



DOI: 10.2478/abcsj-2018-0018

American, British and Canadian Studies, Volume 31, December 2018

“Stop ... and Remember”:
Memory and Ageing in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Novels

CATHERINE CHARLWOOD
University of Oxford, Great Britain

Abstract

This article foregrounds representations of ageing and memory within Kazuo Ishiguro’s novels, particularly *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and, the less critically considered, *The Buried Giant* (2015). While criticism and reviews touch upon themes of ageing, loneliness, and loss of bodily function, scholars are yet to reveal either the centrality of this to Ishiguro’s work or how this might speak to real-life questions surrounding ageing. Few readers of *Never Let Me Go* realise that in writing it Ishiguro’s guiding question was ‘how can I get young people to go through the experience of old people’? The arguments here seek to restore such authorly intentions to prominence.

Ishiguro is more interested in socio-cultural meanings of ageing than biologically impoverished memories: this article examines the shifting relationships Ishiguro presents between memory and age as regards what happens to the ways in which memories are valued, and how people might be valuable (or not) for their memories. Interdisciplinary with age studies and social gerontology, this article demonstrates how Ishiguro both contributes to, and contends with, socially constructed concepts of ageing. In refocusing Ishiguro criticism onto reminiscence rather than nostalgia, this article aims to put ageing firmly on the agenda of future research.

Keywords: memory studies, age studies, ageing, gerontology, reminiscence, identity, old age, narrative

Memory is one of Kazuo Ishiguro’s great themes, but a related – though slightly less obvious – theme is that of ageing.¹ This article stems from a growing conviction that Ishiguro is obsessed with ageing, in particular with what happens as a result of ageing: what happens to our memories, and to how others treat us. While the focus will be on *Never Let Me Go*

and *The Buried Giant*, most of Ishiguro's texts deal with similar issues and are cross-referenced throughout.² The main novels I explore here are decidedly non-realist: *Never Let Me Go* is a dystopian-sci-fi hybrid in which clones are bred to donate their organs to humans; *The Buried Giant* is a fantasy set in Ancient Britain, where the magical breath of a she-dragon causes mass amnesia. However, for all these far-fetched premises, I argue that Ishiguro's depictions of ageing rely on – and derive pathos from – their links to real-life ageing and remembering.

Literature has become of increased interest to scholars of ageing in recent years. Social gerontologist Mike Hepworth considers "the contribution fictional descriptions of ageing can make to our understanding of ageing as a socio-psychological process" (*Stories* 11). For Julia Johnson, "Novels ... are valuable as sociological data" because unlike empirical research "they emphasise the importance of *diversity*" (2, emphasis in the original).³ I am not suggesting that Ishiguro's novels be treated as "sociological data", but his fictional versions of ageing are diverse to the point of being unsettling. These portrayals lead readers to see ageing as the "process" of which Hepworth speaks, something constructed which is experienced within a particular social context. In what follows, I mirror Hepworth's interest in "the *potential* of fictional representations of ageing to engage our interest and concern" (*Stories* 6, emphasis in the original). In keeping one eye on actual ageing, alongside literary representations, I take seriously Jeannette King's idea that "it is necessary to consider the ways in which fiction interacts discursively with non-fictional work on ageing" (297): the traffic must be two-way.

Like the critics quoted above, I use "ageing" rather than "old age" quite consciously, because Ishiguro's characters, just like humans, can be aware of their own sense of ageing at any moment during life. One's "age identity", as Margaret Morganroth Gullette terms it, may or may not fit with one's chronological age (15). Ageing in Ishiguro appears to be "a crisis of the imagination," as Susan Sontag writes, and I will show how he explores the fact that "the territory of aging (as opposed to actual old age) has no fixed boundaries" (33).

Memory and ageing combine in unusual ways in Ishiguro's fiction, and this is not an article charting characters' cognitive demise.⁴ As

Matthew Beedham explains of key omissions in *An Artist of the Floating World*, “Memory may fail because of age, but it may fail so that Ono does not have to remember betraying Kuroda” (37). More often than not, Ishiguro is doing something more complex than measuring memory loss over time. I am interested in how Ishiguro thwarts the supposed dynamics of ageing, whether by ageing characters prematurely (as in *Never Let Me Go*) or robbing the elderly of their mnemonic function (as in *The Buried Giant*). In these subversions, I argue that Ishiguro challenges commonly-held beliefs about ageing and confronts readers with questions about societal treatment of older people.

The first section establishes a framework for thinking through Ishiguro’s representations of ageing by reading his novels with reference to age studies/social gerontology, theories of reminiscence and how experience hastens ageing. The latter two sections look closely at individual texts: premature ageing in *Never Let Me Go* and meaningful/less relationships in *The Buried Giant*. While many of the insights here lend themselves to questions of gender, this is outside the scope of the present study. Throughout, excerpts from interviews, which have been insufficiently quoted to herald Ishiguro’s interest in ageing, are used to highlight Ishiguro’s intentions regarding his novels and writing methods.

Ishigurean Ageing: Reminiscence and Experience

Ishiguro’s characters tend to be older people: Etsuko (*A Pale View of Hills*) has grown-up children and is in her second marriage; Ono (*An Artist of the Floating World*) is retired with children and grandchildren; Stevens (*The Remains of the Day*) is heading towards his twilight years; Axl and Beatrice are an elderly couple (*The Buried Giant*). For these characters, the majority of their experiences are over: instead of negotiating the future, they seek to settle the past. Ishiguro was aware of this characteristic in his earlier fiction, averring in a 1990 interview that “I don’t intend to write about old men looking back over their lives all the time” (Shaffer and Wong 85), before writing *The Unconsoled* with its middle-aged protagonist, Ryder. For the above list of older characters,

"the syntax of remembrance" (James 61) makes social sense, whereas *Never Let Me Go*'s Kathy H. joins the ranks of the remembering early.

Certain aspects of memory – the failing of short-term memory, reliving the heyday of your youth – are stereotypically associated with old age, and there is a sense in which when action ceases, remembering increases. Chapter 4 of *Never Let Me Go* opens with Kathy's admission that she welcomes the end of her caring career for its mnemonic possibilities:

I won't be a carer any more come the end of the year, and though I've got a lot out of it, I have to admit I'll welcome the chance to rest – to stop and think and remember. I'm sure it's at least partly to do with that, to do with preparing for the change of pace, that I've been getting this urge to order all these old memories. (34)

"Stop and think and remember": the polysyndeton slows the "pace" in itself, and the latter two activities are only facilitated by her "stopping" and the absence of time-filling work. Kathy associates her remembering with "preparing for the change of pace", a phrase (with overtones of the for-clones-impossible menopause) which makes it sound as if she is soon to enter senescence, rather than her early thirties. As Miss Lucy (one of Hailsham's guardians) makes plain, "'before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs'" (73). Much like Susan Sontag's claim about (human) women, "they are old as soon as they are no longer very young" (32), in this case because confronted with death and loss. Kathy confesses to "getting this urge" which is strongly affiliated with older people: "to order all these old memories" (34), both once you have time to do so and before such time runs out. With the end in sight, Kathy seeks understanding and "order", something memory does not offer willingly. These memories are not "old" in the traditional sense, either: decades divide the ageing rememberer from the years of her/his childhood and early adulthood, whereas clones barely manage a single decade on from the age of majority. John Mullan has written of how the "first-time reader ... is tempted into a false start" by *Never Let Me Go*'s opening (because the "England, late 1990s" setting does not "root us in a

contemporary reality,” 104), but another such false start is that the reader is lured into thinking that Kathy is old.

