T. (2021, March 17th) Kazuo Ishiguro Draws On His Songwriting Past To Write Novels About The Future. *npr.org*. Obtained from: <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/17/978138547/kazuo-ishiguro-draws-on-his-songwriting-past-to-write-novels-about-the-future?t=1619546975687>

another train of thought. However, Lewis doesn't reflect much more on this technique.⁵ I would argue that Ishiguro's musical method is an overlooked element in making *Never Let Me Go* affect the readers' feelings and empathy, and through using musical theory, I have found that his past as a musician and songwriter might have had a substantial impact in how the book has been written, and how it has been perceived by its many readers.

Musical method

It goes without saying that music is an effective way of affecting moods and triggering certain feelings in listeners. Throughout history music have been used by poets, composers and playwrights to spark emotions in their listeners.⁶ To be able to create music, the musician must acquire some specific skills. Micheal E. Charness and Gottfried Schlaug states in *Neurology of the Arts* that several studies have shown that musicians' brain structure and function differ to those of non-musicians. Charness and Schlaud argues that this could be due to the fact that musicians undergo intense motor and musical training over a long period of time, often starting in childhood. But they also mention that this cognitive difference could be genetic, and that some individuals who are self-selected musicians choose to become musicians because they have the necessary brain structure for learning and performing intricate bimanual motor tasks.⁷ Music at its core is a specific mathematical frame, where you are somewhat expected by the listener to operate withing in a specific system, but still able to twist and turn the different ingredients to create an unbelievably large number of variations. When composing within a specific key, the composer will create what is called a diatonic melody. In a key you have 7 notes to choose from. These 7 notes can be combined to create a

⁵ Lewis, B. (2000). *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Page 133. Manchester University Press.

⁶ Bruner II, Gordon C. (1990). Music, mood, and marketing. *Journal of Marketing Vol. 54 No. 4*. Sage publications, INC.

⁷ Charness E.M. and Schlaug, G. (2004). *Neurology of the Arts. Painting, Music, Literature*. Imperial College Press. Page 153, Brain mapping in Musicians.

total of 7 different basic chords, often referred to as triads. It is common to make a sequence of 4 chords to form the foundation of the song. This is referred to as the chord progression of the song. When describing a chord's function within a key, the chords are given a number from 1 to 7 written in roman numerals to distinguish between the chord's order and the notes in the chord. In other words, A C7 chord is a C-chord containing the 7th note in the scale of C, while a VII chord is the last diatonic chord within its given key. Non-diatonic notes are often referred to as blue notes. Blue notes are hallmarks of blues, jazz and more emotionally complex music.

I would argue that in "Never Let Me Go", Kazuo Ishiguro often use digressions as dominant VII chords. These chords are often used to create tension and signal a transition to a new key. As stated in the intro, these digressions are often used to spark memories which leads to a completely other story, effectively working as a transition between Kathy's memories. In *Never Let Me Go*, these digressions either spark a nostalgic positive memory, or a more problematic or even sad memory. Although it is hard to argue that this way of building tension and release is an exclusively musical technique, I would still argue that using this technique mirrors songwriting and makes the story more emotionally complex, making the reader feel the tension and release between Kathy's digressions and memories.

For example at page 6, where Kathy is telling us about how when she is out driving, she sees things that remind her of Hailsham: "Driving around the country now, I still see things that will remind me of Hailsham. I might pass the corner of a misty field, or see part of a large house in the distance as I come down the side of a valley, even a particular arrangement of poplar trees up on a hillside, and I'll think: "Maybe that's it! I've found it! This actually *is* Hailsham!" Then I see it's

impossible and I go on driving, my thoughts drifting on elsewhere. In particular, there are those pavilions.” The pavilion part works as a digression, signaling a transition the same way a dominant VII chord would in music. Kathy goes on describing these pavilions for a while before suddenly another memory is sparked. “Not long ago I was driving through an empty stretch of Worcestershire and saw one beside a cricket ground so like ours at Hailsham I actually turned the car and went back for a second look.” This whole digression works as a transition between her driving around the country in the present, to her telling us a completely different and nostalgic story about how the students at Hailsham loved attending lectures in the pavilion, and how they used to beg and plead with the guardians to hold their upcoming lecture there. This again sparks another memory about how Kathy and her female friends ended up spying from the pavilion down at the boys playing on the football pitch when Tommy threw a temper tantrum after not being included. This last story lasts four pages until the end to chapter 1.

