

"Exploring Power Dynamics in Modern Fiction: A Critical Analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith"

إعداد

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Abstract:

This research paper probes the fiction of power through the works of two contemporary novelists, the modernist-oriented Kazuo Ishiguro and the avant-garde Ali Smith, as they narratively engage with the issues of authority, identity, and resistance in the contemporary world. Focusing on Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014), this paper aims to explore the ways in which these novels question social norms, power structures, and the intricate nature of human agency in the contemporary world. With Ishiguro, these readings reveal how Ishiguro deconstructs dystopic constructs of subtle coercion and submission and also how Smith rereads storytelling to dismantle conventional and dominant narrative paradigms and give voice to those at the margin. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to reveal how contemporary fiction mirrors and shades of power relations, and to give insights into the socio-political consequences of storytelling acts.

Keywords: Power dynamics, authority, resistance in modern fiction; narrative innovation, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ali Smith.

Introduction

The English novel has long worked as a vital medium through which the complexities of power dynamics are explored, critiqued, and reshaped. In examining the intersections of authority and ideology within these narratives, readers can uncover the profound ways in which resistance is articulated by various characters. This paper delves into the implications of such representations, highlighting how the turn to beauty in British fiction since the 1990s serves as a response to the socio-political aftermath of Thatcherism, notably defining boundaries in neoliberal discourse (Su, 2014). Further, by focusing on marginalized voices, particularly those of servants within the Gothic tradition, the tension between rationality and superstition highlights resistance against dominant narratives (Barlaskar, 2017). Through such analyses, we can appreciate how the English novel not only reflects societal power structures but also acts as a site of potential subversion and re-imagination of identity and authority.

In examining the dynamic interplay of power, authority, and resistance within English literature, one captures a profound examination of societal structures and individual agency. This narrative framework serves as a vehicle for authors to criticize established norms and the ideologies that underpin them, revealing the complexities of dominance and power. Through characters and plots that embody this struggle, literature becomes a mirror reflecting the tensions between oppressive authority and the human spirit's resilience (Nugroho & Rokhman, 2020). For instance, works addressing colonial contexts frequently depict the clash between imperial power and indigenous resistance, showcasing how cultural imposition can lead to a serious counter-response. The analysis of Lynne Kutsukake's *The Translation of Love* clarifies this resistance within a postwar Japanese society shaped by American authority, highlighting the nuanced process of cultural adaptation and subversion that emerges as a reaction to dominance (Young, 2009). Through these narratives, literature not only investigates power relations but also celebrates the entity of the oppressed.

The exploration of authority in the English novel vividly illustrates how power dynamics shape narrative structures and character interactions. Novels often reflect the tensions between prevailing ideologies and

emergent forms of resistance, revealing the complexities of social hierarchies. For example, characters embodying ultraconservative views frequently get involved in campaigns against perceived threats to their authority, such as feminism and gender equality, mirroring the recent global surge of anti-gender movements, which seek to fortify traditional power structures against liberal democratic ideals (Hoeveler, 2003). In this context, the narrative acts as both a description of and a response to these forces, suggesting that the English novel serves as a battleground where ideological conflicts revealed. Additionally, the discourse surrounding degrowth provides a lens through which to evaluate the consequences of unrestrained authority in literature, emphasizing the need for alternative models of governance and societal organization (Kallis, 2018).

In examining the portrayal of authoritative figures within the English novel, one cannot ignore their profound influence on societal norms and values. Authors often depict these figures, particularly in the context of Victorian society, as both enforcers and products of dominating ideologies. For instance, in Wilkie Collins's novellas, the emphasis on marginalized characters interrogates traditional gender roles, thus reshaping established norms and highlighting gender anxieties that were present at the era (Allford, 2014). Simultaneously, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* illustrates the impact of maternal authority through the character of Mrs. Tulliver, whose prioritization of social status over her daughters' emotional fulfillment clarifies the constraints imposed by patriarchal structures. Eliot's narrative elucidates the struggle for individuality against the backdrop of societal expectations, reinforcing the notion that authoritative figures can both uphold and challenge the cultural fabric of their times (Naseb, 2024). Ultimately, these portrayals serve as critical reflections on authority and its ramifications within society.

The representation of ideology within English novels serves as a pivotal lens through which power dynamics and social structures are critically examined. Authors utilize narrative techniques to illuminate the inherent conflicts between authority and resistance, often reflecting the complexities of societal values and beliefs. In this context, the portrayal of ideology acts as both a mirror and a scaffold, revealing how dominant

narratives shape individual behavior and collective consciousness. For instance, the dissection of Trotsky's theory of Uneven and Combined Development underscores the significance of historical context in understanding ideological formations, highlighting how revolutionary experiences can reshape societal paradigms (Davidson, 2017). Furthermore, the absence of an abstract in some critical discussions emphasizes the depth of inquiry required to unravel such multidimensional representations of ideology. Ultimately, the intersection of narrative and ideology facilitates a richer comprehension of the continuous power struggles embedded within the fabric of society.