Compare Kathy’s statement above with Ono’s admission that “Retirement places more time on your hands. Indeed, it is one of the enjoyments of retirement that you are able to drift through the day at your own pace, easy in the knowledge that you have put hard work and achievement behind you” (*AFW* 40-1). This grandfather shares similar concerns with having more time, a changed “pace” and the end of professional “achievement” (Kathy attempts not to “boast” about her caring career in *Never Let Me Go*’s opening). The time provided by retirement, or Kathy’s “stop[ping]”, though, needs direction: Ono’s reflection on retirement comes after realising “It is perhaps a sign of my advancing years that I have taken to wandering into rooms for no purpose ... I must have been standing there lost in thought for some considerable time” (40). Undertaking the journey to see Miss Kenton/Mrs Benn, butler Stevens chides himself for “becoming preoccupied with these memories ... I know I shall greatly regret it later if I allow myself to become unduly diverted” (*RD* 70). For all of memory’s pull, Ishiguro’s ageing characters must remain vigilant about how they spend their later years. Ageing provides a temporal contradiction as much as a mnemonic one. Readers are used to Ishiguro’s unreliable narrators insisting on their memories even as they recognise that “This is all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong” (*NLMG* 12), but perhaps an aspect more closely tied to ageing is the realisation that while you newly have time on your hands, you have no time to waste. After seeing Roger and hearing of Hailsham’s imminent closure, Kathy’s sense of longevity is thrown into relief: “it started to dawn on me, I suppose, that a lot of things I’d always assumed I’d plenty of time to get round to doing, I might now have to act on pretty soon or else let them go forever” (195). It is the end of Hailsham, reminding Kathy of her own anticipated demise, which provokes Kathy’s return to Tommy, Ruth and more broadly her personal past.

Much has been written about Ishiguro’s work in relation to nostalgia, but rather than this mode I wish to focus attention on reminiscence, both as a noun (something remembered), and a verb (the activity of remembering), one purposely performed by many Ishiguro

characters. For Caroline Bennett, *A Pale View of Hills* "shows Ishiguro already specializing in the psychology of reminiscence ... seamless recollection within a recollection" (84). Lilian Furst notes the "phrases that act as reminders of the reminiscing nature of what is being told" in *The Remains of the Day*, such as "I recall, I remember" (535). Reminiscence sees Ishiguro's characters undertaking the work of piecing together their memories to create a self-narrative (however carefully ameliorated that might be).⁵ In medical or sociological discourse, reminiscence (as a therapeutic practice) grew out of the life review, which involves seeing one's whole life in terms of a narrative. The difference between the two is that reminiscence "does not promise the totality of the life review. It is more fragmentary and partial" (Woodward 2). While I will argue more for reminiscence in Ishiguro's work due to the many digressions, omissions and temporal disjunctions, many of his novels see characters undertaking a kind of life review. Speaking about his pre-*Unconsoled* work, Ishiguro notes "I used a method where somebody looked back over his or her life in old age. You built up a picture through flashback of the key points in their life as they tried to assess it" (Shaffer and Wong 114). This practice continued, since "Kathy H.'s narrative is ... a review at the coming end of her life" (Hartung 52).

When Chapter 2 of *Never Let Me Go* begins with tales of Tommy being bullied and Hailsham's "Exchanges", Kathy notes that "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" (15). By visiting donors in hospital and reminiscing with these in-patients, Kathy is both in dialogue with "residential care homes in fiction", which can "provide opportunities for families to make some form of reconciliation" (Manthorpe 27), and somewhat replicates the kind of Reminiscence Therapy (RT) that is now used with older people (who may be suffering from dementia, or other declines in memory).⁶ Reminiscence, or "the process of recapturing salient memories from one's personal past", is part of what psychology terms everyday memory (Webster 256). Notice that like Woodward's idea of "partial[ity]" above, it is only "salient memories" that reminiscence recaptures: reminiscence is not expected to provide a coherent narrative. Seeking to delineate the functions of

reminiscence at any stage of life, Jeffrey Webster established the Reminiscence Functions Scale (RFS), many of which – identity/problem-solving, conversation, death preparation and intimacy maintenance – are pertinent to the ways that conversations remembering Hailsham are used in the novel (259).⁷ The more that you can take somebody back to their former experiences, the more you bolster their identity; it sounds particularly natural in the above quotation that topics of conversations are “found” rather than pre-determined. In reminiscing, Ishiguro’s characters try on past selves for size, particularly when prompted to by shared remembering.

Marking the difference between reminiscence and oral history, Joanna Bornat sees that rather than documenting content, reminiscing with others seeks to “share and communicate memories with a view to understanding each other or a shared situation, or with the aim of bringing about change in their current lives” (317), but that for both oral history and reminiscence “the interconnectedness of past and present is a necessary dimension” (321). Reminiscence is more coloured by the needs of the present, because it concerns the use of memory for the continued living of life. Looking at Ishiguro’s novels in terms of reminiscence – since it is explicitly “non-totalizing” (Woodward 3) – recasts the question of the unreliable narrator as a question of the ageing self, and raises the issue of how it makes a productive present out of the past.⁸

Reminiscence, with its switching between time frames, is a reminder that “the experience of growing older is not simply a one-way process ... but a sense of movement between the past, present, and future” (Hepworth, “Changes” 48). This interplay between different times is how readers see characters become conscious of ageing. Ono may recognise his own psychological ageing (the “wandering aimlessly” (41) mentioned above), but glosses over his own physicality, while pointedly observing the physical ageing of others. Mrs Kawakami “has been greatly aged by the war years. Before the war, she may still have passed for a ‘young woman’, but since then something inside her seems to have broken and sagged” (*AFW* 23). Although Ono admits “it is hardly any wonder” given the war, it is hardly a flattering description.⁹ Ishiguro’s inverted commas indicate Ono’s understanding that “young woman” is a socially

constructed category, a performance which may be accepted as long as it is convincing (rather than chronologically appropriate).