The title

In Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel we get to hear about a fictional song by a made-up artist named Judy Bridgewater. The song is called “Never Let Me Go” and has later been recorded by Rachel Portman to be used in a film-adaptation of the book.⁸ One of the central scenes in the book is based on Kathy listening to this song while dancing in her dorm with a pillow in her hands, pretending that the pillow is a baby. Kathy’s Bridgewater cassette has a lot of sentimental value to her, and it is mentioned throughout the book multiple times. The song is in the key of C and all the chords in the song are diatonic, except the diatonic E minor has

⁸ Howell, P. (2010, September 30th). Howell: The hunt for the elusive Judy Bridgewater. *Toronto star*. Obtained from: https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/movies/2010/09/30/howell_the_hunt_for_the_elusive_judy_bridge_water.html

been replaced by E major. Using the non-diatonic chord makes the chord progression and melody more emotionally complex and optimistic. Minor chords can be described as sounding melancholic and sad, while major chords sound happy and cheerful. Using this knowledge, one could easily argue that this pattern mirrors the whole novel. The dystopian setting containing clones with a bleak future intertwined with the narrator's nostalgic flashbacks creates the same kind of emotionally complex structure as the song.

Characters and relationships

I would argue that Kazuo think about characters in a more musical way than most writers. In an interview from the Globe Theatre, he said that he doesn't really see characters as characters, and that he finds thinking in terms of individual characters much less inspiring than studying relationships. Ishiguro states that it is the shifting relationships between characters that make a story interesting.⁹ I would argue that this way of thinking is very musical and relates to the way a musician or songwriter think of chords. A chord by itself is not really that interesting. We of course need some knowledge about a chord and its function, but it is not until we add more chords and play around with the relationship between them that we get music. The same goes for the notes in a melody, it's the intervals between each note that gives the notes their function. It is not until you surround a note with other notes you understand what that note really is.

In "Never Let Me Go", Kazuo Ishiguro never tells us anything about the characters that isn't in some form or another an active factor in altering the relationships between them. The characters are described by Kathy telling us stories about how the relationship between her and the other characters has changed, instead of describing a character directly. This helps the

⁹ Barton, G. (2017). Never Let Me Go, With GCSE and A Level study guide by Geoff Barton. *Faber & Faber*. Exploring Characters, page 313.

reader decide for themselves what kind of person the characters are, instead of just giving us a full description directly. For instance, at page 45 when Kathy first is describing Ruth, she doesn't tell us directly how she is outspoken and hot-tempered, but instead she tells us a story: "Then Ruth is standing there, not in the sand with the rest of us, but a few feet away. She's very angry with two of the girls somewhere behind me, about something that must have happened before, and she is standing there glaring at them. My guess is that I knew Ruth only very slightly at that point. But she must already have made some impression on me, because I remember carrying on busily with whatever I was doing in the sand, absolutely dreading the idea of her turning her gaze on me. I didn't say a word, But I was desperate for her to realize I wasn't with the girls behind me and had had no part in whatever it was that made her cross." This way of telling us about Ruth, using a story where the shifting relationship between multiple characters gives us impressions about her makes the story way more emotionally complex. Kathy could have simply told us directly: "Ruth was always very hot-tempered and highly-controlling", but instead, throughout the book she uses memories of how their relationship has been altered and shifted to give us impressions about her. This works similarly to the way a chord gets its sound in relation to the other chords that it is used together with. In music, I would argue that it is the sequence of the chords, rather than the individual chords that gives us the understanding and true feeling of the chord. Just like within a chord, the notes don't really give us any specific feeling when played separately. But when they are played simultaneously, they give us an indication about it being a major or minor chord for example. But a major or minor chord by itself isn't really that interesting, it is its connection and shifting relations to the surrounding chords that makes it meaningful. I would also argue that this applies to the way Kathy's sad memories and realizations wouldn't

have made that big of an impression on the reader if I weren't for her contrasting happy nostalgic memories from Hailsham.

