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Bakalářská práce

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**A comparison of contemporary dystopian novels by Kazuo
Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun***

Čestné prohlášení

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis is concerned with the comparison of two novels by the author Kazuo Ishiguro – *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021). It is divided into two main parts: the theoretical part, where are introduced literary genres dystopia and alternate history, and the practical part which describes the two novels and their similarities and differences according to the terminology introduced in the theoretical part. The main goal is to compare these two novels and find the similarities and differences between them in regard to the analysis of four main points: society, the main characters, the meaning of being human, and endings.

Introduction

Dystopian literature has been a highly popular genre since long ago. But perhaps the interest in this genre is fading, given that some topics such as technological progress are much closer to us than when they have only been described on the pages of books. Authors like Kazuo Ishiguro, in particular, can portray dystopian themes so realistically that many readers may feel that the themes resemble our reality rather than fiction. It is this Nobel Prize winner who has created works that are meant to make readers ponder. These works contain elements of dystopia, but they also portray other aspects of reality that our society might encounter at some point. And besides all the pessimism of the developed world, he still hopes that we humans will keep what is truly humane and unreplaceable by technical progress.

The main goal of this bachelor thesis is to compare the dystopian novels *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro. The aim is to highlight the similar and different elements in the novels. This thesis aims to introduce the books of the British Nobel Prize winner to society and broaden the awareness of modern dystopian literature.

The bachelor thesis is divided into two main parts: theoretical and practical. The theoretical part includes chapters that introduce the reader to concepts such as dystopia and alternate history, which are important characteristics of the analysed books. The last chapter of the theoretical part includes a biography of the author Kazuo Ishiguro.

The practical part focuses on the individual novels *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*. The analysis consists of the circumstances of their publication, the content of the books, and then the individual elements including the description of society, main characters, the meaning of being human, and the ending of both novels. At the end of the practical part, there is an overall comparison of the elements of the analysed books in which the similarities and differences between the novels are described.

1 Dystopia as a literary genre

The word *Dystopia* comes from Ancient Greek, where “*dys*” means bad or hard and “*tópos*” means place. This gives us a clear image of how to perceive this meaning. Dystopia represents a place, some kind of fictive world that has gone bad.

Dystopia has been one of the most popular literary genres in the past centuries. The term “dystopia” was first used by John Stuart Mill in the 19th century, when he associated it as the opposite of utopia. However, the common usage of this word as a genre of literature started after the Second World War. In literature, where utopia was portrayed as the perfect place full of perfect things, dystopia was the opposite (Bedore, 2021).

It is also important to see the difference between dystopia and anti-utopia, as they are often interpreted as synonyms. Vieira (2010, p. 17) states, that anti-utopia derives from utopia in the same way dystopia does; nevertheless, the main point is that in anti-utopia, there, is no *hope*. It is about pessimism, destruction, and a corrupted social system. Dystopian literature may be showing the same signs, but the readers are left with the hope of change.

Dystopian literature usually reflects societal concerns. The portrayal of modern dystopia in literature is connected to the industrial progress because people were scared that this change could only bring destruction to the world. There was also a lack of knowledge, which has made dystopian works so frightening. Due to the rise of fascism, the Holocaust, and the output of war weapons, the idea of dystopia became especially realistic. People started to realize, that greediness for power and control over the world would only bring them despair. And there also came the question about the moral, social, and environmental consequences of humans’ action. At this time, great dystopian novels were published such as *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley or *1984* (1949) by George Orwell. The beginning of socialism also greatly impacted the portrayal of dystopia in novels. Protagonists were usually stripped of their identity and individuality, becoming part of one big society, without hope for the future (Demerjian, 2016, p. 7-10).

Contemporary dystopian literature usually portrays a character that stands against the system, and the world, for example in the case of *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins, *Divergent* (2011) by Veronica Roth, and so on. Generally, this main protagonist wants to make a change in the corrupted future. The portrayal of the near future is usually very close to the readers and they are able to imagine, what could possibly happen in their world. This makes

them sympathize with the protagonist. Additionally, it is essential that the author creates a fictional system that readers can relate to (Pavlova, 2018, p. 113).

Pavlova (2018, p. 115) divides dystopian literature into three main categories – political, ecological, and technological. Political dystopia is usually associated with the demise of utopian ideas and social engineering (e.g., *American War* by Omar El Akkad). Ecological dystopias illustrate ecological catastrophes that are commonly caused by human's action, but they can also be natural disasters themselves (e.g., *The Children of Men* by P. D. James). The most common technical dystopia is generally caused by the technological and industrial progress, as was mentioned above (e.g., *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro).

The protagonist of dystopian novels is mostly a clever and observant person, that notices that there is something wrong in their society. In the beginning, the character is blinded and does not usually recognize any flaws in the system. The character fortunately (and most times even randomly) becomes aware of the corrupted world and decides to find a brighter future behind the system. The author has to create a world, where the readers are able to identify with the protagonist and his/her situation. Readers then can see the connection between the fictional world and reality, thus bringing out the true effect of dystopian literature (Pavlova, 2018, p. 115). Booker (in Voigts & Tönnies, 2020, p. 297) adds that the main protagonist often fails in his rebellion, and this is also followed by the reaction of the readers. This failure serves as a kind of warning and motivation for the readers to look for parallels in the fictional and real world. Readers thus have the opportunity to spot any similar cues that are present in dystopian literature and thus prevent them from erupting in the real world (Zeißler in Voigts & Tönnies, 2020, p. 297).

One of the other elements of dystopian literature is control or some oppressive force that keeps order in the fictional world. This force is often referred to as the antagonist of the story that the protagonist fights against (Adams in Ryan, 2014, p. 7). Society can be violently silenced in order to achieve its stability (Reeve in Ryan, 2014, p. 9).

2 Alternate history in literature

Alternate history (sometimes referred to as alternative history, alternate universe, or parahistory) is a genre of literature that focuses on historical events, that turned out in a different way from, how we know them today. Thanks to these changes in history, the present alters from our reality and some of the events bring out a different, fictive future. Alternate history is usually associated with science fiction, however, some science fiction critics claim, that for it to be a part of sci-fi literature, it has to include some relation to technology, for example, motives of time traveling (Hellekson, 2000, p. 248-249).

Hellekson (2000, p. 249-250) also explains four models of history: the eschatological, genetic, entropic, and teleological. The author also mentions that these models of history play with the “*beginning and end, design and disorder*”. The first eschatological model describes the ultimate destiny of humankind or its history. The genetic type however concerns with the origin and development of history. The entropic model characterizes the random forming process of history. In reverse, the teleological model of history is based on a purpose and a goal. Alternate history can follow any of these models, nonetheless, the genetic model is the core of this literary genre (thanks to the essential change in the historical timeline).