Later, Ono remembers seeing how "Kuroda's face, which had been quite round before the war, had hollowed out around the cheekbones", ultimately leading Ono to realise "'He's not young any more'" (AFW 78). In marking physical change over time, comparing present evidence with past memory, Ono recognises that ageing has taken place. In *An Artist of the Floating World*, though, rather than the accumulated ageing of passing years, both Mrs Kawakami's and Kuroda's ageing is brought about, or accelerated, by World War II: "aged by the war years"; "before the war". Hepworth states that "individuals 'enter into' old age at different points during the life course", seeing ageing as "never simply a fixed biological or chronological process, but an open-ended subjective and social experience" (2). Ishiguro's characters often find themselves prematurely aged as a result of their life experiences.¹⁰

Teresa Mangum writes about how Dickens's novels shed light on "the ways in which an abstract concept like old age accrues social meanings" and focuses particularly on his "violent acts of 'improper' ageing" (71). Citing Tiny Tim and Judy and Bart Smallweed, Mangum argues that "extreme experience or feeling ... is especially likely to induce preternatural aging" in Dickens's fiction (72). Like Hepworth's notion of "'enter[ing] into' old age" at different stages, Mangum shows how Dickens's young people can be aged by their life experiences. I would argue that Ishiguro offers similar "preternatural aging" as a result of "extreme experience", particularly through Kathy. However, it is precisely because Hailsham has such an aura of protective calm that the acceptance of the clones' fate is so shattering. Furthermore, Ishiguro manages to make Kathy's childhood seem incredibly distant, despite its relative proximity. Much as Mangum writes of Dickens, Ishiguro's novels refuse an "easy reliance on biology or chronology as the determinants of age" (72). In this, Ishiguro inadvertently aids the cause of age studies, which "has been dragging 'aging' – arguably the most biologized aspect of the construct of age – away from nature and towards culture" (Gullette 102). From *An Artist of the Floating World*'s characters aged by war to *Never Let Me Go*'s fatigued carers "looking vacantly ... slumped ... sitting there

looking tired” (190-2), ageing in Ishiguro’s novels is more experiential than it is biologically determined, even though nothing could be more biologically determined than a clone’s existence.

Premature ageing in *Never Let Me Go*

Kathy H. is not old. Her age at the time of narration (thirty-one) as well as many of her narrated memories, falls within what in psychology is referred to as the reminiscence peak (or reminiscence bump: the period of life between approximately ten and thirty years of age which humans remember best), which contains many significant life events.¹¹ The occurrence of ‘first times’ (first kiss, first time leaving home, first job) and unique events (wedding, graduation, childbirth) within this age range is unmatched by any other. However, Kathy does not experience – indeed, is incapable of – many of these milestones. Her reminiscence peak is occasioned by her foreshortened life span.

In a 2009 interview, Sebastian Groes questioned Ishiguro specifically about reminiscence peak research: “People who are eighty or a hundred years old don’t remember much of events after their twenty-fifth birthday. But the period between their fifteenth and twenty-fifth birthday is densely crowded with memories. It’s called the ‘reminiscence bump’” (257). Agreeing that he’s noticed this phenomenon among his own acquaintances, Ishiguro calls it “odd ... some kind of arrested development”. This is an interesting phrase as regards *Never Let Me Go*, because the development of the clones is brutally and purposefully arrested by a state-sanctioned system; however, in real-life remembering, people naturally display a kind of “arrested development” which privileges those early years of maximum (seemingly open-ended) developing.¹² Less negatively, Ishiguro goes on to note that “There is something very special about that period when you’re just becoming an adult, and when you’re forming as a person. It doesn’t matter if you’re ten years or fifty [away ...] childhood memories have a special quality” (257). For all its distortions of ageing, then, *Never Let Me Go* displays the same attention to the years of maximal identity-formation, but intensified through their never having time or opportunity to pay dividends for the

individual: remember Miss Lucy's warning – the clones' lives are cut off "before ... middle-age."

While Kathy's reminiscence peak is skewed, Axl and Beatrice (of *The Buried Giant*) can barely be said to have one. While fragments of their personal pasts return over the course of the novel they cannot locate significant memories within a set chronology. The missing memory of why their son is absent is a metaphor for their loss of significant milestones within their respective autobiographies. With the reminiscence peak concentrating memories around one's youthful years, older people's memories would therefore provide evidence of a different socio-cultural historical period compared with peers of a different generation. As social gerontologist Peter Coleman writes, "From an evolutionary consideration, it would make sense if older people could remember well events that were outside the experience of younger people. Infrequent but important occurrences, such as natural disasters, would be held better in the memory of the society" (14). It is with this perspective of societal memory, and thus survival, that Axl and Beatrice's amnesia seems so problematic. Not only are they lacking memories for themselves, but they cannot contribute to society in the same way, as the next section shows.

In some ways, *Never Let Me Go* reads like the memoir of someone who is dying, but this is not the case. This is not an illness, not a continuous process of dying, but a warped logic in which Kathy's (single) life will eventually be given for the (several) lives of others. Keith McDonald raises the point that "pathography is a genre of nascent popularity in the 1990s in which [*Never Let Me Go*] is set" (80). While not a "pathography", as McDonald terms it, this is a sub-genre with which Ishiguro's text resonates. Many reviews focused on the clones' early deaths, but did not equate this with a sense of ageing: for Gary Rosen, Kathy's fate is "to die young," while *Never Let Me Go* is, for Theo Tait, "a parable about mortality." While I am not denying that these things are true, this concentrates the narrative on death in such a way that occludes ageing. Given that Ruth's and Tommy's deaths happen off-stage (and Kathy's death post-dates the novel altogether), what the reader witnesses is ageing, since "Ageing is what characters *do* in narrative, whatever else

they appear to do” (Gullette 64, emphasis in the original), something made manifest in *Never Let Me Go*.¹³

Having mentioned her privilege in being able now somewhat to choose her donors, Kathy observes that “these days, of course, there are fewer and fewer donors left who I remember, and so in practice, I haven’t been choosing that much” (4). “Who I remember” becomes a euphemism, because Kathy means that her generation of clones have largely died out (or have been killed off, depending how you look at it). Like an ageing human, Kathy’s is a narrowing social circle, similar but different from the elderly woman whose social engagements now tend to be funerals, whose phone book is full of defunct numbers. If Kathy can be seen as a tragic figure, her tragedy is – ironically – in living too long, past everyone else. For Ruth Scurr, this mismatch with the usual period of mourning makes the novel successful:

If Kath[y] were a woman in her eighties, crying alone at the end of the novel because her two closest friends from school had recently died, her story would be touching but reassuringly banal. In making Kath[y] and her friends clones ... Ishiguro has found an ingenious way to evade banality and bring the reader to a raw confrontation with death – loss – and the unendurable fragility of everything we love. (21)

It is in simultaneously aligning Kathy with and asserting her difference from the aged that Ishiguro creates pathos.¹⁴ I would add that the reader also “confront[s]” the reliance on memory which comes with ageing, as a means of establishing identity and personhood. As Yugin Teo puts it, “The foreshortened lifespan of a clone determines that time is made even more precious” (113), but “time” might be read here as “memory”, the way that time is personalised through individual experience. In the introduction I stated that Ishiguro is interested in what happens to our memories as a result of ageing, and rather than their fallibility or decline, he foregrounds how memories become that much more “precious”, as Kathy at the end of *Never Let Me Go* observes: disagreeing with a donor who complains that “even your most precious [memories] fade surprisingly quickly,” Kathy asserts that “the memories I value most, I don’t see them ever fading” (262) – indeed, their “value” admits them a privileged place in her thinking.