Narration

The story in *Never Let Me Go* is told by only one narrator, her name is Kathy H.. Silvia Caporale Bizzini argues in *Recollecting memories* that an important result of having one narrator telling her story based on his or her memory is that it gives the narrator and story life in relation to other people's stories. Kazuo Ishiguro has said that he is trying to capture the texture of memory, and that he believes flashbacks aren't just a clinical, technical means of conveying things what happened in the past. He argues that flashbacks are to be seen as somebody turning over certain memories, in the light of his or her emotional condition. Bizzini therefore argues that Kathy's storytelling is more than just a recital of her personal memories, but also is a way of giving a voice back to those who've died. She also states that the German philosopher Herzog argues that this type of "redemptive narrative" is defined by the meaning and origin of storytelling because it views the past as fragmented. In other words, memories can only preserve certain bits and pieces from past events, and stories told from memory recover and rejuvenate these bits and pieces in order to highlight the absence of the people who have died. Bizzini therefore argues that through Kathy's act of remembering, her friends' memory and sacrifice will not be lost to the world.¹⁰ As Kathy tells us at page 280, she feels certain that her friend's memory will live on. "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 memory of them." At page 281 she tells us about how thankful she is about her memories of Hailsham and her friends, despite her bleak future. After telling us that she won't be searching for Hailsham anymore, she says: "But as I say, I don't go searching for it, and anyway,

¹⁰ Bizzini, S.C. (2013). *Recollecting memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's "When We Were Orphans" and "Never Let Me Go"*. *Atlantis vol 35. No 2.* Page 70.

by the end of the year, I won't be driving around like this anymore. So the chances are I won't ever come across it now, and on reflection, I'm glad that's the way it'll be. 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."

Language in relation to memory

Silvia Caporale Bizzini argues that another important instrument that Kazuo Ishiguro uses in "Never Let Me Go" is language, which is an important and direct consequence of having a single narrator telling her story from memory. Kathy never deploys any scientific medical language, and laboratories are never mentioned. She also uses less direct and harsh words than what we would regularly use to describe such a dark situation. When she is telling us about the clones who died after their donations, Kathy uses the words "to complete". After donations, the clones either complete, or recover enough to continue working as carers for the other clones who are donating. I would argue that using the word "donation" implies that it is done voluntarily, not by coercion. Bizzini also acknowledges that in spite of the bleakness of the plot, no violence is ever openly mentioned by the narrator. Kathy has instead invented a special jargon which substitutes scientific language. Bizzini uses Keith McDonald's argument about the reason these linguistic details are so important being that it reminds us about people's tendency to normalize atrocities in a given ideology. She argues that this language is an incredibly important instrument in triggering the readers feelings of empathy, and that it makes readers able to identify with the narrator. According to Bizzini, this linguistic strategy helps to define a melancholic environment and sequence of different feelings which humanizes the characters in the novel. I would argue that using this special

jargon makes the novel more musical by conveying both nostalgic and sad memories in a more personal and emotionally complex way since it makes the reader aware of how Kathy uses downplaying to normalize her situation. When Ruth bluntly asks Kathy about why she has worked as a carer for so long instead of starting her donations, Kathy answers: "I don't mind. Anyway, it's important there are good carers. And I'm a good carer." Ruth then answers: "But is it really that important? Okay, it's really to have a good carer. But in the end, is it really so important? The Donors will all donate, just the same, and then they'll complete." This use of language leaves a lot unsaid. It reflects Keith McDonald's claim about human beings' tendencies to normalize and downplay atrocities, thus making the narrator seem more relatable.¹¹ It also relates to Calvin S. Brown's argument about one of the key differences between literature and music being the fact that in music, language is to be felt in song, rather having the listener understand word by word.¹²