Besides these four models, Hellekson (2000, p. 251-254) divides alternate history into other subgenres according to the time. One of them are nexus stories, which deal with time traveling (time policing stories) and stories about battles. They are mostly centred around one centric point in the timeline (battle, assassination), that had an effect on our present. In the alternative histories that take part in the time change, there is usually some head of the system that organizes events for their own purpose. This “*chronocracy*” (as Hellekson calls it) is basically the time controller of this society, they play with the timeline to reach balance. Even with this kind of control, the chronocracy still fails in the end. The battle stories focus on the war events in the history, but with the emphasis on military strategy and warfare, without taking into account the historical or philosophical concerns. As for the characters, they usually display known historical figures and emphasize battle strategies, weapons, and battling. These characters then change the present politics.

The other subgenre that Hellekson mentions is the true alternate history. This normally occurs after the nexus event, resulting in a changed world. One drastic change then causes multiple other changes, which develop in a world that is completely different from our reality.

Last but not least, there are parallel worlds stories in which there are many different alternate worlds with their alternate histories – and they all exist at the same time. They conclude that history can change at any time and all the events can happen at the same time in each timeline. There is also the importance of linear time in these parallel worlds.

From another point of view, we can distinguish two types of scenarios in alternative histories – fantasy and nightmare. These two forms can be interpreted as what the author hopes for or fears. Fantasy scenarios represent the disappointment of what is in the present and show the past as superior. They lean towards liberalism because they describe how the past was better and want to change the present back to its beginning. On the other hand, nightmare scenarios show the past as inferior to the present, being satisfied with how the present has turned out. They tend to be conservative; they perceive the past negatively and deny any need for change. These forms however might vary, thus meaning that nightmare scenarios can also have liberal tendencies as fantasy scenarios can be more conservative. Nevertheless, most of the alternate histories use the past to advance larger goals for the present day (Rosenfeld, 2003, p. 93).

Alternate histories can also take part in alternate worlds. As a result of some change in the past, the present evolves in a different way thus creating a new world. Authors frequently reveal how the change occurred, helping the readers to realize why is this an alternative history. These changes can be associated with plagues, diseases, politics, exploration, technology, or war (Oki, 2011, p. 95-96).

3 About the author Kazuo Ishiguro

The Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro was born on the 8th of November 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan. Until the age of five, he had lived within the traditional Japanese style in a generational house with his parents and grandparents. In some of his novels, he also portrays some of his experiences from living in Japan.

Ishiguro and his family followed his father, who was invited to work in the National Institute of Oceanography, to Great Britain in 1960. They settled in Guildford, Surrey, not expecting to stay in Britain for more than two years. He attended Woking County Grammar School beginning at the age of eleven and remained there until he entered university, even though his family still considered going back to Japan.

As a teenager, he wrote and performed songs at local venues with his friends. His inspiration for music came from big musicians such as Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and Joni Mitchell. Ishiguro himself learned how to play guitar and took piano lessons since he was five years old.

When Ishiguro was in his twenties, he decided to travel around the USA and Canada, and on the way back to England he started writing his first stories inspired by his travels.

He enrolled at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1974, where he studied English Literature and Philosophy. There he was met with the works of Proust and Kafka, which had a great influence on him.

In 1976 he started working on his first novel, which was never published. Two years after that he graduated from his Bachelor's studies and became interested in authors like Austen, Dostoyevsky, Socrates, and others. He continued to write another of his novels in 1977, but this one as well has never been published.

He started to take classes in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia in 1979. This small course was managed by Malcolm Bradbury. Later on, another great British writer Angela Carter became his tutor and close friend. During his studies at UEA, he began to publish short stories in literary magazines.

In 1982 he was given British citizenship and at the same time, he also published his first novel *A Pale View of Hills*, a story about a Japanese widow living in England. This book has won him several awards and inspired him to continue with his writing. He then started to write screenplays for television.

The first novel that brought him recognition was *The Remains of the Day* in 1989 which also won the Booker Prize. This story also received a film adaptation directed by James Ivory.

From years 1995 to 2021, the author published other novels such as *The Unconsoled* (1995), *When We Were Orphans* (2000), *Never Let Me Go* (2005), *The Buried Giant* (2015), *Klara and the Sun* (2021) (The Nobel Prize in Literature, 2017).

Ishiguro has received many awards in the past years, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017. His novels were translated into over fifty languages, and two of them were made into movies. He also received a knighthood in 2018 for Service to Literature (Faber, © 2022).

4 Never Let Me Go

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* was written in 2005 and it is his sixth novel. In his previous novels, for example, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), he portrayed British history, traditions, and nature. In the case of *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) or *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), he used Japanese historical elements. In *Never Let Me Go* he turns away from these historical stereotypes and he focuses on the present day with a dystopian topic. Due to this change of setting, it is sometimes classified as a sci-fi novel (Musilová, 2007).

However, many critics refuse to classify this novel under the sci-fi genre for its lack of science. The book itself is about clones – but these clones are real people with emotions. More than science fiction literature, *Never Let Me Go* can be classified as an alternate history – as it is set in an alternative England, there is the progress of bioengineering, and the overall existence of clones, that changes the present healthcare (Oki, 2011, p. 95).

On the other hand, Ishiguro does not provide enough information about this alternate universe for the readers, as he mentioned in an interview for Film Independent: “*It starts to raise all the issues about biotechnology, about organ donations. That is fine with me, but I am not sure that it is the heart of what we are trying to do. We are trying to tell a story about love and friendship in the face of the bleak fact that we are mortal.*” (Film Independent, 2010). It shows that Ishiguro might have created an alternative universe, but its importance is not essential for the novel.

The story is told through the eyes of the main character, Kathy H., who describes the life of hers and her friends Ruth and Tommy. The novel is divided into three parts. The first part describes their childhood and growing up at Hailsham boarding school. Students live here isolated from the rest of society and are strictly educated by guardians so that one day they can become donors. As children, they do not yet realize the fate of their lives, and the current most important thing for them is to be healthy, and creative. They create artworks that then get to the gallery, which is run by the mysterious “Madame”. One day, one of their guardians, Miss Lucy, explains to them that their main purpose in life is organ donation. She tells them that they will never live ordinary lives, they will not have the opportunity to travel somewhere, and that one day they will become donors. However, the students do not fully understand this.

In the next part, as teenagers, they leave Hailsham for the first time and arrive at the Cottages - a deserted farm where they try to fit in with the community of students from other institutions

before they can become carers. Here we learn that the young students are the clones of the members of social minorities. A rumour also begins to spread among the young people that if they are able to prove that they are in love, they can gain a few extra years of life and delay their donation. At the end of their stay at the Cottages, there is a conflict between Kathy and Ruth with Tommy, who were a couple at the time. After that, Kathy leaves the Cottages to become a carer.