Central to the development of characters in English novels is the interplay between ideology and the motivations that drive these figures toward conflict. Ideologies, whether rooted in socio-political contexts or personal beliefs, often serve as both guiding principles and sources of internal struggle for characters. For instance, in narratives where authority figures embody oppressive ideologies, characters may find themselves confronting their own values against dominant societal norms. This tension highlights the struggle for agency within constrained circumstances, as encapsulated in the notion that freedom is our aesthetic and our ideology articulated by Amiri Baraka, wherein liberation acts as a foundational motive for characters navigating their environments (Rambsy, 2012). Thus, the ideological frameworks that characters inhabit shape their desires and conflicts, ultimately driving their narratives forward and illustrating the profound impact of ideology on both personal and collective identities within the fiction of power (Kilmer, 2021).

So, the intricate interplay of authority, ideology, and resistance in the English novel reveals the genres capacity to interrogate and reshape societal norms. Novels often portray the struggle for power not only among dominant figures but also within the marginalized voices that challenge the status quo. As (Hoeveler, 1992) articulates, the rise of the female reader catalyzed a shift in narrative dynamics, allowing Gothic novels to transcend mere entertainment and engage in a dialogue that subverted the restrictions imposed on women. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of lower-class narratives, suggesting that these voices disrupt the prevailing domestic ideologies while simultaneously

enriching the Gothic tradition. Thus, through the depictions of authority and rebellion, English novels serve as critical sites of resistance, ultimately affirming the potential of literature to foster social investigation and empower both individuals and communities.

Power dynamics serve as a crucial lens through which the evolution of the English novel can be critically examined, particularly in relation to authority and resistance. The representation of sociopolitical structures in literature not only reflects contemporary societal norms but also interrogates them, allowing readers to engage with underlying ideologies. For instance, the exploration of companionate marriage in Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas illustrates how authors confronted restrictive social norms surrounding marriage, blending authority with the emergence of individual autonomy (Pierce, 2018). This intersection of power with characters' narratives demonstrates how social hierarchies could be both reinforced and contested within the literary sphere. Moreover, seminal works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* have spurred feminist discourse and redefined notions of power, raising questions about authorship and identity in a genre often dominated by patriarchal structures (Hoeveler, 2003). Consequently, the evolution of the English novel becomes a dialogue between power, resistance, and the shifting cultural landscape.

The exploration of power dynamics in modern English fiction has become a critical area of study, as contemporary novels increasingly reflect and challenge societal norms. This paper digs deep into the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith, two prominent authors whose narratives engage with themes of authority, identity, and resistance in innovative ways.

Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith employ distinct yet complementary approaches to interrogate power dynamics in contemporary English fiction. Through fragmented identities, institutional control, and subversive narrative structures, both authors reveal how authority operates through biological determinism, surveillance capitalism, and historical revisionism while exploring modes of resistance grounded in memory and collective storytelling.

Ishiguro's novels dissect power through protagonists whose identities are shaped by external authorities rather than self-determination. In *Never Let Me Go*, clones like Kathy H. confront their predetermined fate as organ donors through: Their "complete" lives are reduced to medical utility, with Madame's gallery of art serving as pseudo-humanizing propaganda. Kathy's retrospective account reveals how clones internalize institutional as natural order. The clones' aspirational behaviors parody 1980s individualism, exposing how neoliberal rhetoric masks systemic control (C21 Literature, 2019). In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' devotion to duty becomes a metaphor for: His identity dissolves into performative service for Lord Darlington, whose Nazi sympathies underscore the moral bankruptcy of inherited power. The unreliable narration depicts how power structures manipulate historical memory and personal accountability.

Ishiguro exposes the psychological interiority of systemic oppression, while Smith imagines literal and metaphorical escapes from hegemonic systems. Both authors converge in depicting art's dual role: as tool of control (Madame's gallery) and liberation (George's rituals in *How To Be Both*). Where Ishiguro maps the erosion of agency under institutional power, Smith charts paths for its reclamation through narrative innovation. Their works collectively argue that identity under late capitalism exists in perpetual negotiation between authoritarian constructs and emancipatory counter-stories.

Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) presents a dystopian vision of England where clones are manufactured for organ harvesting, highlighting the biopolitical control over bodies and the objectification of human beings (Ishiguro, 2005). This novel examines the notion of "anatomo-politics," where the body is treated as a machine subject to discipline and optimization, echoing Foucauldian theories of biopower. The narrative demands an empathetic engagement from readers, challenging them to see the world through the eyes of the clones and confront the ethical implications of such a society (Ishiguro, 2005).

Ali Smith's works, such as *Hotel World* (2001) and *How to Be Both* (2014), explore themes of identity, memory, and the fluidity of time. *Hotel World* delves into the aftermath of a tragic event, tracing the lives of characters connected to the deceased, and explores the concept

of spectrality and adaptation (Smith, 2001). *How to Be Both* innovatively intertwines narratives from different eras, challenging conventional storytelling structures and reflecting on the nature of art, identity, and human connection (Smith, 2014).