As argued by Rebecca L. Walkowitz in *Ishiguro's floating worlds*, Ishiguro often resist directly describing pivotal and traumatic episodes, but provides us with internal monologue or daydreaming instead of exterior interaction and description. In other words, the author tries to make us feel what the narrator feels rather than having us understand everything that happens in detail. In *Never Let Me Go* however, the narrator often describes things as thoroughly she can, but also provides us with the thoughts she had at the given moment. After describing the situation, she tells us what her thoughts about it are today in comparison to what she thought when it happened, using elaborate reasoning, which relates to Calvin S. Brown's point about one of the key differences between literature and music.¹³ I would

¹¹ Bizzini, S.C. (2013). Recollecting memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's "When We Were Orphans" and "Never Let Me Go". *Atlantis* vol 35. No 2. Page 74.

¹² Brown, C.S. (1970). The relations between Music and Literature as a study. *Comparative Literature* Vol. 22, No.2, Special Number on Music and Literature. University press. Page 103

¹³ Walkowitz, R.L. (2001). Ishiguro's Floating Worlds. *ELH* Vol 68. No. 4. Page 1050.

however argue that Kazuo Ishiguro uses the best of both worlds, both giving us a description of important events, as well as making us feel what Kathy feels when she is telling us about it.

Nostalgia

Silvia Caporale Bizzini argues that nostalgia as an idea has structured Ishiguro's novels since he first started writing. She mentions the fact that Kazuo Ishiguro stated in an interview that in the seventies and early eighties he was very influenced by the Freudian model. He was especially influenced by the concept of humans being a passive product of their past experiences and memories, which leaves humans less able to make their own free choices. But Ishiguro has later insisted that humans are more advanced and intricate, and that the agency of individuals are greater than the Freudian model makes it out to be. He says that he has realized that humans are able to greatly change their lives at any point during their lifetime, and that our potential for change is highly underestimated. After 2001, Kazuo Ishiguro started to reflect on defining his protagonists and their roles in relation to memory, nostalgia, and how they live their lives and perceive reality in a different way than before. Bizzini argues that the reason Ishiguro's reflection is interesting is that it can and should be applied to his storytelling. It reveals to us that nostalgia in Ishiguro's novels is not to be understood as the presence of negative illusory memories, but rather as a means to restore positive emotions of freedom and fairness and to fight to actualize them.¹⁴

I argue that an important skill of a great artist is being able to recreate and bring back vivid memories from the audience's childhood and adolescence. When we grow up into adulthood, our brain learns to shut out what we have seen a thousand times before. But as children, we

¹⁴ Bizzini, S.C. (2013). Recollecting memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's "When We Were Orphans" and "Never Let Me Go". *Atlantis vol 35. No 2.* Page 68.

don't see every house as just "house", we see the individual houses, and notice the most subtle differences. As we grow up, we deem these differences as not useful, and therefore our world is perceived as bland and boring. A great artist is someone who is able to recreate our nostalgic memories and trigger our curiosity by describing something we all recognize in a unique way, and I would argue that Kazuo Ishiguro effectively does this in *Never Let Me Go*. Using situations and feelings from your own life is a norm within the art of songwriting and gives the song a more genuine and personal expression. Through always using the narrators' memories to tell the story, we get a very personal connection to Kathy, and many of her nostalgic memories are relatable to most people, since her days at Hailsham are in some ways similar to those of many readers' early schooldays. When describing her childhood in such detail, it makes us forget that Kathy is an imaginative character and makes us more invested in the story. Her nostalgic stories from Hailsham create an effective contrast to her sad memories of death, hopelessness and helplessness. The achieved effect of this contrast is that the sad memories is experienced as even sadder by the reader, in the same way that creating harmonies between minor and major chords in music can make a minor chord sound even more melancholic. I would argue that this mirrors a minor plagal cadence. A minor plagal cadence is performed by playing the first diatonic chord in a major key, which is a major chord, and then going to the fourth diatonic chord, which also is a major chord, but then instead of continuing in a diatonic pattern, you play another fourth chord as a minor chord, creating a very melancholic feeling. This chord is non-diatonic, meaning that it isn't a part of the key. By listeners, it can be described as expecting something but not getting it. The fourth diatonic chord usually resolves to the first chord. Therefore, the listener expects a diatonic resolution, but instead gets a non-diatonic minor chord. In other words, we leave the key to create an unexpected sad resolution. Minor plagal cadence is used in multiple popular songs,

