



The Representation of English and Japanese National Characteristics through Female Characters in the Works of K. Ishiguro

Irsaliev Madinakhon

Lecturer, National University of Uzbekistan

E-mail: irsaliyeva92@bk.ru

Abstract

This article analyzes how female characters in the works of one of the prominent figures of 21st-century English literature — Anglo-Japanese writer Kazuo Ishiguro — reflect the complex processes of intercultural identity formation. Using examples from the novels “The Remains of the Day” (1989), “An Artist of the Floating World” (1986), “Never Let Me Go” (2005), and “Klara and the Sun” (2021), the study explores the traits typical of English society such as self-control duty and emotional suppression as well as Japanese values like loyalty and familial obligation through the lens of female characters. The analysis highlights how these women become symbolic intersections of cultural dialogue.

Key words: female characters, English literature, anglo-japanese, intercultural, values, symbolic.

Introduction. Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the most renowned contemporary writers addressing issues of memory and identity through Anglo-Japanese experiences. Born in Nagasaki in 1954 and raised in the UK since 1960, Ishiguro fuses Western and Eastern cultural codes in his novels. His female characters — Miss Kenton (Kathleen Benn, *The Remains of the Day*), Noriko (granddaughter of Ono, *An Artist of the Floating World*), Kathy H. (*Never Let Me Go*), and Klara (*Klara and the Sun*) — serve as narrative devices through which national values, emotional memory, and socio-cultural constraints are interrogated.

Methods and Results. Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the representatives of so-called cross-cultural literature, where the national component plays a significant role. Although Ishiguro writes in English, national identity is not the central theme of his work. On the contrary, the author emphasizes the “universal” nature of his novels — that is, they can be understood by anyone, regardless of cultural background. Nevertheless, a certain “Japanese accent” can still be observed in his writing, even though there may be nothing overtly reminiscent of Japan on the surface. One of the features considered “Japanese” is the absolute solitude and rootlessness (uprootedness) of the characters. Additionally, the detailed descriptions, the frequent use of euphemisms, ambiguity, and subtlety found throughout his novels are characteristics strongly associated with Japanese literature.

Both aesthetic and moral components play a significant role in Ishiguro’s novels, and these too carry a “Japanese accent.”



The Peerian Journal

Open Access | Peer Reviewed

Volume 43, June, 2025

Website: www.peerianjournal.com

ISSN (E): 2788-0303

Email: editor@peerianjournal.com

For instance, the Japanese aesthetic concept of *mono no aware* — the melancholic beauty of things — resonates with the imagery of watching an old boat in the novel, which mirrors traditional Japanese experiences such as observing the moon, cherry blossoms, or snow. On a moral level, the concept of duty (*giri*) becomes a unifying thread throughout the narrative. Much like the code of the samurai, the characters strive to act within the framework of a system defined by society and to fulfill their responsibilities with sincerity and integrity.

The researcher Nesterenko studied K. Ishiguro's works and analyzed. According to his studies a distinct "Japanese accent" can be clearly traced in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005). The novel combines features of dystopian fiction with elements of serious realistic narrative and parable-like qualities. As in Ishiguro's other works, the reader encounters multiple layers of time and space. The main character, Kathy, as it gradually becomes clear, is not entirely human — she is a clone. Kathy narrates her present life, in which she serves as a carer for donors (i.e., clones who have undergone one or more organ donation procedures for transplantation to humans), while simultaneously recalling her past. The novel is divided into three parts, each organized around a different spatial and temporal setting. The author situates the story in a specific, realistic timeframe — the late 1990s. In the 1950s–60s, an educational facility called Hailsham was built for clones. In the first part of the novel, the reader learns about Kathy's childhood spent at Hailsham, where she was raised alongside her friends Ruth and Tommy. This time is perceived as "one golden period." At the age of sixteen, they leave Hailsham and move to the so-called Cottages — which, in reality, are the remains of a farm. Rapid changes begin to occur in their lives, described by Kathy as "...as if day had turned into night" (Ishiguro, 2009: 105). They stay there until they move on to begin their training as carers for donors¹. In the final part of the novel, Kathy speaks about her present life: she has been a carer for nearly twelve years, caring for donors — among them, her closest friends Ruth and Tommy.