The final part of the book portrays Kathy H.'s life as a carer, who takes care of the other donors. She describes her caring for Ruth, who awaits her last donation, which she will probably not survive. Ruth suggests they visit Tommy and go on their last trip. In their final moments together, Ruth admits that she regrets keeping her and Tommy apart, so she gives them the address of Madame, who used to run the Gallery for Hailsham students. They believe that if they can prove love through their artwork, they will be able to extend their lives. Ruth dies and Kathy becomes Tommy's carer. They decide to fulfil Ruth's last wish and visit Madame, who lives with Miss Emily, Hailsham's former headmistress, who tells them there has never been any deferral. Hailsham always tried to give the students a humane education, and the gallery served to prove to the world that even clones are normal people. Unfortunately, their experiment did not work and so they closed Hailsham. At the end of the book, Kathy ends up being a Carer for Tommy, who dies after a subsequent donation (Ishiguro, 2005).

Never Let Me Go was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2005. It was also interpreted into a movie version in 2010, starring Kiera Knightley as one of the main characters (British Council, 2017). Now, there are speculations about a new series adaptation of Ishiguro's book, which, however, no longer follows the plot line of the novel, but rather focuses on a dystopian society and a protagonist who rebels against it (Hailu, 2022).

4.1 Society

As was mentioned above, many critics label *Never Let Me Go* as an alternate history. Ishiguro uses real events in order to create a new world. In this case, it is a devastated England after World War II. Health care there developed in a different way, than how we know it today. Later in the book, one of the guardians – Miss Emily – explains to Kathy and Tommy how the donations started. There were no students but “*shadowy objects in test tubes*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 256). She tries to clarify, that Hailsham tried to demonstrate that even clones have emotions and talents, but it was later banned by the rest of society. When Kathy asks why would the clones be treated badly, Miss Emily describes that since now doctors were able to cure fatal diseases,

people would rather prioritize their own families and partners over the clones that tried to act like regular humans. She states: “*They tried to convince themselves you weren’t really like us. That you were less than a human*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 257-258). This statement builds a divided society where “normal” people stand on one side and cloned people on the other.

In addition, these clones were genetically created from other people (in the novel, they are called *possibles*), especially from social minorities, such as prostitutes, criminals, and homeless people (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 164). This also adds up to the division of society. It raises the question, whether these people who were chosen for cloning could be considered not so important for society. They can be used and in case something goes bad, it will not matter to the rest of society.

These clones are educated in boarding schools, even though they stay here their whole childhood. As a matter of fact, it could be considered their home, because they do not leave until they are old enough (Buchweitz, 2020, p. 133). Hailsham is considered one of the “*privileged estates*”, but there are other schools for the cloned students (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 4). From Kathy’s description, Hailsham was secluded from the rest of the world. The school was surrounded by forests, and the students did not have many visitors from the outside world, besides Madame and people who brought them accessories from the outside world. The woods around the school were used to scare the students, so they had no desire to leave the school’s premises (Ishiguro, 2005, 49-50). The same goes for the Cottages – a separate farmhouse for the students, where they were sent after reaching a certain age. Again, there were not many visitors from the outside, only Mr. Keffers, who visited them a few times a week. He mostly did not speak to the students and looked at them with disgust. Kathy mentions: “*You went up to greet him when he arrived in his van and he’d stare at you like you were mad*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 114-115).

To follow up on the previous statement, the division of *Never Let Me Go*’s society is clear from how regular people react when meeting one of the students. Not only Mr. Keffers was an unapproachable individual. In her memories, Kathy talks about Madame and her strange behaviour, when she was approached by Hailsham’s students. The children themselves speculated there was something wrong with her and decided to test, why was she acting that way. When she got surrounded by the students, Kathy describes that she was afraid of them, as someone is afraid of spiders (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 35). The rest of society tried to keep a distance from the clones, as they were not only scared of them, but they did not want to admit that the

clones have to do anything with being human. They were treated as objects, that are not able to feel and express emotions.

4.2 The main characters

The novel's most important character is Kathy H., as we can see the events from her point of view. She talks about her life as a set of memories, from her childhood in Hailsham, until the end, when she wanders around England. The readers do not experience the novel as Kathy, they rather serve as listeners whom Kathy speaks to. Kathy has been a carer for almost twelve years, which is a long period compared to other clones. Kathy is an observant and caring character. It is evident from her work as a carer, which is greatly appreciated by others (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 3). Kathy deeply cared for Tommy and Ruth, nonetheless, it is noticeable that she did not appreciate their relationship. Kathy loved Tommy but did not want to ruin her friendship with Ruth, so she became a quiet observer. Instead of building a stable relationship, she became very promiscuous. Kathy and Ruth grow apart because of Ruth's manipulative behaviour, which is mentioned later in this chapter. She becomes closer with Tommy again, which Ruth cannot stand, making her the antagonist of the story. The readers sympathize with Kathy even more than before (Ray, 2018, p. 285-286). Even though Kathy is the protagonist of the story, she is in fact a neutral character – there is no rebellion, as it usually is in dystopian novels. The characters just accept their predetermined future as donors. Kathy being the narrator, readers lack information throughout the whole story, but in the end, thanks to her stubbornness, we are introduced to how this world with the clones functions (Musilová, 2007).

The other important characters are Tommy and Ruth – Kathy's best friends. Their relationship is very dynamic, and Ishiguro portrays a lot of aspects of growing up. These three characters grew up together in Hailsham, moved to Cottages, and spent their last minutes in each other's company. Readers can notice their development as they grow older from their unbothered childhood to their donor years.

Kathy talks about Tommy at the beginning of the story. As a boy, he used to be very hot-headed, and other children bullied him because of that (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 9-12). He had a problem with controlling his emotions and easily threw a tantrum. Kathy, however, was the only one who always tried to calm him down and stood up for him. At the end of their story, when they find out the truth, Kathy mentions that the reason for his outburst was that he possibly "*always knew*" about their fate (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 270). Tommy was not doing well in his artistic performance, which also shaped his character. It was very important for the children to be creative, so their

work could get to the Gallery (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 18-20). Many of his schoolmates laughed at his poor performance. After Miss Lucy, one of their guardians, explained to him, it is not important to create a masterpiece, he becomes quite introverted. Tommy started dating Ruth as they got older, which somehow created a gap between him and Kathy. They eventually find their way back together in the end. Tommy has no longer anger issues; he is social, creative, and very optimistic about their deferral. After finding out, that there is no possibility for them to delay their donations, he has one last outburst. Kathy kept him company until his final days (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 268-270).

Ruth and Kathy were best friends in Hailsham. Ruth had been very controlling of Kathy from the start and it got worse as it went on. Ruth had always wanted to be better than Kathy at everything and when they met, she was already very bossy (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 45-46). After Ruth started dating Tommy and they got into the Cottages, she became even more insufferable. Kathy herself then says “*Here were two quite separate Ruths*”, with one Ruth trying to impress the veterans and ignoring both Kathy and Tommy, and then the other Ruth from Hailsham, Kathy’s best friend (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 127). Towards the end, Kathy becomes Ruth’s carer, as they reconcile and reminisce about their time in Hailsham. Before her last donation, Ruth apologizes to Kathy for her previous behaviour. There is some sort of realization on Ruth's part when she admits that she stood between Kathy and Tommy. She then provides them with the address of Madame, so they can ask for a deferral (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 227-229).