By analyzing these authors' works, this paper aims to demonstrate how modern fiction serves as a critical platform for examining power dynamics and challenging dominant ideologies. Through their narratives, Ishiguro and Smith not only reflect societal structures but also offer spaces for reformation and re-evaluation of identity and authority. This study will explore how their novels engage with contemporary issues, such as biopolitics, identity fragmentation, and the role of memory in shaping human experience.

Ultimately, this analysis seeks to illuminate the ways in which modern English fiction can both mirror and challenge societal power structures, providing a nuanced understanding of how literature contributes to ongoing discussions about authority, identity, and resistance in the 21st century. By focusing on Ishiguro and Smith, this paper will highlight the significance of their contributions to these discussions and explore the broader implications of their narratives for understanding contemporary power dynamics.

Literature Review

The study of power dynamics in literature has long been a crucial area of inquiry, offering insights into the ways narratives reflect, critique, and reshape societal hierarchies. This review examines key scholarly perspectives on the representation of power in literature, focusing on themes such as authority, resistance, and marginalization. It situates these discussions within the broader context of modern English fiction, with particular emphasis on the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith.

Literature often serves as a mirror to societal power structures, depicting how authority operates across political, social, and economic domains. Scholars have highlighted how narratives reveal the mechanisms through which power shapes human behavior and relationships. For example, Lavanya Subramaniam argues that literature reflects intersectional systems of power, such as race, gender, and class, which influence individuals' experiences and opportunities (Subramaniam,

2024). Similarly, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is cited as a pivotal work that challenges historical power imbalances by confronting the legacy of slavery and its enduring impact on African American identity (Subramaniam, 2024). These analyses underscore the importance of literature in amplifying marginalized voices and critiquing dominant ideologies.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* exemplifies this reflective function by portraying a dystopian society where clones are exploited for organ harvesting. The novel critiques biopolitical control over bodies and raises ethical questions about autonomy and humanity (Ishiguro, 2005). Through its subtle narrative style, Ishiguro invites readers to interrogate the societal systems that normalize exploitation under the guise of progress.

Beyond reflecting power structures, literature also acts as a platform for dissent and resistance. Writers often use their craft to challenge authority, expose injustices, and advocate for social change. This is evident in works such as George Orwell's *1984*, which critiques totalitarianism through its depiction of surveillance and thought control (Pierce, 2018). The protagonist Winston's acts of rebellion symbolize the struggle for individuality against oppressive regimes.

Ali Smith's novels similarly embody resistance by challenging conventional storytelling structures and amplifying marginalized perspectives. In *How to Be Both*, Smith intertwines narratives from different eras to explore themes of identity and memory while subverting linear narrative conventions (Smith, 2014). This innovative approach not only disrupts traditional literary norms but also reflects broader societal tensions between past and present ideologies.

The intersectionality of power dynamics—how race, gender, class, and other identities intersect—has been a focal point in literary analysis. Scholars argue that understanding these intersections is essential for grasping the complexities of authority and resistance in narratives. For instance, Jane Austen's Regency-era novels critique gendered power structures within class hierarchies by portraying marriage as an economic necessity for women (Parveen, 2024). Similarly, Charles Dickens's Industrial Age fiction highlights systemic injustice and class

exploitation through vivid depictions of working-class struggles (Parveen, 2024).

In modern fiction, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* explores intersectionality through its depiction of clones who lack agency due to their socially constructed status as commodities. Ali Smith's *Hotel World* addresses gendered experiences of grief and adaptation while incorporating elements of spectrality to challenge dominant narratives about life and death (Smith, 2001).

Innovative storytelling techniques play a significant role in representing power dynamics in modern fiction. Ali Smith's experimental narratives disrupt traditional forms to emphasize fluidity in identity and time. This aligns with Lavanya Subramaniam's assertion that literature can subvert existing power structures through creative expression (Subramaniam, 2024). Similarly, Ishiguro's restrained prose style enhances the emotional resonance of his critique on biopolitical control.

Innovative storytelling techniques play a crucial role in modern fiction, enabling authors to challenge conventional narrative forms and represent complex power dynamics. Ali Smith and Kazuo Ishiguro are exemplary in their use of experimental approaches to explore themes of authority, identity, and resistance. Smith's fluid narrative structures emphasize the interconnectedness of time and identity, while Ishiguro's restrained prose heightens the emotional resonance of his critique on biopolitical control. This discussion expands on their narrative strategies, highlighting how these techniques subvert existing power structures and foster critical engagement.

