

Yaryna Oprisnyk

Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

THE INTERMEDIAL POETICS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO'S FICTION

The growing interest in the interrelationship between different forms of art has led to the emergence of the term *intermediality*, which is interaction of different 'media,' that is, different channels of human communication, where one media-product "thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another medium" (Brosch, 2005, p. 343). That is, different kinds of art refer to each other, interacting both explicitly, through allusions to another art form, or implicitly, by imitating its techniques. In particular, researchers of intermediality reveal the connections between literature and cinema, with both forms of art originating from natural human thinking, which is essentially a representation of visual and verbal images. Therefore, the *cinematographicness* of a literary work is an example of intermedial transcoding, which, according to Mikhail Bakhtin (2010, p. 358), is "the ability of a language to represent another language."

The Notion of Literary Cinematographicness and its Constituents

The main feature of a cinematic literary text is its pronounced *audio-visibility*, whereby writers describe various aspects of a story primarily in terms of their sensory perception, along with theatrical means like action, non-verbal language, and dialogue. The objective of such narrative is "telling for showing" (Kellman, 1987, p. 474), whereas literary descriptions of the inner, psycho-emotional spheres, with direct verbalized indications of human thoughts and emotions, are rarely used. Examples of this are frequent detailed descriptions of the appearance or non-verbal language of the characters, which not simply state but also presuppose that the recipient will be able to imbue them with the necessary psychological and emotional meaning. Another means of audio-visibility in literature is rendering of the inner world through the outer one, such as through the images of nature, landscapes, weather, streets, peculiar sounds (or silence), and music. In addition, the cinematic text employs special effects like blurring of pictures or colours, zoom shots, contrast of light and darkness, focus, the panorama effect, etc., and sound effects – echoes, contrast of silence and sound, background sounds, rhythm, music, and peculiar emotional intonation. Moreover, in filmic writing, the world is often composed in clearly defined shots and perspectives, which can be retraced in detailed depictions of character's appearance or facial expression (*close-up*), character's place of interaction (*wide shot*), as well as in descriptions of landscapes or distant objects (*extreme long shot*).

Another aspect of literary *cinematographicness* can be traced in the elliptical, fragmented structure of the narrative, which resembles the *montage* editing technique in film. Stephen Kellman (1987, p. 473) defines the method of montage in literature as an organized "sequence of narrative fragments," the order of which is dictated by a certain narrative and aesthetic idea. In turn, Marshall McLuhan (1969, p. 241) compares the effect of montage in literature to the

stream-of-consciousness technique, describing it as a “means of the mental snapshot, of the sequence of the arrested and isolated moments of experience which anticipate the cinema.” In a literary work, *montage* also manifests itself through special techniques of constructing its temporality, with numerous elliptical transitions, sudden shifts of the chronotope, time distortions, flashbacks, accelerated or slow-motion pace, etc.

Literary Cinematographicness in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Novels

Kazuo Ishiguro is a contemporary British writer of Japanese descent. He was born in Nagasaki, in 1954, and when he was five years old, the family moved to Britain. As argued by many critics, Ishiguro’s works are examples of postmodern literature characterized by hybridity on multicultural, multi-genre, and intermedial levels. In his fiction, Ishiguro actively incorporates the afore-mentioned cinematic techniques, evoking both Western and Eastern (particularly Japanese) literary traditions. Researchers have repeatedly pointed to the peculiar “stinginess” of emotion in Ishiguro’s texts; particularly, Wai Chew Sim (2009, p. 82) describes Ishiguro’s artistic method as “a spare, elliptical style where everything works by inference and insinuation, an extraordinary control of pace, and a focus on psychological minutiae rather than external action.” And yet, the author makes these simple, seemingly insignificant details and situations emotionally meaningful due to the hidden psychological meaning that only empathetic readers can reconstruct. In addition, Ishiguro shows a deep interest in the peculiarities of human memory, whereby the common feature of his narratives is that they intertwine with the scenes of the protagonists’ past, marking their attempt to answer a certain unspoken question that subconsciously torments them.