4.3 The meaning of being human

As was stated in the beginning, Ishiguro’s main idea of the story is about being human. Yet the story is about characters that are not humans, but clones. These clones are not part of society, even though they look and behave like the rest of the population. They are kept away from the public until they reach a certain age when they can become donors. The considered humans are those, who use the organs of the clones (Buchweitz, 2020, p. 131-132).

Levy (2011, p. 13) raises a question of human rights and how it is connected to the story of clones in *Never Let Me Go*. The author mentions, how society in the novel reflects the “bystander effect”, where the world realizes the cruelty, performed on so-called clones, but chooses not to go against it. And as Miss Emily in the book says, people were aware of this inhumane thing, however, they decided to prioritize their loved ones over the clones.

Not only does Ishiguro put Kathy in the position of a narrator, but he also makes her a human by doing so. Perhaps the fact Kathy remembers everything proves her humanity. After all, the memories are the last thing she has left and that is why she emphasizes their importance: “*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 memories of them*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 280). Through her memories, she shares what the clones have been through and all the feelings they experienced – all that makes them people.

As this novel presents a set of memories, Kathy’s storytelling and reminiscing help her to become a human being. Even with the prescribed future, she still values everything she has been through. These memories give her the meaning of her and her friends’ existence – that they have in fact lived a life like regular humans (Boschetti, 2017, p. 51, 53-54).

4.4 The ending

In the end, when Kathy and Tommy reach Miss Emily and Madame, they are filled with hope – they hope to gain at least a few more years, so they can enjoy the “normal” life. However, their hopes are crushed right in front of their eyes when they find out, there has never been a deferral. Miss Emily and Madame do not give them any solution, they just tell them how it really is. They may look like the antagonists of the story, but they serve more as information givers at that point. The real antagonist was society and regular people, who refused to change their system. Hailsham only did everything to “*prove [the clones] had souls at all*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 255). At this point, they realize that there has never been any hope. Just like the clones, even the readers find all the information at the end of the book. There is no happy ending, Kathy and Tommy do not run away to live a better life – they just accept it.

The final pages indicate that Kathy needs to “*let go*” of everything from her past and her memories. And it has the same effect on the reader, who closes the book after finishing and, just like Kathy, goes “*wherever it is they are supposed to be*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 282). The title of the book “*Never Let Me Go*”, however, implies the opposite and thus Ishiguro creates the question of whether it is good to give up everything. Especially in this story, which is too similar to our world (Whitehead, 2011, p. 81).

Ishiguro created this novel as a vision of what could happen to our world. He set it in an alternate history in order to bring his bleak vision of the future closer to his readers. *Never Let Me Go* thus serves to inspire a younger generation who might just change that very idea of his (Nobel Prize, 2017).

5 Klara and the Sun

Klara and the Sun is Ishiguro's eighth novel and the most recent one, being published in 2021. The author turns away from history and the newest novel takes part in a dystopian future full of artificial intelligence and genetic modification. As in *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro raises a question about humanity, and what it means to be human. Many critics argue that there is a connection between *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* (Preston, 2021).

Kazuo Ishiguro himself answered that *Klara and the Sun* is somehow an “emotional reply” to *Never Let Me Go*. Both stories, even though they include elements of science fiction and a dystopian world, are at their core about being human. Ishiguro tries to highlight the good things about human nature. As *Never Let Me Go* finishes in a darker tone, *Klara and the Sun* leaves readers with hope (Bethune, 2021).

Klara's story takes place in the near future in the USA, where children undergo a genetic modification, known as “lifting”, to secure better education and career. We see the story from Klara's perspective, who is an Artificial Friend (AF). She and other AFs serve as companions to the lifted children. Klara is spotted one day in a shop by a girl named Josie, who chooses Klara as her companion. Klara moves to the countryside to live with Josie and her mother. As Klara grows close to Josie, she discovers that the young girl is seriously ill due to genetic modifications. Klara remains devoted to Josie and does everything in her power to help her when her condition worsens. It is also important to mention the Sun, which is like a god to Klara. Since the Sun is her energy source, she believes he can also cure Josie's illness.

Klara later meets Josie's best friend Rick, who unlike the other children has not been lifted, thus is discriminated against because of this and has less chance of further education. However, Rick and Josie are still great friends and share big plans for the future. And Klara, in order to make their plans come true, decides to save Josie. One day she goes to the fields to ask the Sun to cure Josie and in return, she promises to destroy one of the machines that pollute the environment.

Josie's mother, who has not yet come to terms with the death of Josie's older sister due to complications after genetic modification or with Josie's illness, plays a significant role in the novel. She begins to spend more time with Klara in order to give her the task of learning about Josie as much as possible, so that if Josie does not overcome her illness, Klara can become Josie herself. She is planning a “portrait” of Josie, a robotic version of her that they could combine

with Klara. As Josie's condition gets worse, Klara continues to believe that the Sun will save Josie, and even though she has failed to stop the pollution, she continues to beg the Sun to heal Josie. Especially because of the love between Josie and Rick.

On one dark day, the Sun appears in the sky and Josie's condition suddenly begins to improve and she soon regains her health back. Nevertheless, as Josie gets older, she leaves for university and she and Rick drift apart. Klara is eventually left alone and later ends up in the yard for broken robots. There she meets the manager of the store Klara occupied earlier and reminisces about happy memories and how the Sun saved Josie's life (Ishiguro, 2021).

Klara and the Sun is Ishiguro's first comeback after winning the Nobel Prize in 2017. The novel was longlisted for the Booker Prize in 2021 (Faber, 2021). Readers may expect to see Klara on the movie screen as well, as Sony 3000 Pictures have bought the screen rights to adapt the novel while Ishiguro will be the executive producer for this TV adaptation (Fleming, 2021).

5.1 Society

Ishiguro turns away from his classical setting in historical England or Japan and this time takes the readers to the futuristic United States of America. In this dystopian society, workers have been replaced with machines and artificial intelligence. Besides these robots, people are divided into high and low classes. Those with higher social status use AI along with so-called Artificial Friends as companions for their children. The children are schooled at home, thus meaning they have almost no interaction with their peers. That is why the parents buy them their AFs. They co-exist with this modern technique and think that it is necessary to have a pleasant life (Askew, 2021, p. 181). There are also people who are obsessed with artificial intelligence and robots and want to acquaint society with the importance of this technological development, such as Mr. Capaldi, who works on the portrait for Josie. He says: "*So we have to fight back. We have to say to them, okay, you're worried because you don't understand how AFs think. Fine, then let's go take a look under the hood*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 297). He suggests Klara to undergo research to familiarize humanity with AFs. He believes that there is nothing to be afraid of and that discovery can only enrich people's lives. But on the other side stand people, that were replaced by AI in their employment. This part of the population refuses this technical progress and rejects or even fears the robots (Askew, 2021, p. 182). People also seem to be repulsed by the idea of living side by side with robots. In one part of the novel, when Klara and Josie stand next to the theatre, there is a woman who states: "*First they take the jobs. Then they take the seats at the theatre*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 242).