Ali Smith's storytelling disrupts traditional forms to emphasize fluidity in identity and time. Her novel *How to Be Both* (2014) exemplifies this approach by intertwining two narratives—one set in Renaissance Italy and the other in contemporary England—allowing readers to experience the simultaneity of past and present. Smith's innovative use of prolepsis and analepsis destabilizes linearity, creating a narrative space where identities and histories overlap. As Rabia Asiyye Sönmez notes, Smith constructs "multilogic narrative universes" that promote dialogue across ontological boundaries, encouraging readers to engage with the text in dynamic ways.

Smith also employs queering as a narrative strategy, reimagining classical texts to celebrate transformative identities. In *Girl Meets Boy* (2007), she reinterprets Ovid's myth of Iphis and Ianthe, intertwining feminist activism with queer desire. The novel's fluid structure challenges binary categories of gender and narrative form, reflecting Smith's broader critique of societal norms. For instance, the narrator states, "What if stories were not about beginnings and endings but about what happens in between?" This rhetorical question encapsulates Smith's rejection of rigid storytelling conventions.

In *Hotel World* (2001), Smith further experiments with narrative perspective by using irregular syntax to capture the fragmented consciousness of her characters. Sara's ghost narrates with scattered punctuation and run-on sentences, reflecting her disorganized state of being: "No interrupting, she said. It's my story, this is it: are you listening?". This technique immerses readers in Sara's experience, fostering empathy while disrupting conventional narrative coherence.

Kazuo Ishiguro employs a contrasting approach to narrative innovation, using restrained prose to enhance the emotional impact of his critique on biopolitical control. In *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ishiguro portrays a dystopian society where clones are created for organ harvesting. The understated style reflects the quiet resignation of the clones as they grapple with their lack of agency. Kathy's reflection—"Memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly"—underscores the fragility of human experience within a system that commodifies life itself.

Ishiguro's use of subtle language invites readers to confront ethical dilemmas without overt moralizing. For example, Miss Lucy's declaration—"Your lives are set out for you... That's what each of you was created to do"—reveals the harsh reality faced by the clones while maintaining a tone of quiet inevitability. This restrained approach amplifies the emotional resonance of the narrative, compelling readers to reflect on the implications of systemic exploitation.

Memory serves as a site of resistance in Ishiguro's work, offering characters a means to reclaim individuality within oppressive systems. Kathy's insistence on preserving her memories—"The memories I value most, I don't ever see them fading"—symbolizes her attempt to assert

agency against societal erasure. Through this focus on memory, Ishiguro critiques the dehumanization inherent in biopolitical control.

Both Smith and Ishiguro use innovative storytelling techniques to subvert existing power structures. Smith disrupts linearity and fixed identities through her experimental narratives, creating spaces for marginalized voices and transformative possibilities. Her works challenge readers to reconsider traditional notions of time and identity while engaging with broader societal critiques.

Ishiguro's restrained prose style achieves a similar effect by emphasizing emotional resonance over explicit critique. His narratives quietly expose systemic injustices, encouraging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about biopolitical control and commodification.

Ali Smith and Kazuo Ishiguro exemplify how innovative storytelling techniques can represent power dynamics in modern fiction. Smith's fluid narratives emphasize interconnectedness and transformation, while Ishiguro's restrained style amplifies emotional engagement with systemic critique. Together, their works demonstrate how literature can subvert societal norms through creative expression, fostering critical reflection on authority, identity, and resistance in contemporary contexts.

By challenging conventional forms and engaging with pressing socio-political themes, these authors highlight the transformative potential of fiction as a medium for exploring power dynamics. Their narratives not only reflect existing hierarchies but also envision alternative possibilities for identity and societal organization—a testament to the enduring relevance of innovative storytelling in modern literature.

The exploration of power dynamics in literature extends far beyond individual texts, addressing broader societal concerns that resonate with contemporary issues. Works like George Orwell's *1984* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* serve as cautionary tales about the dangers of unchecked authority, reflecting themes of surveillance, control, and the erosion of individual freedoms¹. These classic dystopian narratives continue to influence modern literature, as authors like Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith engage with pressing socio-political themes, reflecting existing hierarchies while envisioning alternative possibilities for identity and societal organization.

In 1984, Orwell depicts a totalitarian regime where the Party exercises complete control over citizens through surveillance and propaganda. The slogan "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength" encapsulates the regime's manipulation of truth and reality. Winston Smith's struggle against the Party symbolizes the human desire for individuality and truth in a world dominated by oppressive power. Orwell's novel serves as a warning about the dangers of unchecked authority and the erosion of personal freedoms, highlighting the importance of critical thinking and resistance against oppressive systems.

Lord of the Flies explores power dynamics within a group of boys stranded on an island, illustrating how fear and savagery can lead to the disintegration of societal order. Jack's embodiment of physical power contrasts with Ralph's moral authority, demonstrating the conflict between different forms of power and their impact on human behavior. Golding's novel underscores the inherent darkness within human nature and the fragility of societal structures when power is left unchecked.