Essentially employing the method of psychological parallelism to show the characters’ feelings without naming them directly, Ishiguro develops the poetics of imagery, with an in-depth semantics of various audio-visual images and effects, much like in haiku or imagism poetry. First of all, the author often conveys the psychological content through the symbolism of external phenomena, such as the depiction of nature or landscapes. For example, in the novel *A Pale View of Hills*, each image-scene carries a deep symbolic and psychological meaning, while remaining concise and audio-visual at its core. Accordingly, the consciousness of the protagonist-narrator is revealed not through long descriptions of her thoughts and emotions, but through the scenes of memories, dialogues, common everyday situations, landscape sketches and non-verbal language. An important visual symbol is already present in the title of the novel – “A Pale View of Hills” – which hints at Japan, the protagonist’s memories as if through a pale veil of mist, denoting a weak connection between past and present. Interestingly, a landscape covered with mist, which is a common motif of Japanese art, appears to be central in all Ishiguro’s novels, symbolizing the vagueness, uncertainty, and the illusory nature of the visible world: “a *mist* was rolling across my path” (Ishiguro, 2010, p. 160); “the night outside – its deathly hush, the chill, the thickening *mist*” (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 106); “stared at the *blank fog* on the other side” (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 206); “the past <...> had somehow faded into a *mist* as dense as that which hung over the marshes” (Ishiguro, 2015, p. 11). Such recurring symbolic image of mist and fog probably points to the protagonists’ confusion and emotional uncertainty, the vagueness and fading of their memories, as well as the lack of a clear vision of their future, as seen in the given examples.

In general, Ishiguro's novels abound in symbolic images representing the feelings of loss, confusion, desolation etc. The audio-visual nature of the novel *The Unconsoled*, for example, is represented by visual metaphors that symbolically convey certain phenomena and archetypes of the human psyche in cinema and other visual arts, such as the pervasive motif of wandering through a labyrinth, climbing stairs, and falling into darkness: «*another narrow dark street*» (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 54); «*claustrophobic corridors*» (p. 92); «*the dark road unwinding before us*» (p. 126); «*walkway dark, silent and empty*» (p. 242).

Although present in other Ishiguro's novels, auditory imagery is particularly important in *The Unconsoled*, primarily because the protagonist is a musician. A frequent phenomenon in the novel is filling the environment with background sounds of the city or nature, as in the following examples: “*the sound of voices calling and shouting, the clanging of heavy metallic objects, the hissing of water and steam*” (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 458); “*the sounds of birds beginning their chorus. The wind was moving in the trees*” (p. 498). Another peculiarity in the novel is the constant involvement of specific audio-visual effects, such as echoes, rhythm, sudden intense noises, and of course, music, where the author emphasizes its emotional effect on the characters: “*our footsteps echoing in the empty street*» (p. 126), «*our footsteps resounding through the auditorium*” (p. 532); «*a faint, rhythmic noise that would stop and start*» (p. 335); “*thunderous applause*” (p. 450); “*the music had cast a spell over us all, had lulled us into a deeply tranquil mood*” (p. 102); “*The sadness of the music drifting through the air*” (p. 414).

Furthermore, the effect of a zoom-in or close-up shot often becomes instrumental in depicting the character's feelings. What is notable in Ishiguro's writing is that instead of directly verbalizing characters' emotions and reactions, he often depicts them through their external manifestations, that is, non-verbal language, such as by focusing on facial expressions and gestures: “*the grey-haired man had started to raise his arm, his fingers almost in a pointing gesture, a reprimand all but escaping his lips*” (Ishiguro, 2015, p. 76); “*His jaw clenched furiously, his cheeks grew distorted, the muscles on his neck stood out*” (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 454).

Interestingly, although the narrators of Ishiguro's novels are mostly 1st person, even their own feelings they usually reveal through external manifestations, which emphasizes the alienated and contemplative nature of their self-narratives: “*though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control*” (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 211); “*some residue of my bewilderment, not to say shock, remained detectable in my expression*” (Ishiguro, 2010, p. 15). Besides, the frequent use of remarks that indicate the characters' intonation is another example of revealing their feelings through external, non-verbal manifestations: “*There was a playful note in her voice*” (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 56); “*I heard Miss Kenton say softly behind me*” (Ishiguro, 2010, p. 104); “*I said it dead straight, with a bit of weariness*” (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 113).