Critics have somehow overlooked Ishiguro's repeated statements which link *Never Let Me Go* to ageing. As he has made clear in interviews, Ishiguro wanted to write a story about "young people who are going through a human life span in thirty years instead of eighty" (Hunnewell), but struggled to find the right context to make this possible, reworking *Never Let Me Go* several times. Apart from Heike Hartung's article, critics do not read or write about *Never Let Me Go* as if the primary question Ishiguro asked himself in writing it was "how can I get young people to go through the experience of old people[?]" (Gaiman). Ishiguro's most extensive statement about this comes in his 2006 interview with Cynthia F. Wong and Grace Crummett. Hitting upon the idea of cloning was the crucial find, since "I was looking for a situation to talk about the whole aging process, but in such an odd way that we'd have to look at it all in a new way" (Shaffer and Wong 213). Though hard to believe (since so much critical attention has been paid to cloning in the novel), cloning is more of an incidental situation which allows "the whole aging process" to dominate the narrative. While "not literally about the aging process", Ishiguro goes on to characterise *Never Let Me Go* as "a way of exploring certain aspects – psychologically, for instance – of what happens as you leave childhood, face up to adulthood, and then face up to your mortality" (214). The compressed chronology of clone life forces them to start taking stock much earlier, but they replicate the value humans place on remembering their autobiography. As Ishiguro states, "Memories, especially about childhood, become the precious things. It's not really their careers they care about" (Shaffer and Wong 219). Reading *Never Let Me Go* in its intended context of ageing allows this (e)valuation process to offer poignant reflections on how readers might wish to approach end-of-life care.

Initial readers voiced confusion as to why the clones do not rebel against their fate. Explaining this authorial choice, Ishiguro reveals that "ultimately, I wanted to write a book about how people accept that we are mortal ... that after a certain point we are all going to die, we won't live forever" (Matthews 124). *Never Let Me Go* intends to speak to the limited life-spans of all humans, but pushes this into relief by making that span that much shorter. Further specifying, Ishiguro notes "I wanted the

characters ... to react to this horrible programme they seem to be subjected to in much the way in which we accept the human condition, accept ageing, and falling to bits, and dying” (Matthews 124). Death awaits us all – human and clone alike – but in different ways. In this formulation, Ishiguro makes the natural process of ageing into a “horrible programme” to which humans are “subject”. This is an overly negative reading of ageing, but it fits with the sense in which ageing humans become part of a programme of treatment, particularly if taken into a care home. Like the clones, ageing humans also lose functionality over time rather than all at once (although more incrementally), and lose the power of choice. With no sense of injustice, Kathy parenthetically, blithely, refers to “whichever centre they send me to” (262) for her donations. Although not care homes, the clones end up in medical-style “centres”. Remembering one of Ruth’s centres, Kathy confesses that it “is one of my favourites, and I wouldn’t mind at all if that’s where I ended up. The recovery rooms are small, but they’re well-designed and comfortable” (16). “Well-designed” takes precedence over comfort, reminding the reader that such places were purposefully created to enable the smooth operating of the organ-harvesting programme, not for the benefit of the clones. “Where I ended up” betrays a similar trajectory to that of the ageing human losing agency, who knows that a care home is a likely (final) destination.

Claire Messud’s review of *Never Let Me Go* shows how quickly the reader is (mis)led into thinking of Kathy in the context of ageing, since “Kathy informs us in the novel’s second sentence that she has been ‘a carer now for over eleven years,’ [and] we ‘naturally’ assume she’s at work in Britain’s healthcare system, tending to the elderly or infirm.” This is the second way in which Ishiguro ties his alternative world to that of real-world ageing. In designating the euphemism “carer”, he suggests that Kathy attends to the elderly: another false link to old people, since all of those under her care are similarly young.

Mullan highlights the “recent significance” of the word “carer” in terms of ageing, noting that it is “one of our caring, congratulatory words for those obliged or paid to look after those who cannot look after themselves. It expresses a kind of official admiration for what may well

be resentfully undertaken, or done just for money" (108).¹⁵ This "official admiration" is inherent in Kathy's pride at the opening of the novel, that "they've been pleased with my work" (3). As Ishiguro mentioned in an earlier interview, the wish to do well is "one of the things ... that distinguishes human beings," that whatever we do, we have to be able "to tell ourselves by some criteria that we have done it well ... we've contributed well" (Shaikh). Commenting on Kathy's opening words, Bruce Robbins notes that "If the word 'carer' seems a bit mysterious, it's because the congenial everyday verb has been absorbed into an official-sounding occupational category" (291). "Carer" has become a euphemism as much in Western society as in that of the novel.

As social geographer Danny Dorling points out, "care workers for older people are the largest least well-paid group in most affluent societies, because we don't value caring as a skill, and we don't generally like to be reminded of our own mortality. Carers are taught through their hours, wages and conditions of labour how little in turn we value older people" (172-3).¹⁶ "Carer", then, speaks to the lack of care inherent in our real-life social system, as well as to Kathy's inability to care, or be cared for, in any meaningful way in *Never Let Me Go*: from the description of her carer's life – "my bedsit, my car" (3); endless travel and anonymised dwellings – neither party in the caring relationship appears to benefit.

Kathy disqualified, *Never Let Me Go* does have an elderly character: Miss Emily. Human, and therefore eligible for old age, prefaced by "mechanical sounds", Miss Emily re-emerges from literal shadows at the end of the novel, now "a figure in a wheelchair" (233). Miss Emily has the trappings of old age: the wheelchair, a carer in a non-euphemistic sense (George, "a large man in a nursing uniform," 246) and a concentration on the past.¹⁷ Miss Emily recognises her visitors without difficulty: "'you, of course, are Kathy H. You've done well as a carer. We've heard a lot about you. I remember, you see. I dare say I remember you all'" (234). While Miss Emily means it as a compliment, to "do well as a carer" means placating those who have every right to be angry and aiding the very system which ensures your own death.

Having "heard ... about you" foregrounds the role of conversations within remembering, but instead of connecting human and clone in

memory, “Miss Emily went on reminiscing ... mentioning a lot of people whose names meant nothing to us. ... she drifted off on tangents none of us could follow. She seemed to enjoy herself, though, and a gentle smile settled around her eyes” (239). Unlike the reminiscing conversations between fellow clones, this is exclusive, and does not invite further sharing. Elsewhere in the novel, when Kathy talks to former Hailsham students about Hailsham, conversation promotes remembering and, as Teo points out, “Being able to share the memories and feelings of their days in Hailsham is a way of ‘affirming’ its existence as an integral part of their histories ... Their affirmation of each other’s lives through the stories they tell constitutes a mutual or collective recognition of each other” (79-80). By contrast, Miss Emily’s talk has no such reciprocity: while Kathy forms part of the content of Miss Emily’s memories, they are in no way shared or shareable. The cruellest statement with which Miss Emily confronts her former students is “‘Look at you both now! You’ve had good lives, you’re educated and cultured’” (238). Three donations in and “pretty woozy ... carsick” (225) before they arrive, Tommy cannot “look” worthy of positive exclamation. Facing her young students, a woman who is “frail and contorted” (233) from natural human ageing determines the barely-thirty-somethings have “had good lives”, the past perfect tense linguistically pre-determining that they’ve reached their cut-off point, even as they’ve come to ask for a “deferral”, and more (life)time. Summarising her legacies from Hailsham, Miss Emily credits the “gallery”, “‘And a mountain of debt too ... And the memories, I suppose, of all of you. And the knowledge that we’ve given you better lives than you would have had otherwise’” (242). While Miss Emily may be secure in the “knowledge” that they gave the clones “better lives”, the reader is still dogged by Kathy’s question “why?”, since the “life” secured merely forestalls death for a time and provides an enriched memory only as a result of age-inappropriate ageing.