two of them being *In My Life* by The Beatles and *Creep* by Radiohead.¹⁵ I would argue that this pattern especially mirrors part 3 of the novel. In part 3 Kathy and Tommy finally become a couple, sparking hope about finding Madame and getting their donations deferred. We get to hear about how Tommy and Kathy enjoy their life together, despite Tommy's health. Things look bright for quite a while, until Madame tells them the harsh reality. Rumors about the deferrals available to the Hailsham students are mentioned many times throughout the book, each time leading us to believe that there might be a positive ending for them. But in a very short amount of time, Ishiguro gives us something unexpected by shattering all hope, effectively mirroring a minor plagal cadence.

Leaving out notes

In the podcast *How To Fail With Elizabeth Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro talks about the way humans automatically censor out parts of their surroundings in the same way that musicians use certain scales to censor out all the notes that aren't useful. For example, when a musician is practicing the pentatonic scale, which is a scale containing only 5 notes, he/her will practice only looking for the diatonic notes, while leaving the other ones out. He is fascinated by the way we humans use this same technique to censor out things we don't want to see in our surroundings. He says: "Particularly in big cities, I think because we are so crowded on top of each other and so many different tribes and different worlds have to co-exist in a relatively small physical space, we get very good at blanking out huge sections of people". He then states that this is the case with homeless people, most of us automatically shut them out from our perception. Ishiguro then makes the claim that this process is very natural, and that we all have to pick and choose what to pay attention to or not. When musicians learn a scale, they are in reality just told which notes to ignore. They then have to make their song by using only

¹⁵ Signals Music Studio. (2017, October 3rd). Minor Plagal Cadence [Songwriting Lesson][Video]. Obtained from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEadIDOBpuA>

these 5 notes, while ignoring all the other ones. He continues: “After a while, your ear adjusts to what that pentatonic scale sounds like. You don’t miss the other notes, you’re not consciously skipping them, you just confine yourself to those 5 notes.”¹⁶ I would argue “Never Let Me Go” problematizes this phenomenon by letting us hear the story about a huge societal problem from one of these left out people. Ishiguro helps us witness how society has structurally helped people ignore clones who are bred to help the majority of humans live longer. This is not an exclusively musical phenomenon, but I would argue that Ishiguro might not have come up with the idea of writing about the clones in this way if it weren’t for his musical way of thinking and reflecting on his surroundings.

Inversion

When comparing literature and music, there are certain terminology that can be found in both. One of these elements is inversion. In music, inversion is used as a way of changing the sound of a chord. A triad is a chord containing three notes, and if you were to play a C triad on the guitar, you could move the root note away from being the lowest note to becoming the highest note. This will give the chord a different sound, and make it sound more unstable, because the chord is still a C, but the lowest note is now a E. Using chord inversions is a brilliant way of creating an ambiguous tone since the chord can be interpreted as both a minor 6/5 suspension and inverted major chord. This can add tension and drama to a chord without fully transforming it.¹⁷

Reversal of chronology

Michael Von Albrecht argues that psychological mechanisms are the natural root to two

¹⁶ Day, E. (2021, March 24th). *How to Fail: Kazuo Ishiguro. S10, Ep8*. [Audio podcast] Quote from 50:46. Obtained from <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6ViSxoQNhqQgQXhs9WJHLs?si=66178f8778bf4050>