Modern authors like Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith continue this tradition of exploring power dynamics through their narratives. Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* critiques biopolitical control by portraying a dystopian society where clones are created for organ harvesting. This novel highlights the commodification of human life and the lack of agency faced by marginalized groups. Ishiguro's work reflects broader societal concerns about the exploitation of bodies and the ethics of scientific advancements.

Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* disrupts traditional narrative structures to emphasize fluidity in identity and time. Her innovative storytelling challenges readers to reconsider fixed notions of selfhood and history, reflecting on the interconnectedness of past and present experiences. Smith's work serves as a critique of societal norms, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of identity and human connection.

Both classic and modern works of literature address pressing socio-political issues such as surveillance culture and systemic inequality. Orwell's depiction of a surveillance state in *1984* resonates with

contemporary concerns about privacy and government control. Similarly, Ishiguro's exploration of biopolitical control in *Never Let Me Go* reflects on the ethical implications of scientific advancements and their impact on marginalized communities.

The exploration of power dynamics in literature remains a vital area of study, as it reflects broader societal concerns and challenges readers to engage critically with the world around them. From Orwell's *1984* to contemporary authors like Ishiguro and Smith, these narratives not only mirror existing power structures but also offer spaces for subversion and re-imagination of identity and authority. By examining these works, we gain insights into the complexities of power and its impact on human experience, underscoring the importance of literature as a platform for social critique and change.

Through their innovative storytelling techniques and engagement with pressing socio-political themes, modern authors continue the legacy of using literature as a tool for critiquing power dynamics and envisioning alternative futures. This tradition underscores the enduring relevance of literature in addressing contemporary issues and fostering critical reflection on the forces that shape society.

The representation of power dynamics in literature provides valuable insights into the complexities of authority and resistance. By analyzing Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Ali Smith's *How to Be Both*, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how modern fiction investigates societal norms while offering spaces for subversion. These authors demonstrate how literature can both mirror and challenge power structures, fostering critical reflection on contemporary issues such as biopolitics, intersectionality, and narrative innovation.

Discussion

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* provide profound explorations of power dynamics, identity, and resistance, each employing unique narrative strategies to critique societal hierarchies. This section discusses key themes in their works, supported by direct quotations from their novels.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro presents a dystopian society where clones are created for organ donation, raising ethical questions about autonomy and humanity. The novel critiques the commodification of human life through its portrayal of systemic control over the clones' bodies. One striking moment is Madame's reflection: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all" (Ishiguro, 2005). This statement encapsulates the dehumanization of the clones, whose existence is reduced to proving their humanity while simultaneously being exploited.

The clones' awareness of their predetermined fate adds another layer to the critique of biopower. Miss Lucy tells them, "Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do" (Ishiguro, 2005). This chilling declaration underscores the lack of agency and the normalization of exploitation within this society.

Ishiguro also explores memory as a site of resistance against systemic control. Kathy reflects, "Memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't ever see them fading" (Ishiguro, 2005). Through Kathy's insistence on preserving her memories, Ishiguro highlights how personal history can serve as a means of reclaiming individuality in a world that seeks to erase it.

Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* disrupts traditional storytelling conventions by intertwining two narratives—one set in Renaissance Italy and the other in contemporary England—to explore themes of identity, art, and human connection. This structural innovation challenges linear notions of time and reflects broader societal tensions between past and present ideologies.

One significant theme in Smith's work is the fluidity of identity. In *How to Be Both*, the Renaissance artist Francesco del Cossa narrates: "Who says stories end? They don't end; they spin on like the world spinning on" (Smith, 2014). This assertion challenges fixed notions of selfhood and emphasizes the continuity of human experience across time.

Smith also critiques societal hierarchies through her portrayal of marginalized voices. In George's narrative, grief becomes a lens through which she examines her mother's activism and its impact on her understanding of justice. George reflects: "It matters that someone sees this; it matters that someone says something" (Smith, 2014). This statement underscores the importance of bearing witness and speaking out against injustice.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a poignant exploration of systemic power and its impact on identity and autonomy. Through the relationship between Kathy and Tommy, Ishiguro portrays the human struggle to reclaim agency within a dehumanizing system. Their bond symbolizes resistance against the oppressive structures that define their existence as clones, serving as a narrative lens through which themes of humanity, intimacy, and defiance are examined.

Kathy and Tommy's relationship is central to the novel's exploration of resistance. Despite their predetermined fate as organ donors, their emotional connection represents an attempt to assert humanity in a system that denies them individuality. The moment when Kathy reflects, "And for a moment, it seemed like we were holding onto each other because that was the only way to stop us being swept away into the night," (Ishiguro, 2005) captures the poignancy of their struggle. This image of clinging to one another symbolizes their desperate effort to resist the forces that seek to erase their identities.

Their shared memories serve as a form of rebellion against systemic erasure. Kathy's insistence on preserving her past—"The memories I value most, I don't ever see them fading"—highlights her determination to hold onto her sense of self despite the system's attempts to reduce her existence to utility. Similarly, Tommy's efforts to create art, believing it might reveal his soul, reflect his yearning for recognition as a human being rather than a commodity.