Another example of Ishiguro's novels' audio-visual nature is the involvement of specific visual effects, such as:

- blurring of the picture, when the narrators observe something through mist or smoke: “*watching through the misted-up windows*” (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 98);
- blurry background: “*all I could see of her was her profile outlined against a pale*

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and empty background” (Ishiguro, 2010, p. 154);

- special attention to certain light effects, such as specifying peculiar sources of light and its effects: “*the effect of the pale light coming into the room and the way it lit up the edges of my father’s <...> features*” (Ishiguro, 2010, p. 64);
- contrasts of light and darkness, playing with colours and shadows: “*I was in a wide bare corridor lit harshly with fluorescent ceiling strips*»” (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 468);
- the effect of focus on a particular object that has special symbolic or emotional meaning for the protagonist: *the floor was a vast expanse of white tiles, at the centre of which, dominating everything, was a fountain*» (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 20);
- the effect of panorama, vividly describing landscapes and distant objects on the horizon or providing an establishing long shot at the beginning of the scene: “*There were instead miles of desolate, uncultivated land; here and there rough-hewn paths over craggy hills or bleak moorland*” (Ishiguro, 2015, p. 9).

Another important peculiarity of Ishiguro’s texts is that they are also elliptical and fragmented, which is analogous to the technique of montage editing in cinematography. Moreover, since his novels are mostly based on the memories of the past, the techniques of multiple timelines and flashbacks form the basis of his narratives. For instance, in *Never Let Me Go*, the defining feature of the narrative structure is the technique of flashbacks and even “flashbacks within flashbacks,” with the main timeline being continuously interrupted by the protagonist’s memories of her childhood at Hailsham, the boarding school for clones, and the subsequent years up to the present moment, where she captures her story. With regards to the narrative flow, the scenes in the novel often replace each other as based on the principle of associations, when the memories of the past suddenly interrupt the events of the present, as shown in the following example scene:

Not long ago I was driving through an empty stretch of Worcestershire and saw one [pavilion] beside a cricket ground so like ours at Hailsham I actually turned the car and went back for a second look.

We loved our sports pavilion, maybe because it reminded us of those sweet little cottages people always had in picture books when we were young. I can remember us back in the Juniors, pleading with guardians to hold the next lesson in the pavilion instead of the usual room. (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 7)

Here, in the first sentence, we can observe how the protagonist’s noticing a random sports pavilion during her drive (‘*saw one beside a cricket ground*’) makes her remember the similar pavilion at Hailsham (‘*like ours at Hailsham*’). Thereby, her narrative suddenly shifts to the memories about the mentioned pavilion (‘*We loved our sports pavilion*’), thus beginning the story of her childhood. The montage-like nature of this fragment consists in a sudden change of the spatio-temporal coordinates, caused by certain associations that evoke a memory in the protagonist. For the reader, this means an immediate and complete replacement of the “frame” in their inner movie, automatically redecorating the new scène with necessary details and images.

In other cases, the protagonist’s memories tend to mingle, spontaneously shifting into one another; for instance, when the distant memories are suddenly replaced by the more recent ones, and vice versa. This is evident in the second example passage:

...how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at “creating.”

Ruth and I often found ourselves remembering these things a few years ago, when I was caring for her down at the recovery centre in Dover. (Ishiguro, 2017, p. 14)

Here, the more distant memory about Hailsham (‘how you were regarded at Hailsham’) is interrupted by the rather recent one (‘remembering these things a few years ago’), when Kathy, the protagonist, and her friend Ruth were already grown-ups, hence showcasing the multilevel chronotope in the novel.

The fragmented discourse in Ishiguro’s novels also employs the “gap strategy”, where “what does not appear – what lurks on the fringes of the narrative – is often the most important specter in the story” (Black, 2009, p. 803), while the whole picture is revealed to the reader only in the end of each novel. That is, upon reading the simple, short-spoken 1st-person narrative, the emphatic reader discovers the hidden truth behind what is actually written, such as Etsuko’s sense of guilt about her daughter’s suicide in *A Pale View of Hills*, Stevens’s unspoken love in *The Remains of the Day*, or the fact that the characters in *Never Let Me Go* are clones created for organ donation and, thus, inhumanely deprived of the chance to live a normal human life. Consequently, Ishiguro’s novels appear as a kaleidoscope of separated scenes and frames, where the reader’s task is to reconstruct the necessary spatio-temporal relations and see the whole, true story behind them, which likens his works to the art of cinema.

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