It is also important to mention the division of the youth. Most of the children in *Klara and the Sun* are lifted (genetically modified) which will guarantee their better education. Josie is a lifted child, but her best friend Rick, unlike Josie, is an unlifted boy. This lifting is connected to the social status mentioned above. Lifted children usually come from rich families, the unlifted come from lower-class families. This leads to discrimination that is apparent on both of these sides. Josie and Rick's relationship is a great example of that. When Josie meets her lifted peers, Rick is quite hesitant about meeting them and adds: "*I don't think your guests will be so pleased*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 60). Rick is to some degree correct about his thoughts and as soon as he is welcomed by Josie's guests, he becomes the target of interrogation. All of the other children interview him and claim that: "*It must be weird for him, being here with us*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 71). But he still remains himself, despite the insinuations of the other children. Even if the meeting started as a friendly reunion, later we discover that not only the children despise Rick's presence, but also their parents do. One of the mothers states: "*You shouldn't be here at all*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 80). This shows the real relationship between the lifted and unlifted society.

Josie, however, changes completely throughout this chapter. While she insisted on Rick coming, the attention that Rick gets at the meeting only infuriates her. Eventually, she does not stand up for him and chooses to accompany the other children instead. Rick shares with Klara, that he does not want her to change and that it was his reason for coming. He wants to believe that Josie, even though she is a lifted child, will still remain the same girl he remembers from their childhood and that she will not be influenced by the upper-class society (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 73, 80-82).

5.2 The main characters

Just like in *Never Let Me Go*, the narrator introduces us to the whole story. In this novel, it is Klara and as was mentioned she is an Artificial Friend. Klara's manager describes her as an observant and fast-learning robot; thus, she stands out among the other AFs in the store (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 42-44). It is apparent from the text, that even though Klara is somehow a protagonist of this novel, she is still only a robot, and her understanding of things is rather vague (e.g., she describes the smartphone as "oblong") (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 7). Klara is easily fascinated by ordinary things. Especially the Sun; she believes the Sun has the power to heal humans, just as he does "heal" her because she is powered by the solar system. She worships the Sun like some kind of deity. At the beginning of the story, when she is still in the store, she witnesses

the Sun saving the beggar and his dog, whom she thought were dead. She states: “*I saw they weren’t dead at all – that a special kind of nourishment from the Sun had saved them*” (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 37). Later in the story, she is convinced that the Sun can also heal Josie, who is seriously ill. The relationship between Klara and Josie is very sincere. Klara quickly catches Josie’s eye, when she is spotted in the shop window. After her purchase, she not only becomes Josie’s friend but also her carer. When she discovers that Josie is dealing with a chronic illness, she does everything in her power to save her. She even decides to put her “life” in danger, when promising the Sun, she will destroy one of the polluting Cootings Machines. She sacrifices some of the crucial fluid, that makes her functional, to damage the machine (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 225-228). However, she does not succeed that time and Josie’s state gets worse. Nevertheless, Klara does not give up and she still hopes for the Sun to save Josie. She begs him to save her, not for Klara, but for Rick and Josie’s love. She wishes: “*Then Josie and Rick could go together into their adult lives just as they wished for... I can myself vouch that their love is strong and lasting*” (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 275). Klara is convinced that human love is worth saving. In the end, Josie’s state does indeed get better, when the sun’s rays reach her. Baverta and Ravi (2021, p. 298) believe that Ishiguro wanted to show that people are sometimes very ungrateful and that the more advanced the technology gets, the more ignorant people are. And despite Klara’s best efforts, she eventually ends up in a junkyard. However, she does not regret anything and is satisfied, that she did everything to save Josie (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 305-306).

Josie is Klara’s owner but also a friend. From Klara’s description, it seems that Josie genuinely cared for Klara, since the first day she saw her in the shop window. She promised Klara to get her, but she was asking for her permission to become her AF because she did not want to take her against her will (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 23-25). Josie soon realizes that Klara likes to watch the Sun and does everything she can to make it possible. As Klara cares for Josie, Josie cares for Klara. However, there is a point in the novel, where Josie gets mad at Klara. While there is a meeting for the lifted children, Josie presents Klara as the best AF that has ever been produced. The other children are in a doubt, they try to test Klara because she is an older model and she is supposedly not as good as the newer B3 Artificial Friends. But Klara refuses and Josie gets angry because she cannot show off her new robot properly. And when her peers suggest, she should have gotten the newer version, she agrees: “*Now I’m starting to think I should have*” (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 77). Josie definitely feels the pressure of the higher society she is in and like any other teenage child, she wants to belong somewhere even if it means abandoning her friend, a robot. And since Klara is still a machine, she finds this act rather interesting than harmful

(Ishiguro, 2005, p. 81). This may also be the reason, why Josie goes to college and leaves Klara behind. Because of this, we can also call *Klara and the Sun* a coming-of-age story because we see Josie grow up, move on and leave her AF behind. This is linked to the fact that children all grow up one day and leave their toys behind – in this story, that toy is Klara. While readers may be disappointed at the rather pessimistic ending for Klara, this protagonist did her job; she was the best Artificial Friend Josie could ever ask for (Kavadlo, 2021).

Another important character is Rick, Josie's best friend. Their relationship shows the division of this society. Even though Rick is a smart boy, he has not been lifted and it causes him problems in his life. Josie introduces Rick to Klara with the words: "*We are going to spend our lives together*" and Klara immediately realizes, Rick is someone very special to Josie and that Klara could never replace him (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 55). At first, Rick seems quite distant probably because he lived in a traditional world without artificial intelligence or because of envy that an AF could replace him. He later befriends Klara when he stands up for her at a meeting of the lifted children. Klara and Rick have a lot in common – Rick is an unmodified boy from a poor family and Klara is an outdated robot model, both are often despised by society. However, the main thing they have in common is their love for Josie. As Klara learns how important Josie is to Rick, she insists on helping them with the plan for their shared future (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 81-83). It seems that Klara realizes that she is only an AF, and the relationship between Josie and Rick is more important than Josie's and hers. That is also why she pleases the Sun to heal Josie for their genuine love that seems very special in their society (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 274-277). After some time passes and Josie and Rick grow up, Klara is disappointed that their plan of a shared future did not work. However, Rick assures her their love was real. He says: "*Josie and I really loved each other, that was the truth at the time. But now we're no longer kids, we have to wish each other the best and go our different ways*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 292). Klara accepts Rick's explanation, understanding that she did not lie to the Sun, and believes that maybe one day they will find a way to each other again (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 293).