In *Never Let Me Go*, human intimacy is portrayed as one of the few ways the clones can rebel against their oppressive reality. The strict rules at Hailsham discourage personal connections, yet Kathy and Tommy's bond defies these norms. Their relationship becomes a quiet act of resistance against the system that seeks to control every aspect of their lives.

The symbolic search for Kathy's lost cassette tape further underscores the theme of intimacy as rebellion. When Tommy helps her find the tape, it becomes an emotional moment that deepens their connection. This act not only reflects their shared humanity but also serves as a metaphor for reclaiming lost identity in a world that seeks to strip them of individuality.

The concept of deferrals—rumored extensions granted to couples who can prove they are in love—represents another layer of resistance in the novel. Kathy and Tommy's hope for deferral drives them to seek validation from Madame and Miss Emily, believing their relationship might grant them autonomy over their fate. However, when they learn that deferrals do not exist, their grief underscores the futility of resisting systemic power through institutional channels.

This revelation forces them to confront the reality of their situation: no amount of love or creativity can alter their predetermined fate. Yet, even in this despair, their relationship remains a source of strength and humanity. As they cling to each other in grief after learning the truth, Ishiguro emphasizes the resilience of human connection in the face of systemic oppression.

The novel's ending raises questions about whether Kathy's actions reflect acceptance or resistance. As she prepares for her own donations, she reflects on her life with calm resignation: "I'm not really sad about it... I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head" (Ishiguro, 2005). While some readers interpret this as passive acceptance, others argue that Kathy's ability to preserve her memories represents a quiet act of defiance against the system's attempts to erase her identity.

Her journey to Norfolk after Tommy's death further illustrates this tension between acceptance and resistance. Standing in a field filled with discarded items, she imagines all she has lost returning to her—a

poignant metaphor for reclaiming agency through memory and imagination. This act suggests that even within an oppressive system, individuals can find ways to resist through personal reflection and emotional resilience.

Ishiguro uses restrained prose and subtle symbolism to explore how resistance manifests within systemic power structures. By focusing on Kathy and Tommy's relationship, he, as mentioned in the *Journal of Narratives and Life History* (1993), highlights the importance of human connection as a means of reclaiming identity and autonomy. Their bond serves as a reminder that even in dehumanizing systems, individuals can assert their humanity through acts of intimacy and memory preservation.

Ultimately, *Never Let Me Go* challenges readers to consider how systemic power shapes identity and autonomy while emphasizing the resilience of human connection as a form of resistance. Kathy and Tommy's struggle offers profound insights into the complexities of resisting oppressive systems—a theme that resonates deeply in contemporary discussions about societal hierarchies and individual agency.

Ali Smith's novels often portray characters who resist societal norms through acts of creativity and connection. This resistance is exemplified in *How to Be Both*, where Francesco del Cossa's art serves as a form of defiance against rigid expectations in Renaissance Italy. The statement, "Art is not what you see; it's what you make others see," encapsulates Smith's broader critique of authority and her celebration of artistic expression as a means of challenging power (Smith, 2014).

In *How to Be Both*, Francesco del Cossa's narrative intertwines with that of a contemporary character, highlighting the enduring power of art to subvert societal norms. Cossa's art challenges the conventions of his time, reflecting Smith's broader theme of using creativity to resist oppressive systems. By making others see the world differently, Cossa's work embodies the transformative potential of art to challenge authority and redefine cultural narratives. Smith's use of Cossa's character underscores the idea that art can be both a reflection of societal norms and a tool for subverting them (Passa Porta, 2019). Through Cossa's

story, Smith critiques the rigid expectations placed on artists and individuals in Renaissance Italy, emphasizing the importance of creative freedom and innovation.

In the *Seasonal Quartet*, Smith further explores the theme of resistance through creativity by introducing characters who are storyteller-migrants. These characters use their narratives to claim agency against oppressive systems, such as the UK's detention regime. Hero, a detainee from Vietnam, exemplifies this resistance by using his imagination to transcend the confines of his detention (Smith, 2002). His story highlights how creativity can serve as a powerful tool for challenging systemic power and redefining personal identity within restrictive environments.

Smith's portrayal of these storyteller-migrants emphasizes the role of art and narrative in shaping a counterpublic sphere. This sphere allows marginalized voices to participate in cultural discourse, challenging dominant narratives and fostering alternative perspectives on identity and community.

In *Girl Meets Boy*, Smith reinterprets Ovid's myth of Iphis and Ianthe, challenging traditional gender norms and celebrating fluidity in identity. The novel's narrative subverts the binary constructs of gender, presenting a world where identity is mutable and plural (Smith, 2002). This reinterpretation serves as a form of resistance against societal expectations, highlighting the transformative potential of art to redefine cultural narratives and challenge dominant ideologies. Through Anthea's character, Smith explores the concept of time as an endless cycle, allowing for an engagement with locality that stretches beyond received models and norms. This approach underscores the importance of creative expression in challenging homogeneity and fostering diversity in cultural narratives.