¹⁷ Mcguire, P. (2017, September 27th). Chord Inversions: How Do They Work and How To Play Them. Uses for chord inversion in music. Obtained from <https://www.musikalessons.com/blog/2017/09/chord-inversions/>

different forms of inversion, the first being reversal of chronology. Our memory usually works in a reversed chronologic order. When thinking back, newer memories come first and are then followed by older memories. This reversed chronology is also called an anti-narrative.¹⁸ *Never Let me go* doesn't use a strict anti-narrative but often uses it when looking back on older memories, supporting the claim that Ishiguro uses sequent repetition with variation to create transitions between newer and older memories. Before telling a story about Ruth or Tommy, Kathy might tell us about her most recent memories of them, thus sparking an old memory which she then explains afterwards. This also relates to Bizzini's arguments about having one narrator telling her story from memory creating a sentimental environment and helping readers identify with the narrator.

Reharmonization

I would argue that the inversion in "Never Let Me Go" also could be seen as reharmonization of melody. The order the sequence of notes is played alters the mood of a song the same way that the order in which memories are told affects the readers perception of them. This type of reharmonization is used in one of the most central scenes of the book. The scene describes Madame watching young Kathy dancing to the song "never let me go" in her dorm while pretending that the pillow she is holding is a baby. This story is repeated three times in the book, every time with a different view of it. The first time we hear it is at page 71. We get a detailed description of the situation, and Kathy tells us what her current thoughts about it were at the time. She says that Madame was standing completely still in the half open doorway, with her head tilting to the side while crying. Straight after, Kathy tells us about the time she told Tommy this story a couple of years later. At that time, they thought that the

¹⁸ Albrecht, Michael von. (1995). Some types of Mirroring in Literature and Music. *International Journal of Musicology*, 1995, Vol.4. Page 50.

reason Madame was crying was the fact that Kathy imagined having a baby, despite the clones not being able to have children. Of course, Kathy didn't know this when she was that young, but a female guardian told them this later, and lost her job shortly after. Tommy says: "Madame is probably not a bad person, even though she's creepy. So when she saw you dancing like that, holding your baby, she thought it was really tragic, how you couldn't have babies. That's why she started crying." Kathy then says that she doesn't understand how Madame could understand that the pillow Kathy held was supposed to be a baby, to which Tommy responds: "Maybe Madame can read minds. She's strange. Maybe she can see right inside you. It wouldn't surprise me". At this point they see Madame as a scary and uncanny figure who is responsible for selling the clones' art to the outside world and who doesn't want anything to do with the clones. She shuts them out of her world, in the exact same way Ishiguro mentioned that musicians unconsciously shut out non-diatonic notes when playing within a scale.

The second time we get to hear about this situation is at page 175. The students have now become teenagers who are fully aware of the fact that they are soon going to work as carers who afterwards have to donate their organs until they die. The factor that makes the students' impression of Madame shift, is a theory that Tommy made. Tommy's theory revolved around something a guardian named Miss Emily told a student named Roy. Tommy tells Kathy: "She told Roy that things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff *revealed what you were like inside*. She said *they revealed your soul*." Tommy had also been told rumors by students from other institutions about Hailsham students having a special arrangement available to them. This arrangement was that if two Hailsham students could prove that they were truly in love, they could ask Madame to get their donations deferred. Kathy then starts retelling the story using this perspective. "If Tommy's theory was right, if Madame is connected to us for the sole purpose of deferring our donations when, later on, we fell in love, then it made sense

– for all her usual coldness towards us – she’d be really moved stumbling on a scene like that.” This is still the same story as before, and the characters are still the same. But through inversion, our perception of their roles has shifted, just like inversion of a chord would change our perception of its sound. This story sparks yet another memory, this time about Tommy’s art, and how they realized that Tommy’s art was so bad that his chances of getting his and Ruth’s donations deferred were next to none. Because the story is told from Kathy’s memory, reversal of chronology makes this diversion sparks yet another older memory about how Tommy used to make really terrible art which made him get bullied by the other students. The prior story is then revised, and Kathy continues to tell us about Tommy’s new plans about creating new art to impress Madame, increasing their chances of getting their donations deferred. This is yet another example of Ishiguro’s repetition with variation technique. The effect of its use is in this case that we get to experience two very contrasting memories. The first memory makes us feel sorry for Tommy, while the second memory gives us hope.