5.3 The meaning of being human

Ishiguro in an interview for Waterstones mentioned, that *Klara and the Sun* was meant to be a children's book. He later changed his mind, after his daughter told him this story would not be suitable for young children. Although this novel's ending resembles a fairy tale, there are elements that are more suitable for adults to think about (Waterstones, 2021).

The main theme is once again humanity and what it means to be human. Even though Klara is a robot, the readers may sympathize with her more than with the human characters. The way Klara narrates, describes, and understands things may be similar to AI, but her thinking is sincere, and it leads many people to think about what it really means to have a human heart.

As mentioned, two groups conflict in the story: one that admires technology and one that despises it. Characters like Mr. Capaldi believe humans have nothing a robot cannot replace. He is sure that there is nothing special in a person that a machine cannot do. Josie's mother is on the verge of this group, so she allows herself to be convinced by Capaldi's idea, that if her daughter dies, she will be transferred to a robot, which will be Klara thanks to her observant nature (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 209-210). On the other side are people like Josie's father, who disagrees with this idea. However, he also begins to have doubts and mentions his fears to Klara: "*Science has now proved beyond doubt there's nothing so unique about my daughter*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 224). Klara, on the contrary, finds nothing strange in the plan and agrees to replace Josie. She remains convinced that she will not have to replace Josie because the Sun will cure her. When the father discusses with her whether she believes in the human heart, Klara admits that it is the hardest part to study, but optimistically adds that she will do everything in her power to learn it (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 218-219).

Artificial friends are nowhere close to becoming humans. Klara realizes that later in the story when she learns some key information. Klara cannot show emotions, get angry or sad. All situations serve her only to observe and learn. The main problem is that Klara cannot replace what other people feel for Josie. Klara acknowledges that this remains far from her reach, and it is one of the reasons she cannot fully become Josie's replacement (Askew, 2021, p. 184-185).

5.4 The ending

Ishiguro portrays a setting that is relatively similar to our own world. He uses terrifying dystopian elements, showing how far can technological progress reach. But he somehow incorporates uplifting symbolism of human's joy of life. This novel is not only about the progress of science that can change people's lives but also a tale full of hope and love (Ajeesh & Rukmini, 2022, p. 4, 8).

However, readers may be upset by Klara's destiny and how she ends up in a junkyard after all she had done. But as was revealed earlier, Klara reconciles to her fate. She is aware that she had done all she could and even though Josie and Rick will not be together for the rest of their

lives, Klara understands that they will continue to share their love for each other. She also realizes she could never fully replace Josie because not everything can be learned by a robot and that some things remain purely humane, and irreplaceable by artificial intelligence (Baverta & Ravi, 2021, p. 298)

The ending of the novel acts as a cliché happy ending – the Sun suddenly appears and heals Josie. Rather, it serves as a metaphor that if one hopes, anything can happen. Humanity has accepted the idea that miracles do not happen. Nonetheless, Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* points out that there is always a reason to hope and that sometimes it is necessary to leave behind a pessimistic view of the world (Zipory, 2023, p. 10).

6 Comparison of the novels

6.1 Novels and their genre

Although Ishiguro wrote these two novels sixteen years apart, there are certain elements that are similar and relate to each other. Ishiguro does not offer gripping stories full of twists and turns but stories that leave the reader pondering the meaning of life. Even though he uses some dystopian elements to establish the setting, he does not focus entirely on the classic dystopian clichés such as the restriction of freedom, oppression, and the protagonist's struggle against the system. The author does not classify himself as a science fiction author, but he is interested in topics of technology and bioengineering and it is reflected in his works. He also likes to go back to his older ideas and recreate them and this gives readers an idea as to, why *Klara and The Sun* and *Never Let Me Go* seem similar. He states: “*I usually repeat myself in my novels, some of the novels are rewrites of the previous book because I wanted to revisit that same terrain and explore it a little bit more*” (Waterstones, 2021).

The novel *Never Let Me Go* meets the characterization of both dystopian and alternate history literature. Maleska (2019, p.125-132) classifies *Never Let Me Go* as a dystopian novel, which focuses on the separation of society and its power over the clones' lives. The classic division of society happens when the clones are created. Genetic engineering is one of the dystopian elements, as it is portrayed in classic dystopian literature such as *Brave New World* (1932). In *Never Let Me Go*, this division is demonstrated by an authority figure telling the clones when they will donate their organs or, in Kathy's case, how long she will serve as a carer. This force also orders them to have regular health checks, no smoking, and sterility. Even though the characters in the novel do not show the typical determination to resist the system, there are still certain characteristics similar to protagonists in dystopian stories. Kathy is quiet, observant, and empathetic; Ruth functions here as an assertive and often attention-grabbing character, and Tommy serves as a kind of stable bridge between them, perfectly completing the classic love triangle. It is important to point out that the protagonist of dystopian stories often needs a certain kind of reassurance, which Kathy finds in the readers whom she often addresses, for example: “*I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 13). One of the main differences is technological advancement, as the clones in *Never Let Me Go* do not serve as its warning but rather as its victims. And since they are artificially created, they are not considered real people and thus are hidden from public sight and not allowed to live a normal life. The ending of the story, when the clones find out how things work in their society, can also

be considered a dystopian element. However, as the usual protagonist would have tried to fight back, Kathy and Tommy just accept the fact, that this is the fate they will have to meet. They also do not resist due to the fact that Hailsham did not oppress them, but it provided them with happy memories, similar to those of ordinary humans (Maleska, 2019, p. 134, 136-138).

The genre of *Never Let Me Go* can also be seen as an alternative history. The main feature of an alternate history is that the story takes place in an alternate world. As mentioned at the beginning of the novel, the story is set in England around 1990. But this historical England is alternate because of the advancement of bioengineering to a point that is unknown in our present world. There has been an artificial creation of humans, who serve society only for organ donation. These clones live in facilities scattered around England. However, Ishiguro does not specify what is happening in the rest of the world. Within the literature of alternate history, there is always an important point that changes the evolution of this world. In *Never Let Me Go* is mentioned that this point occurs after the Second World War when medicine progresses and so does the development of artificially created humans whose organs are used to cure serious illnesses (Oki, 2011, p. 94-96). Alternate history tends to be classified under science fiction, but Harrison (2005) argues that there are no signs of science fiction in *Never Let Me Go* and the same applies to the main characters who act as normal people, which clashes with the definition of alternate history. Ishiguro avoids scientific details and focuses more on the human soul and works with it using various themes. Therefore, he never thinks about the genre, only about ideas that he can portray in various scenarios (Oki, 2011, p. 98, 100).