Remembered relationships in *The Buried Giant*

The Buried Giant differs from *Never Let Me Go* in an important respect: its two main protagonists, Axl and Beatrice, are actually old. However,

they are not unusual in struggling to remember their respective and shared pasts, since "in this community the past was rarely discussed" (7), as the entire country is in a condition of amnesia. This is another of Ishiguro's misdirections in terms of memory and ageing since "They're both old, but that isn't the reason for the indistinctiveness of their grasp on the past" (Mars-Jones 17); Ishiguro undercuts readerly expectations. With amnesia as the novel's backdrop, though, it is telling that Ishiguro focuses attention on those characters who might believably be struggling with memory anyway.

Memory loss seems harder for Axl and Beatrice (rather than, say, Ryder in the dreamscape of *The Unconsoled*), as they appear to lack a social function. Until, or unless, cognitive decline sets in, the elders of a community are memory rich, able to hand down traditions and circulate old stories. Opening their chapter on generational memory and family relationships, Attias-Donfut and Wolff declare: "The elderly are laden with an individual, family and social memory, which they pass on to the younger generations. This process is evident and accepted as universal common sense" (443). This societal tenet, though, is dismantled in *The Buried Giant* as no-one remembers the past, nor does it "occur to these villagers to think about the past – even the recent one" (7). The loss of the ability to provide the living memory which transmits the past to the present is felt more keenly due to Ishiguro's archaic scene. In his anthropological work *On the Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, Leo W. Simmons asserts:

Knowledge, wisdom, and experience are social assets which normally accumulate with age and outlast physical stamina. ... Among preliterate peoples memories have been the only repositories of knowledge, skills, and rituals. Where writing and records have been unknown – where all that was worth knowing had to be carried in the head – a lucid mind, a good memory, and a seasoned judgment, even when housed in a feeble frame, have been indispensable and treasured assets to the group. (131)

Ishiguro's setting of ancient Britain occasions a harsher loss for his older characters, because they demonstrably are not "the only repositories of knowledge, skills, and rituals": this role is denied them. Like Attias-Donfut and Wolff's "universal" statement above, Simmons claims that

“Few generalizations concerning the aged in primitive societies can be made with greater confidence than that they have almost universally been regarded as the custodians of knowledge *par excellence* and the chief instructors of the people” (140). Ishiguro writes against the grain in *The Buried Giant* and thus shows what the lack of memory can do to social standing and one’s value within a community.

While *Never Let Me Go* takes place in a world where characters are robbed of elders (“Generational continuity is not possible for the clones”, Hartung 54), *The Buried Giant* takes place in a world where the elders are robbed of their ability to bear witness to the history they have supposedly lived through. In both cases, society in the novel shrinks to the level of the single generation as regards memory. Because of their lack of societal function, Axl and Beatrice are not particularly respected in their community: indeed, in one early scene a candle is forcibly taken from them (the council has ruled they are not allowed a candle for fear they’ll “tumble” it, 23) and they are taken to be a “foolish pair” (24). Here the elders of the community are judged for their perceived frailties, rather than anything they might be able to offer their society.

Talking about emigrants and exiles in a 2011 interview with Sebastian Groes, Ishiguro revealed he had become aware of “this homing instinct” (255), meaning that people tend to revert to their original cultures and earliest memories in older age, even if they’d long since moved away. Such a reversion is attempted by, but denied to, Axl and Beatrice. Ishiguro recalls that his own father returned to the Japanese language when dying: “He didn’t get senile, but when he did get very ill in the last few weeks, he was ‘confused’, as they say” (Groes 256). “Confusion” is a term heavily associated with age-affected memories, and it is no surprise that Ishiguro uses it in conjunction with Beatrice, who – having just confessed “‘oh, Axl, I don’t remember clearly now you question it. And why do we stand out here?’” – is encapsulated in the simple sentence “Beatrice appeared confused again” (25). Again, Ishiguro subtly aligns a character with real-life ageing while asserting a radically different social context. Like ageing humans, in their old age Axl and Beatrice’s thoughts bend again to a much earlier memory of grave importance: the disappearance of their son.

Ishiguro also plays games with the reader's literary memory, since this novel abounds with Arthurian legend, mythological precedent (especially in the form of the Charon-like "boatman" whose ferrying Axl and Beatrice fear) and a variety of other literary references. However, these references, too, seem to have aged past what we remember: the Sir Gawain found in *The Buried Giant* is significantly older, a self-proclaimed (though somewhat disingenuously) "'whiskery old fool'" with a tired horse named Horace (113-4). As Daniel Bedgood points out, it is "King Arthur's *youngest* knight" who Ishiguro has "transformed into a figure marked by age and dishevelled nobility" (115, emphasis mine). Even those characters which the reader might expect to recognise are found as if misremembered, as if more time has passed than we realise.

Hepworth notes that "Old age has been described as the ultimate challenge for the novelist because it is about people who are living through the final period of their lives ... Stories of ageing are faced with the problem of describing a character and his or her relationships with other people when she or he has apparently little life distance left to travel in the 'journey of life'" (*Stories* 3). As if in rebuttal, Ishiguro sends his elderly characters on a quest: Beatrice announces early in the novel, "'There's a journey we must go on, and no more delay'" (19). Their physical frailties are evident in their struggles: Axl is a man who "came wearily up the mountain slope" (291) whose "wife grows weak" (296).¹⁸ As expected, this journey is as much mental as it is physical, seeing as this is how they (eventually) recover their memories. Ishiguro here seems to literalise his statement in an interview that "memory is this terribly treacherous terrain" (Swift). "Delay", though, is characteristic of this journey: the past dogs us at the best of times, and Axl and Beatrice's need to decipher the fragments of memory which do return delays their present actions.

Ishiguro ups Hepworth's "ultimate challenge", since he also makes "describing a character and his or her relationships with other people" very difficult: thanks to the amnesia-inducing "mist", the characters don't know who they are themselves. Every hope of identity Ishiguro sets up seems dashed: at the start the reader is told "Perhaps [Axl and Beatrice] were not their exact or full names, but for ease, this is how we will refer to

them” (2). Later, Gawain’s first reverie remembers and renames Axl, since “We called him Axelum or Axelus then, but now he goes by Axl, and has a fine wife” (238), the last part reminding the reader that Beatrice has no knowledge of Axl’s military past. Part of Axl’s buried identity is his name, hidden from his wife, the narrator, and thus the reader. Part of the problem in *The Buried Giant* is that no-one knows the person with whom they’re trying to establish relation, and may never have known them even before the loss of memory.