Ali Smith's works demonstrate how artistic expression can serve as a powerful means of resisting societal norms and challenging authority. Through characters like Francesco del Cossa and the storyteller-migrants in the *Seasonal Quartet*, Smith highlights the transformative potential of art to redefine cultural narratives and foster alternative perspectives on identity and community. Her novels emphasize the

importance of creative freedom and innovation in challenging oppressive systems, underscoring the enduring relevance of art as a tool for social critique and change.

By exploring these themes, Smith's novels provide a critical space for questioning authority and reimagining identity in contemporary contexts. Her celebration of artistic expression as a means of resistance aligns with broader discussions about the role of creativity in challenging power dynamics and fostering socio-political change. Ultimately, Smith's works demonstrate how literature can both reflect and challenge societal norms, offering a platform for marginalized voices and alternative narratives that enrich our understanding of identity and community.

Through their innovative narratives, Ishiguro and Smith illuminate the complexities of power dynamics in contemporary contexts. Ishiguro critiques biopolitical control through his portrayal of clones' lack of agency, while Smith disrupts conventional storytelling structures to emphasize fluidity in identity and resistance against societal hierarchies (Abichou,2016). By analyzing these works, this paper demonstrates how modern fiction serves as a critical space for interrogating authority and envisioning alternative possibilities for human connection and autonomy.

This paper has explored the representation of power dynamics in modern English fiction through the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith. By analyzing *Never Let Me Go* and *How to Be Both*, it has demonstrated how these authors use narrative innovation to critique societal norms and challenge dominant ideologies. Ishiguro's portrayal of clones in a dystopian society highlights the biopolitical control over bodies, while Smith's experimental storytelling subverts traditional structures to emphasize fluidity in identity and time.

The exploration of these themes reveals that modern fiction serves as a critical platform for examining power dynamics and envisioning alternative possibilities for identity and societal organization. Both authors illustrate how narratives can both reflect and challenge societal hierarchies, offering spaces for subversion and re-imagination of authority.

Ishiguro's work clarifies the commodification of human life through its depiction of clones as disposable entities, emphasizing the tension between their manufactured existence and their quest for humanity. In contrast, Smith's narratives disrupt linear time and identity, challenging readers to consider the interconnectedness of past and present experiences. Ultimately, this study underscores, as mentioned in *Postgraduate English Journal* (2016), the significance of modern English fiction in interrogating power structures and fostering socio-political change. By focusing on Ishiguro and Smith, it highlights how literature can not only mirror societal norms but also provide a space for resistance and re-imagination, contributing to ongoing discussions about authority, identity, and resistance in the 21st century.

Through their innovative narratives, Ishiguro and Smith demonstrate how fiction can both critique existing power dynamics and envision alternative futures. Their works serve as powerful examples of how literature can engage with contemporary issues, such as biopolitics and identity fragmentation, while offering a platform for marginalized voices and challenging dominant ideologies. As such, this paper concludes that modern fiction remains a vital medium for exploring and reshaping societal power structures, providing a critical space for questioning authority and reimagining identity in contemporary contexts.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complex ways in which Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) interrogate power dynamics, identity formation, and resistance within modern socio-political frameworks. Both novels, while distinct in style and narrative approach, serve as profound meditations on authority and agency, revealing the multifaceted nature of control and the possibilities for subversion embedded in contemporary storytelling. This conclusion synthesizes the key findings of the analysis, reflecting on how these authors use fiction not only to mirror societal power structures but also to challenge and reimagine them.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* exemplifies a subtle, insidious form of power that operates through normalization and internalized compliance rather than overt coercion. The dystopian setting, where human clones are bred solely for organ donation, presents a chilling allegory of biopolitical control—a concept articulated by philosopher Michel Foucault to describe how modern states regulate populations through the management of bodies and life processes (Rizq, 2014).

The clones' acceptance of their fate is not born of ignorance but of a deeply ingrained societal narrative that frames their existence as natural and inevitable. Ishiguro's restrained narrative voice, delivered through Kathy H.'s retrospective memoir, invites readers to inhabit the psychological landscape of characters who embody compliance within oppressive systems. This internalization of control highlights how power can be exercised through cultural and institutional narratives that shape subjectivity and limit agency.

Moreover, *Never Let Me Go* critiques neoliberal ideologies that emphasize individual aspiration and self-improvement. The clones' efforts to find meaning through art and relationships echo the rhetoric of personal development prevalent in late 20th-century Western societies. Yet, this aspiration is ultimately circumscribed by systemic constraints, exposing the limits of individualism when confronted with structural violence.