Klara and the Sun is often regarded by critics as an indirect sequel to *Never Let Me Go*. Like the earlier novel, the novel does not belong to classic science fiction literature. The setting is again dystopian, but this time the story moves from the past to the future, which emphasizes the dystopian elements. The protagonist, however, is atypical and in this case, it is an artificial intelligence. The presence of robots is connected with dystopian features. Again, the story is not about fighting the system. In particular, the author focuses on the development of AI from a positive point of view, the inequality of society and humanity (Ajeesh & Rukmini, 2022, p. 4). In addition to the use of robots, we also encounter elements of bioengineering in the book, just as in *Never Let Me Go*. This time, genetically modified people are not a minority, but part of the higher class of society. Modification, or “lifting”, is associated with a certain superiority that only the privileged can afford. Therefore, there is a certain division of society in the novel, which can also be considered an element of dystopian literature (Bean, 2022, pp. 44-45). Irina Kuzmina (2022, p. 87) describes Ishiguro's recent novel as speculative fiction, which contains

elements of fantasy besides dystopian features, perhaps due to the book's ending. She also agrees with the opinion that Ishiguro has not created science fiction, but rather a tale to make the readers think about what makes us human. Therefore, Ishiguro's novels should not be seen as strictly science fiction dystopian literature.

6.2 Society

Both books feature a divided society. In *Never Let Me Go*, there are clones and normal people. Normal people refuse to accept the clones in their society because they are frightened by them, or they simply refuse to accept the fact that the clones do have souls but rather prefer the lives of their loved ones. In the novel, Hailsham tried to convince society that clones have souls through the Gallery, which was managed by Madame. But it did not succeed and Hailsham had to be closed down, due to the population's lack of concern for the life of clones. This leaves the clones with no chance to extend their lives, even if they fall in love. It is curious that when the clones work as carers, no one is bothered by their company. They even praise Kathy for her performance and offer her another few months of service; Kathy also mentions: "*They think I'm fantastic at what I do*" (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 3). This raises the question of whether the regular people are even afraid to take care of the clones, so they prefer to leave the care to their own kind. It may prove that people simply do not want to come into contact with clones, to avoid developing feelings for them and starting to pity them.

In *Klara and the Sun*, society is divided from two perspectives, into high and low society and that of robots and humans. In the case of the higher and lower society, there is the "lifting" that only the richer families can afford in order to give their children a better education and it lowers the chance of children from poor families to have adequate lives. It is evident that neither side agrees with the other. As can be seen with the younger children, they do not want to socialize with each other. However, the same applies to robots as there is a certain competition between the older and newer models, as when Klara is in the shop and notices the odd behaviour of the new B3 models: "*The three new B3s were deliberately moving themselves away from the older AFs so that when customers came in, the B3s would look like a separate group on their own*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 35). In addition, there is also a division between humans and robots. Part of society is unable to tolerate robots but the other part is fascinated by them, which creates tension in the population. Especially when people lose their jobs because of the artificial intelligence. Some people are also confused by how to perceive the robots; for instance, Rick's mother, who

is not sure, how to address Klara: “*After all, are you a guest at all? Or do I treat you like a vacuum cleaner?*” (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 145).

Never Let Me Go and *Klara and the Sun* agree that the main characters are part of the society that is being oppressed. While *Never Let Me Go* portrays an unfair attitude towards clones, hiding them in shadows and not allowing them to be equal to the rest of the population, in *Klara and the Sun*, despite the occasional conflicts, the humans’ attitude towards the robots is neutral, eventually favoured. Both of these groups, however, face inequality from the bigger part of society and they cannot ever be considered real humans.

6.3 The main characters

In both books, readers encounter an inhuman narrator. Kathy and Klara – paradoxically, both names begin with the letter K and have five letters – are excellent observers and thus fit in the position of the narrator (Hoekema, 2022, p. 45). Because they are placed in this position, readers can sympathize with them even though they are not human and lack certain traits to be so. As already mentioned, they are not classic dystopian protagonists. They both accept that they are not part of society, and they just embrace their fate of death (or fading away for Klara). However, both Kathy and Klara are great companions who will always do anything for their friends. Kathy loves Tommy and Ruth and Klara is devoted to Josie and willing to sacrifice herself for her and Rick's love.

The friendship between Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth is very different from the relationship between Klara, Josie, and Rick. Yet there are certain personality traits, that are somehow connected in both novels. Kathy is the neutral one in the relationship; she is very similar to Klara. She does not want to interrupt the connection between Ruth and Tommy, even though she secretly wishes for them to break up. But she still loves them no matter what. As Klara discovers that Rick is someone very special to Josie, she understands she will never be able to replace him and respects their bond. Ruth is a very good friend of Kathy. She is with Kathy when she needs her. However, she changes completely when she is surrounded by other people, especially the veterans in Cottages. Then she somehow forgets that Kathy is there with her and draws all the attention to herself. She resembles Josie, who is also a great friend to Klara, but she is influenced by the pressure of her lifted peers. Tommy and Rick both serve as a connection to the female characters. Both are sort of outcasts, Tommy for his anger issues and poor artistic performance and Rick for being unlifted and his origins. Nevertheless, they both grow out of that and become sensible supports.

6.4 The meaning of being human

Humanity is one of Ishiguro's main themes in his novels. In an interview for Maclean's magazine (2021), Ishiguro points out that his books are about friendship and love. His novels are thus filled with complicated relationships between the characters. He believes that all these aspects make people truly human.

However, in *Never Let Me Go*, he portrays characters who lack certain traits of humanity. They look and act like people, but society does not accept them out of fear. Clones are raised as human beings, they are empathetic, express their feelings, and are not opposed to physical relationships (Jossy & Duston, 2023, p. 29). They accept all these things as part of their lives. Ruth and Tommy in the Cottages imitate the physical touches they see on television because they see it as part of human love (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 119-123).

The appearance of the protagonist in *Klara and the Sun* resembles a human, but her way of talking and describing remains robotic. Even though she is unable to show emotions as a robot, her love for Josie is stronger than it is for some other characters in the book. As such, she is able to show some human qualities, such as resisting the store manager because of not wanting to be sold to anyone but Josie. It is unlikely for a robot to be resistant to some given rules and the manager scolds Klara for her behaviour: "*I supported you this time. But I won't do it again. It's for the customer to choose the AF, never the other way round*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 32).

Humanity is often associated with self-sacrifice. Jossy and Duston (2023, p. 31) argue that people are constantly trying to sacrifice something in order to be accepted by others. Like Kathy and Klara, they try to fit into society through their sacrifices. Perhaps for this reason, there is no protest from either protagonist in the novels. Kathy does not protest because donation seems right to her. Moreover, she knows that the clones' lives are pre-set and there is no point in fighting the system in any way. She is also aware that she has already experienced all the good things when she was with her friends in Hailsham. Perhaps being able to sacrifice herself for humanity makes her more human than anyone else. Even Klara, who is programmed as a robot, can go beyond her limits to sacrifice herself for Josie. Even though she lacks emotional expression, she is empathetic, more than humans. And even when she ends up abandoned, she is self-aware that she did the best she could for Josie, as she says: "*I believe I gave good service and prevented Josie from becoming lonely*" (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 304). Thus, she becomes far more human than other people (Sun, 2022, p. 4).