Results and Discussion. The findings belong to the researcher Polona Ramzak shows that several characters in Ishiguro contribute to a broad perspective of 'Japaneseness' with their stereotypical and non-stereotypical behaviour and thinking. They are frequently in conflict with the change in their values, mostly because of the war. These old-fashioned values are often the remains of Japanese ethics, followed by the samurai class. Ishiguro's imaginary Japan leans on the samurai ethics. In his stories "The Summer after the War" and "A Family Supper", the young protagonists deal with the bitter reaction of their older relatives to the decay of traditional Japanese values, replaced by American influence. The latter even depicts a samurai suicide. In *A Pale View of the Hills*, Etsuko, the narrator, moves to England from Japan. After her daughter's suicide, she recollects the time she spent in Nagasaki. On the one hand, Etsuko represents the

¹ Ю. С. Нестеренко. Элементы японской культуры в романе Кадзуо Исигуро «Не отпускай меня». Знание. Понимание. Умение. – М.: 2015. – С.3.



The Peerian Journal

Open Access | Peer Reviewed

Volume 43, June, 2025

Website: www.peerianjournal.com

ISSN (E): 2788-0303

Email: editor@peerianjournal.com

post-WWII change, moving to a better place and marrying a businessman, while at the same time, she remains dependent on her husband, keeping the façade of a happy marriage, thus proving the stereotype of Japanese families being patriarchal. The novel features another Japanese stereotype: that working women are to be pitied and despised². However on Ishiguro's 'Japaneseness', the critics disagree. Haruki Murakami, a leading Japanese author, says that *The Remains of the Day* "looks like a Japanese novel – in its mentality, its taste, its colour," (cited in Iyer 1994: 58), while Kenzaburo Oe, an other Japanese literary legend, mentions that Ishiguro's books make him feel that the power of the characters is not very Japanese, that the books are about people from England (Oe & Ishiguro 1991: 115). Ishiguro sees the biggest difference between Japan and England in the peace and quiet of the English countryside.

The creation of female characters in the debut novel "A pale view of hills", in particular, the main character Etsuko, shows the balance between commonality and creative individuality in the context of the story. So, we will consider two main situations in the creation of the female image in the work. 1. Generality: The novel's female characters, including Etsuko, operate within the social and cultural norms of post-World War II Japan and, to some extent, post war Britain. These norms influence their roles, expectations, and behaviors. 2. Creative individuality: 1) unique personal memory: each female character in the novel, including Etsuko, has a unique personal past and experiences that shape her individuality. Etsuko's memories of her personal past in Japan and her experiences during and after the war inform her unique perspective and choices. 2) emotional complexity: Etsuko's emotional world, including her feelings of loss and grief, demonstrates her individuality. Her emotional reactions and relationships with her daughters and other characters are deeply personal and reflect her unique experiences. Etsuko's experience as a Japanese woman living in post-war Britain also emphasizes her creative individuality.

Conclusion. The female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels embody hybrid figures that simultaneously represent and reconstruct cultural codes from both English and Japanese traditions. Anchored in four motifs – duty, emotional restraint, caregiving, and soft resistance – these figures serve as cultural bridges. The study contributes to a deeper postcolonial-feminist understanding of female representation and enriches methodologies of cross-cultural literary analysis. In general, Kazuo Ishiguro's novels are significant for their intellectual and emotional depth, their contribution to literature and culture, and their ability to provoke thought and discussion on a wide range of topics. Female characters are the main in his works which shows both English and Japanese characteristics. His work continues to be celebrated today for his artistry and ability to connect with readers on a deep level.

References

1. Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
2. Ishiguro, K. (1986). *An Artist of the Floating World*. Faber & Faber.

² P. Ramzak. Ishiguro's Japanese-English Identity and His Reception Internationally and in Slovenia. 2021. – p. 99–114. DOI: 10.4312/an.54.1-2.99-114.



The Peerian Journal

Open Access | Peer Reviewed

Volume 43, June, 2025

Website: www.peerianjournal.com

ISSN (E): 2788-0303

Email: editor@peerianjournal.com

3. Ishiguro, K. (1989). *The Remains of the Day*. Faber & Faber.
4. Ishiguro, K. (2005). *Never Let Me Go*. Faber & Faber.
5. Ishiguro, K. (2021). *Klara and the Sun*. Faber & Faber.
6. Spivak, G. C. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?". *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 271–313.
7. Sugihara, Y., Katsurada, E. (2002). "Gender role development in Japanese culture." *Sex Roles*, 47(10), 389–400.
8. Нестеренко, Ю. С. (2015). Элементы японской культуры в романе Кадзуо Исигуро «Не отпускай меня». *Знание. Понимание. Умение*, 3.
9. Ramzak, P. (2021). Ishiguro's Japanese-English identity and his reception internationally and in Slovenia. *Acta Neophilologica*, *54*(1-2), 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.4312/an.54.1-2.99-114>