The main mnemonic issue for Axl and Beatrice is the strain it puts on their relationship. Unable to remember, they have ironed out the difficulties of their marriage, of which – it becomes clear as the novel goes on – there were many. Unlike previous Ishiguro characters, who determinedly repress certain memories and even do so consciously, Axl and Beatrice display a sincere wish to recover their pasts. Critics have linked this to their age, with Tammy Ho Lai-Ming querying: “Perhaps, to younger people, memories are less precious because they have time to create more. For Axl and Beatrice, however, they need to remember, for there is not much time left”. The loss of their memories keeps returning the couple (especially Beatrice) to the, apparently related, question of love. While they profess love for one another in the present moment, neither has any sense of on what this is based. As Beatrice bemoans: “‘But Axl, we can’t even remember those days. Or any of the years between. We don’t remember our fierce quarrels or the small moments we enjoyed and treasured. We don’t remember our son or why he’s away from us’” (49). The emotional valence of their past is lost: “fierce” or “treasured” moments have alike been erased. The anaphora on “We don’t remember” ironically makes their forgetting the most memorable thing. While Beatrice insists on the first person plural pronoun, her statements betray the enormous chasm between a pair that have little more than this linguistic linking to tie them together. As this passage makes clear, the loss of memory is a loss of family ties. “The family circle is a ‘memory milieu’, which plays a central role in the continuity of History,” Attias-Donfut and Wolff claim (453), making Axl and Beatrice’s family seem that much more broken through their amnesia, and this is before the reader finds out that the son is dead.

In some ways, *The Buried Giant* appears to be testing an unspoken adage – memories maketh marriage. As Beatrice's speech shows, their union is little more than proximity over time and as their, separate, memories begin to return, the "we" of Beatrice's speech becomes increasingly two distinct "I"s. Put simply, Axl and Beatrice's memories of the same event are different. Of a day at a fair, Beatrice remembers Axl quarrelling with a man, though he claims "I recall nothing like that, princess ... It's not how I remember it" (84-5). While this is quickly resolved, even this early event shows memory's power to divide, as competing versions of the past are pitted against each other.¹⁹

While Axl and Beatrice initially seek all aspects of their past together, as time goes on they find reasons to become uneasy about memory's return. Indeed, it becomes clear that only memories which bind them to each other are, in fact, welcome. With Beatrice having productively forgotten their earlier quarrel, Axl has no wish to remind her:

'You don't remember, princess?'
 'Did we have a foolish quarrel? I've no memory of it now, except that I was near my wit's end from cold and want of rest.'
 'If you've no memory of it, princess, then let it stay forgotten.'
 '... Can it be we quarrelled earlier, though I've no memory of it?'
 '... Trust me, it's best forgotten.' (270-1)

Here, the opposite injunction is given: "let it stay forgotten". While this makes sense for present peace and companionship, it goes against what the pair originally requested. It also gets close to Gawain's later, awkward, plea to "Leave this country to rest in forgetfulness" (311), hinting at the living death forgetting can entail. Well before they reach Querig, and the opportunity to break the spell of amnesia, Axl and Beatrice are sufficiently frightened about the return of memory wholesale, and its effect on their relationship, that Axl exacts a "Promise to keep what you feel for me this moment always in your heart, no matter what you see once the mist's gone" (280) from Beatrice. Once they are capable of reminiscing, though, the memory of "this moment" will be seen alongside a host of others, possibly causing the overall tenor of Beatrice's feelings towards Axl to shift. While she makes the promise with "no

hardship", the reader suspects the past's revelations will cause hardships of their own.

Earlier I claimed love as "apparently linked" to memory. This is because in the world of *The Buried Giant* exist boatmen who refuse to ferry couples across to an island together unless they can demonstrate "an unusually strong bond of love between them" (43). Therefore, Beatrice rightly fears her lack of memories with Axl, remembering a strange woman's question: "How will you and your husband prove your love for each other when you can't remember the past you've shared?" (48). Without memory, Axl and Beatrice have nothing to show for their lives together, or their lives at all – the loss of memory is revealed anew as a devastating blow to personal identity. Much as Tommy and Kathy painstakingly select which of his animals will suitably reveal his soul to Madam as they make their case for being "truly in love" (NLMG 160), Axl and Beatrice desperately seek memories which they can place before the boatman as evidence of their love. As Arifa Akbar's review of *The Buried Giant* notes: "In this sense, this novel continues where *Never Let Me Go* left off ... it too was preoccupied by the extremities of love, and the extent to which it can remain unimpeachable in the most testing of circumstances".

The return of memories, however piecemeal, threatens the couple, with a vague remembrance of a non-specific event leading Beatrice to "shrink from you" and she asks: "'let me walk a little way in front and you behind ... I'll not welcome your step beside me now'" (272). The mental act of remembering catalyses a physical division of the pair. Far from the stable duo of the opening, the return of memory threatens to separate them even though, as Tammy Ho Lai-Ming writes, "collective amnesia can be interpreted as a test for Axl and Beatrice's true love. Apart from death, forgetting is perhaps one of the biggest enemies for lovers". The great contradiction of the novel is that memory is both a necessity of life and the cause for conflict, as past wrongdoings come to be realised. Ultimately, though, the reader likely sides with Beatrice who – as memory is about to be restored to the nation – avers: "Let's see freely the path we've come together, whether it's in dark or mellow sun" (307).

The Terms of Time

Ishiguro is concerned with the brevity of life (even when he doesn't foreshorten characters' lives), a fact which comes into sharp focus when the brief term of human life is seen against that of the nation: lives can be wasted through the simple temporal fact of the brief span of historical time onto which an individual life-span happens to map. In his recent Nobel lecture, Ishiguro characterises Stevens (of *The Remains of the Day*) as "an English butler who realises, too late in his life, that he has lived his life by the wrong values; and that he's given his best years to serving a Nazi sympathizer" ("My Twentieth Century Evening" 8-9). "Too late", "his best years" – again Ishiguro is implicitly talking about ageing, and in particular how this threatens the possibility for self-improvement in later life. In conversation with Brian W. Shaffer, Ishiguro notes, of *An Artist of the Floating World*, that "I wanted a certain poignancy to emerge from his sense that a man's life is only so long, while the life of a nation is much longer; that Japan as a nation could actually learn from its mistakes and try again even if Ono couldn't" (Shaffer and Wong 170).²⁰ Since in so many novels, Ishiguro pits individual existence against the collective existence which comprises the "nation", this is particularly resonant. However, while in *An Artist of the Floating World* Ono "takes comfort in the fact that a nation's life isn't like a man's life. A new generation comes along; Japan can try again" (170), this consolation drops away in later novels: *The Buried Giant* in particular ends on the sort of new start which brings only bloodshed and division.

In reminiscing, all of Ishiguro's characters are involved in ageing, whatever biological age they happen to be. They seek a coherent and satisfying (potted) narrative, because as Ishiguro noted "one of the sad things about people's lives is that they are rather short. If you make a hash of it, often there isn't time for another go" (Shaikh). In their depictions of memory and ageing, then, Ishiguro's novels emphasise the temptation towards self-evaluation. Old age itself does not offer perspective, but to engage actively with one's own process of ageing is to evaluate one's past, present and future selves and provide some vision – however complex, however messy – of the individual life course as measured

against other people's, societal narratives and, most importantly, one's own sense of self-worth and achievement. As Ogata-San says to Jiro, "it's good to take a glance back now and then, it helps keep things in perspective" (*PVH* 29-30).