6.5 The ending

Ishiguro likes to hide crucial information in his books until the very end. In *Never Let Me Go*, the ending is filled up with all the information and despair that the clones get, in *Klara and the Sun*, it is the rescue of Josie and a dose of hope for humanity.

For this reason, the ending of *Never Let Me Go* seems more pessimistic. Although Ishiguro himself calls it a “cheerful book”, the ending is much darker but, in some way, more realistic. If he had created a protagonist who would fight against the system, it would have lost its charm and could no longer deal with the beauty of human nature. On the other hand, he himself says that he wanted to explore humanity from a different point of view, and therefore *Klara and the Sun* seems much more optimistic. He compares Klara and her ending to real people and says: “*When you're useful, people welcome you, and when they don't want you to cross a line, they push you back*”. In the same way, he compares Klara's fate to the elderly who were once needed by their children, but when they are no longer needed, they simply fade from the world (Bethune, 2021).

There is a certain connection between *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*. Readers may notice that in the earlier novel, the author mentions the genetic modification of children as well. When Kathy and Tommy find out why Hailsham shut down in the first place, the reason was a man who was trying to create superior humans. Miss Emily remarks: “*It's one thing to create students such as yourselves, for the donation programme. But a generation of created children, who'd take their place in society? Children demonstrably superior to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people*” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 258-259). Yet, years later the author comes up with a novel about robots and genetically modified children, who are granted to be superior to the non-modified population. That makes it obvious that Ishiguro likes to recreate his topics and connect his ideas between his novels and that is why readers sense a kind of similarity between them.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the major contemporary British authors. Since he won the Nobel Prize, it can be seen that his writing is significant to contemporary culture. Even though works like *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* tend to be described as dystopian, there are far more important matters at stake than the portrayal of a dystopian world. Therefore, his books may be disappointing to readers expecting a thrilling experience. On the other hand, the books will be enjoyed by those who like to take lessons from books and reflect on the meaning of human life.

The theoretical section of this thesis introduced the readers to dystopia and alternate history, which is the approach Ishiguro used when writing his books. The first chapter introduced dystopia, its origins, and the main elements of dystopian literature. The second chapter portrayed alternate history as a genre of literature. It introduced the reader to the basic division of alternative history and how it can be applied. The last chapter in the theoretical part presented the biography of the author Kazuo Ishiguro.

The practical part focused on the comparison of two novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*. Each chapter showed the story of the book and then its analysis based on four set points: society, the main characters, the meaning of being human, and the ending. The final chapter then compared the findings from the analysis in the previous chapters and included additional information to support the comparison of the novels.

In both cases, the society portrayed is divided. In the case of *Never Let Me Go*, it is a society where the clones are oppressed by the rest of the population. In *Klara and the Sun*, it is divided into high and low society, and into a part of the population that supports technological progress and a part that rejects it.

The main characters have some similarities, especially the narrators, who cannot be called human. Both novels feature the relationship of three friends who fight against social norms but at the same time solve ordinary human troubles. In *Never Let Me Go*, the characters are clones who spend their entire lives together. In *Klara and the Sun*, it is an Artificial Friend and her human friends, each from a different social class.

The most important part is the subchapter The meaning of being human because according to Ishiguro, this is the most important theme in both of the novels. In *Never Let Me Go*, humanity is introduced from the perspective of the clones, who, despite all the oppression of society, possess traits that appear far more humane than those of the “normal” part of society.

Klara and the Sun tells the story of a robot who, despite not having a human heart, can sacrifice her life despite her programming.

The last analysed point is the ending of both novels. *Never Let Me Go* shows a darker and more pessimistic ending. However, it also contains some relation to the recent novel. *Klara and the Sun* has a more positive ending that leaves the reader filled with hope.

In conclusion, while both novels are considered dystopian, it is not their most important aspect. The author portrayed the dystopian division of society, technological progress, and the oppression of the main characters. But he also emphasized the importance of humanity and even though the main characters are not human, they are more humane than the rest of the population. Their destinies make readers think about the question: what does it really mean to be a human?

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Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá srovnáním dvou dystopických románů britského autora Kazua Ishigura – *Neopouštěj mě* a *Klára a Slunce*. Teoretická část je zaměřena na charakteristiku dystopie a alternativní historie a také na biografii autora těchto románů. Součástí praktické části je analýza jednotlivých románů podle stanovených bodů – společnost, hlavní postavy, význam pojmu lidství a zakončení románů. Závěrečná kapitola praktické části obsahuje komparaci společných prvků románů a také srovnání prvků dystopie a alternativní historie v románech.

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení	Michaela Čtvrtníčková
Katedra nebo ústav	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce	Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby	2023

Název práce	Srovnání současných dystopických románů Kazua Ishigura: <i>Neopouštěj mě</i> a <i>Klára a Slunce</i>
Název v angličtině	A comparison of contemporary dystopian novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> and <i>Klara and the Sun</i>
Anotace práce	Bakalářská práce se zabývá srovnáním dvou současných dystopických románů Kazua Ishigura: <i>Neopouštěj mě</i> a <i>Klára a Slunce</i> . Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část. Hlavním cílem teoretické části je charakterizovat pojmy dystopie a alternativní historie. Mimo to také obsahuje biografii autora Kazua Ishigura. Praktická část je zaměřena na analýzu dvou románů: <i>Nepouštěj mě</i> a <i>Klára a Slunce</i> . Analýza je soustředěna na společnost, hlavní postavy, význam pojmu lidství a zakončení obou románů. Hlavním cílem je porovnat tyto prvky v obou románech a také prvky dystopie a alternativní historie.
Klíčová slova	Dystopie, alternativní historie, Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Neopouštěj mě</i> , <i>Klára a Slunce</i>
Anotace v angličtině	The bachelor's thesis deals with a comparison of two contemporary dystopian novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> and <i>Klara and the Sun</i> . The thesis is divided into theoretical and practical parts. The main aim of the theoretical part is to characterize the concepts of dystopia and alternative history. In addition, it also includes the biography of the author Kazuo Ishiguro. The practical part focuses on the analysis of two novels: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> and <i>Klara and the Sun</i> . The analysis focuses on society, the main characters, the meaning of being human, and the endings of both novels. The main aim is to compare these elements in the novels as well as the elements of dystopia and alternate history.
Klíčová slova v angličtině	Dystopia, alternate history, Kazuo Ishiguro, <i>Never Let Me Go</i> , <i>Klara and the Sun</i>
Přílohy vázané v práci	-
Rozsah práce	39
Jazyk práce	Anglický jazyk