The third time we get to hear about the incident between Kathy and Madame in the dorm is at page 265. Here, Kathy tells us how Madame saw the story from her point of view, effectively leading to a reharmonization. This time around, both Tommy and Kathy are adults who after Ruth dies, falls in love and decide to visit Madame. They visit her in the pursuit of finding out if the rumors about Hailsham students getting their donations deferred really were true. Here they come to realize that their old impression of Madame is not accurate at all. She has not been exploiting the clones, but she can in fact be described as an activist fighting for the clones right to a more normal life. Madame tells them about how the system using clones to donate organs to the rest of the population started, and how it developed. In fact, Madame and Miss Emily founded Hailsham to prove the clones’ humanity to the rest of the world, in order to give them a better life. But after many setbacks, they had to close Hailsham down.

The fact that Madame and Miss Emily both were fighting for the clones' rights contributes to increasing our confidence regarding the donation deferrals. But we soon find out that the rumors are untrue, and that there is no way for Tommy and Kathy to continue being together much longer. This is when Kathy decides to confront Madame about the situation in her dorm. Madame tells them how she experienced the situation. "But when I came into your dormitory, I saw you, by yourself, a little girl, dancing. As you say, eyes closed, far away, a look of yearning. You were dancing so very sympathetically. And the music, the song. There was something in the words. It was full of sadness." Knowing now who Madame really was, our perception of the situation shifts for the second time. The first time we heard about the situation, we picture Madame as a scary and uncanny figure who is responsible for selling the clones' art to the outside world and who doesn't want anything to do with the clones. The second time we are led to believe that although she acted very cold towards the clones, she might indeed want to help students who were in love get their donations deferred. And the last time, we learn that Madame really has been fighting for the clones to get better and more fulfilled lives. This way of using reharmonization directly relates to the way a songwriter uses an inversion to move the notes in a chord around to make it fit into the melody, both in the way of making it sound nicer, and to make it easier for the musician to play. Telling the story three separate times, each time from a different angle, helps to drive the story forward and effectively alter the mood of the story. The characters are still the same, but their roles in the story have changed through the act of reharmonization.

Conclusion

I would argue that the fact Kazuo Ishiguro used to be a musician and songwriter most likely have influenced his novel writing. As argued in "Neurology of The Arts", a musician's brain differs from a non-musician's brain, but although Ishiguro's past as a songwriter might be the

cause of the musical tendencies in *Never Let Me Go*, it is hard to say for certain if Kazuo Ishiguro's writing is musical, or if literature in general use similar structures as music to create an engaging experience for the reader or listener. As stated by Calvin S. Brown in *The relations between Music and Literature as a study*, it is nearly impossible to demonstrate or even suspect the most subtle techniques used if we don't have clearly documented chains between the literature and the music it has been inspired by.¹⁹ Intentionally or not, many of his techniques as a writer directly mirror those of a composer. Both his musical use of inversion, language and shifting relationships adds to the likelihood of Ishiguro being inspired by musical structures, and I argue that the use of these structures accentuates the contrast between nostalgia and hopelessness. The fact that Ishiguro's sequent repetition-with-variation technique mirrors song structure, might be somewhat unintentional, but I would still argue that his past as a songwriter is likely to have influenced his way of structuring and sequencing Kathy's memories in *Never Let Me Go*.

¹⁹ Brown, C.S. (1970). The relations between Music and Literature as a study. *Comparative Literature Vol. 22, No.2, Special Number on Music and Literature*. University press. Page 103

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