Memory is all about relationships – connecting the past to both the present and the future – and Ishiguro is, above all, a writer of relationships. In his Nobel lecture, Ishiguro claims his writing practices took a new turn with *Never Let Me Go*: "if I attended more to my relationships, my characters would take care of themselves" ("My Twentieth Century Evening" 13). As I demonstrate here, Ishiguro is interested in how the dynamics of memory and ageing allow us to relate to different versions of our self-identity, and how memories affect our relationships with others. More often than not, though, Ishiguro is more concerned with how the memory changes wrought by ageing affect the way *others* relate to *us*: the reciprocity of memory as a symbiotic line of communication is under distinct threat in most, if not all, of Ishiguro's novels.

Perhaps the real question is not about age at all, but time. Ishiguro uses both the actuality and the notion of ageing to point to a larger human condition and existential anxiety: to be alive is to perform acts within a limited time-frame. Ageing reminds us that we don't have enough time to be wasting it, and thus it's no surprise that Ishiguro's characters frantically search their memories for the meaning(s) of their own lives. *The Buried Giant* asks if without memory individuals can have not just meaningful relationships but a meaningful life at all, since Ishiguro's previous novels and interviews stress that a meaningful life involves recounting the very achievements Axl and Beatrice have forgotten.

In all of his fictional brushes with memory and ageing, Ishiguro plays biological models of ageing off against socio-cultural notions without ever fully resolving their relation to each other, often because the social construct of the life-course dictates that certain things must be achieved within a certain time-frame. It can be no mistake that in *When We Were Orphans*, the novel immediately preceding *Never Let Me Go*, Christopher's ward Jennifer is surprised he still considers her "A young woman?" since she self-characterises as "Thirty-one, no children, no

marriage" (307), the exact same age and condition as Kathy, though for very different reasons. However, crucially, for Jennifer, "I suppose there *is* time still" (emphasis in the original), while for Kathy there is neither time nor ability. Like so many people in old age, Kathy only has her memories to fall back on.

Notes:

¹ For work on Ishiguro and memory see Teo, Drag and Furst.

² I use the standard abbreviations for Ishiguro's novels throughout the endnotes, with full details given in the works cited.

³ See also Hubble and Tew's argument that "most non-academic people ... clearly do not primarily ground or obtain their view of older subjects through matters such as demographics, statistics, academic research or even in most cases from the actual lived experience of the elderly. They are swayed by and make judgements according to cultural narratives, their viability, and their apparent relevance to their own interests" (161).

⁴ See Maylor for an overview of the ways that age affects memory.

⁵ Much as reminiscence used to be seen as pathological, with "only a difference of degree between a wish to reflect on and describe past events and the repetitive reminiscences of demented elderly people" (Coleman "Study of Ageing" 11), certain of Ishiguro's characters seem to distrust reminiscence as dangerous. Mrs Fujiwara in *A Pale View of Hills* "always tells me how important it is to keep looking forward in life" (111) and earlier she wishes a pregnant couple didn't visit the cemetery because "They should be thinking about the future" (25). Similarly, when Jennifer is unconcerned by the loss of her personal possessions she tells Christopher, "You have to look forward in life" (*WWWO* 133).

⁶ See, for instance, Y.-C. Lin, Y.-T. Dai, and S.-L. Hwang, "The Effect of Reminiscence on the Elderly Population: A Systematic Review," *Public Health Nursing*, 20.4 (2003): 297-306. For an overview of reminiscence see Peter G. Coleman, "Reminiscence: Developmental, Social and Clinical Perspectives," *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*, ed. Malcolm L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005): 301-15.

⁷ The other functions are boredom reduction, bitterness revival and teach/inform. As Webster was defining the functions of reminiscence across the entirety of the life course, he questioned adults from age 17 to 91.

⁸ This is perhaps particularly interesting because Ishiguro states "I'm really only interested in unreliable narrators in so far as they have very interesting reasons for being unreliable, the deep reasons why we all have to be unreliable narrators. Because most of us when we look at ourselves, we have to be rather unreliable in order to face ourselves" (Shaffer and Wong 139).

⁹ Even more dismissive, Ono notes of Miss Sugimura that "the war years had turned her into a thin, ailing old woman" (*AFW* 10-1).

¹⁰ The description of the aged Matsuda, compared with Ono's memory of him "almost thirty years ago" (89) is more akin to biological ageing. For further hints at the changes wrought by war see the character of Suichi – "the enormous impact of his war experiences" (59).

¹¹ See, for instance, D.C. Rubin, S.E. Welzer and R.D. Nebes, "Autobiographical memory across the life span", in *Autobiographical Memory*, ed. D.C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 202-21, or D.C. Rubin, T.A. Rahhal and L.W. Poon, "Things learned in early adulthood are remembered best," *Memory & Cognition*. 26.1 (1998): 3-19.

¹² Maylor, too, notes that "Older people themselves often report that, while their memory is poor for what happened yesterday, they have very clear recollections of events that happened a long time ago, perhaps in childhood or during the war" (205).

¹³ Ruth's and Tommy's deaths are referred to euphemistically on pages 69 and 262, respectively.

¹⁴ James Wood's review similarly considers cultural reactions to ageing: "why do we persist in the idea that to be assured of death at seventy or eighty or ninety returns to life all its savor and purpose? Why is sheer longevity ... accorded meaning, while sheer brevity is thought to lack it?" (39).

¹⁵ Mullan further notes that the OED's first entry for this definition of "carer" comes in 1978 (108).

¹⁶ Whitehead's article on caring in *Never Let Me Go* makes a similar point through Eva Feder Kittay's work, that care work "is often supplied by migrants or noncitizens, because these are precisely the workers who tolerate the poor pay, lack of benefits or status, and long hours" (62). The one real-life carer in *NLMG* is "George, the big Nigerian man pushing me", as Miss Emily refers to him (234).

¹⁷ By contrast, a wheelchair for a clone is a marker of physical frailty through surgery: Kathy sees Harry (with whom she remembers having sex at school) "being brought in after a donation ... in a wheelchair" (*NLMG*, 93).

¹⁸ Though showing signs of physical ageing, Axl and Beatrice are far from decrepit, especially when compared with Father Jonas who, prefaced by "a faint smell of vomit and urine," is bedridden, "white-haired and advanced in years. His frame was large, and until recently must have been vigorous, but now the simple act of sitting up appeared to cause multiple agonies" (*TBG* 162-3).

¹⁹ Ishiguro has previously used disagreements over a particular memory to show disfunction within a relationship with Brodsky and Miss Collins: "I don't remember that ... I don't remember this time you're talking about" (*U* 324), with Miss Collins – unable to assent to Brodsky's version – claiming "Some things ... are best forgotten" (326).

²⁰ Ishiguro returned to this idea in conversation with Gaiman, who also feels that "the human lifespan seems incredibly short and frustrating" while "stories are long-lived organisms". This time, Ishiguro used a European example, that while a nation "can turn Nazi for a while ... Whereas an individual who happens to live through the Nazi era in Germany, that's his whole life."

Works Cited

- Akbar, Arifa. "This Isle Is Full of Monsters." Rev. of *The Buried Giant*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Independent* 26 Feb. 2015. Web. 14 Mar. 2016.
- Attias-Donfut, Claudine, and François-Charles Wolff. "Generational Memory and Family Relationships." *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*. Ed. Malcolm L. Johnson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 443-54.
- Bedggood, Daniel. "Kazuo Ishiguro: Alternate Histories." *The Contemporary British Novel Since 2005*. Ed. James Acheson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2017. 109-18.
- Beedham, Matthew. *The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Bennett, Caroline. "'Cemeteries are no places for young people': Children and Trauma in the Early Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro." *Kazuo Ishiguro: New Critical Visions of the Novels*. Ed. Sebastian Groes and Barry Lewis. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 82-92.
- Bornat, Joanna. "Listening to the Past: Reminiscence and Oral History." *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*. Ed. Malcolm L. Johnson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 316-22.
- Coleman, Peter. "Reminiscence within the Study of Ageing: The Social Significance of Story." *Reminiscence Reviewed: Perspectives, Evaluations, Achievements*. Ed. Joanna Bornat. Buckingham: Open UP, 1994.
- Dorling, Danny. *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Still Persists*. Rev. ed. Bristol: Policy P, 2015.
- Drag, Wojciech. *Revisiting Loss: Memory, Trauma and Nostalgia in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*. Cambridge Scholars, 2014.
- Furst, Lilian R. "Memory's Fragile Power in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* and W. G. Sebald's 'Max Ferber.'" *Contemporary Literature* 48.4 (2007): 530-3. JSTOR. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.
- Gaiman, Neil, and Kazuo Ishiguro. "'Let's talk about genre': Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro in conversation." *New Statesman* 4 June 2015: n. pag. Web. 14 June 2016.
- Gullette, Margaret Morganroth. *Aged by Culture*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004.
- Hartung, Heike. "The Limits of Development? Narratives of Growing Up/Growing Old in Narrative." *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 56.1 (2011): 45-66. Web. 13 May 2018.
- Hepworth, Mike. "'The Changes and Chances of this Mortal Life': Aspects of Ageing in the Fiction of Stanley Middleton." *Writing Old Age*. Ed. Julia Johnson. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2004. 48-63.
- . *Stories of Ageing*. Buckingham: Open UP, 2000.
- Hubble, Nick, and Philip Tew. *Ageing, Narrative and Identity: New Qualitative Social Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Hunnewell, Susannah. "Kazuo Ishiguro, The Art of Fiction No. 196." *The Paris Review* 184 (Spring 2008): n. pag. Web. 23 Apr. 2016.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *An Artist of the Floating World*. 1986. London: Faber, 2013.
- . *The Buried Giant*. London: Faber, 2015.

- . "My Twentieth Century Evening – and Other Small Breakthroughs." *Nobel Prize*. 1-16. 7 Dec. 2017. Web. 14 Dec. 2017.
- . *Never Let Me Go*. London: Faber, 2005.
- . *A Pale View of Hills*. 1982. London: Faber, 2005.
- . *The Remains of the Day*. 1989. London: Faber, 1999.
- . *The Unconsoled*. 1995. London: Faber, 1996.
- . *When We Were Orphans*. 2000. London: Faber, 2001.
- James, David. "Artifice and Absorption: The Modesty of *The Remains of the Day*." *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. London: Continuum, 2009. 54-66.
- Johnson, Julia. "Introduction." *Writing Old Age*. Ed. Julia Johnson. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2004. 1-4.
- King, Jeannette. "Fiction as a Gerontological Resource: Norah Hoult's *There Were No Windows*." *Ageing & Society*. 29 (2009): 295-308. *Cambridge Core*. Web. 26 July 2018.
- Lai-Ming, Tammy Ho. "Forgetting the Past: Nineteen Thoughts on Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* and Chan Koonchung's *The Fat Years*." *World Literature Today*. 16 Sep. 2015: n. pag. Web. 24 June 2017.
- Mangum, Teresa. "Literary History as a Tool of Gerontology." *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging*. 2nd ed. Ed. Thomas R. Cole, Robert Kastenbaum and Ruth E. Ray. New York: Springer, 2000.
- Manthorpe, Jill. "Ambivalence and Accommodation: The Fiction of Residential Care." *Writing Old Age*. Ed. Julia Johnson. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2004. 23-37.
- Maylor, Elizabeth A. "Age-Related Changes in Memory." *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*. Ed. Malcolm L. Johnson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 200-8.
- Mars-Jones, Adam. "Micro-Shock." Rev. of *The Buried Giant*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *London Review of Books* 37.5 (5 Mar. 2015): 17-8.
- Matthews, Sean. "'I'm Sorry I Can't Say More': An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. London: Continuum, 2009. 114-25.
- McDonald, Keith. "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as 'Speculative Memoir.'" *Biography* 30.1 Life Writing and Science Fiction (2007): 74-83. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.
- Messud, Claire. "Love's Body." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Nation* 16 May 2005: 28-31. 28 Apr. 2005. Web. 9 June 2016.
- Mullan, John. "Afterword: On First Reading *Never Let Me Go*." *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes. London: Continuum, 2009. 104-13.
- Robbins, Bruce. "Cruelty Is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 40.3 Ishiguro's Unknown Communities (2007): 289-302. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.
- Rosen, Gary. "What Would a Clone Say?" Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The New York Times Magazine* 27 Nov. 2005: n. pag. Web. 5 July 2018.

- Scurr, Ruth. "The Facts of Life." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Times Literary Supplement* 5317. 5 Feb. 2005: 21-2. Web. 9 June 2016.
- Shaffer, Brian W., and Cynthia F. Wong, eds. *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008.
- Shaikh, Narmeen. "Kazuo Ishiguro's Interior Worlds." *Asia Source*. Web. 22 Dec. 2016.
- Simmons, Leo W. *The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1945.
- Sontag, Susan. "The Double Standard of Aging." *The Saturday Review* 23 Sept. 1972: 29-38.
- Swift, Graham. "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *BOMB* 1 Oct. 1989: n. pag. Web. 7 June 2016.
- Tait, Theo. "A Sinister Harvest." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Telegraph* 13 Mar. 2005: n. pag. Web. 5 July 2018.
- Teo, Yugin. *Kazuo Ishiguro and Memory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Webster, Jeffrey Dean. "Construction and Validation of the Reminiscence Functions Scale." *Journal of Gerontology* 48.5 (1993): 256-62.
- Whitehead, Anne. "Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Contemporary Literature* 52.1 (2011): 54-83. *Project MUSE*. Web. 19 Aug. 2016.
- Wood, James. "The Human Difference." Rev. of *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The New Republic* 16 May 2005: 36-9. Web. 9 June 2016.
- Woodward, Kathleen. *Telling Stories: Aging, Reminiscence, and the Life Review*. Berkeley, CA: Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, 1997. 1-17. Print. Occasional Papers.