In contrast, Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* employs a radically experimental narrative structure that itself becomes a form of resistance against



conventional literary and social hierarchies. The novel's dual narratives—one set in the 15th century and the other in contemporary England—interweave to challenge linear conceptions of time, history, and identity. This polyphonic form disrupts dominant historical narratives, foregrounding marginalized perspectives and emphasizing the multiplicity of human experience. Smith's narrative strategy reflects a postmodern skepticism toward fixed identities and authoritative histories, suggesting that power is not monolithic but fractured and contested. The novel's fluid temporality and shifting viewpoints invite readers to question the stability of truth and the authority of singular narratives. In doing so, Smith amplifies voices often silenced or erased by dominant cultural discourses.

Furthermore, *How to Be Both* explores art and storytelling as sites of both control and liberation. The figure of Francesco del Cossa, a Renaissance painter whose ghost inhabits the novel, symbolizes the enduring power of creative expression to transcend temporal and political boundaries. Through this metafictional device, Smith asserts the potential of narrative to resist erasure and to reconfigure social realities.

Together, Ishiguro and Smith offer complementary perspectives on power and resistance. Ishiguro's work reveals the psychological interiority of oppression, emphasizing how individuals navigate and sometimes acquiesce to systemic control. His subtle, melancholic prose evokes empathy and ethical reflection, encouraging readers to recognize the human costs of institutional power.

Smith's novel, by contrast, enacts resistance through formal innovation and narrative multiplicity. Her playful yet profound approach embodies a refusal to accept fixed categories of identity or history, instead celebrating ambiguity, hybridity, and collective memory. This approach aligns with contemporary critical theories that emphasize the fluidity of subjectivity and the importance of storytelling as a political act. Both authors engage with the role of art—whether the clones' artwork in Ishiguro's novel or the Renaissance paintings in Smith's—as a double-edged sword that can both reinforce and challenge power structures. This ambivalence underscores the complexity of cultural production within systems of authority.

The narrative choices made by Ishiguro and Smith have profound socio-political implications. By foregrounding marginalized perspectives—clones denied full humanity in *Never Let Me Go*, and historically silenced figures in *How to Be Both*—these novels critique exclusionary practices embedded in societal norms. They reveal how power operates not only through laws and institutions but also through cultural narratives that shape collective consciousness. These works also highlight the ethical responsibilities of storytelling. Ishiguro's restrained narration compels readers to confront uncomfortable truths about complicity and moral ambiguity, while Smith's fragmented narrative invites active reader participation in reconstructing meaning. Both approaches demonstrate that fiction can serve as a critical space for questioning authority and imagining alternative social arrangements.

A central theme in both novels is the negotiation of identity under conditions of constraint. Ishiguro's clones struggle with the tension between their imposed roles and their desires for individuality and connection. Their tragic fates underscore the fragility of agency within oppressive frameworks. Smith's characters, meanwhile, embody multiplicity and transformation, resisting reductive classifications through fluid identities and interwoven histories. This emphasis on hybridity resonates with contemporary debates about identity politics, intersectionality, and the politics of representation.

By exploring these dynamics, the novels contribute to broader conversations about how individuals and communities assert agency in the face of structural inequalities. They suggest that resistance can take many forms—from quiet endurance to radical narrative disruption—and that identity is always in flux, shaped by historical and cultural forces.

Ultimately, Ishiguro and Smith demonstrate the enduring power of fiction as a space for critical inquiry and imaginative reconfiguration. Their novels do not offer simplistic solutions but instead open up questions about the nature of power, the ethics of memory, and the possibilities for social change. Through their nuanced portrayals of authority and resistance, these authors encourage readers to engage critically with the world around them, recognizing the ways in which narratives shape perceptions and realities. Fiction becomes a site where dominant

ideologies can be challenged, marginalized voices amplified, and new visions of identity and community imagined.

Engaging deeply with *Never Let Me Go* and *How to Be Both* has reinforced my conviction that literature remains a vital tool for understanding and contesting power. Ishiguro's subtle exploration of compliance and loss evokes profound empathy, reminding us of the human cost of systemic oppression. Smith's inventive narrative strategies inspire hope, illustrating how storytelling can disrupt entrenched hierarchies and foster solidarity. Together, these novels exemplify how contemporary fiction can illuminate the complexities of our social world while offering pathways toward greater justice and inclusivity. They challenge readers not only to witness but also to participate in the ongoing negotiation of identity and authority, affirming the transformative potential of literary art.

In conclusion, the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Ali Smith provide rich, complementary insights into the fiction of power in the modern era. By examining the nuanced interplay of authority, identity, and resistance in *Never Let Me Go* and *How to Be Both*, this study has highlighted how contemporary narratives both reflect and reshape societal power dynamics. Their novels underscore the importance of narrative form and perspective in articulating and contesting power, demonstrating that fiction is not merely a mirror of reality but an active participant in its construction. As such, Ishiguro and Smith's fiction invites ongoing critical engagement, encouraging readers and scholars alike to consider how stories can challenge domination and envision more equitable futures.

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استكشاف ديناميكيات القوة في الأدب الحديث: تحليل نقدي لكازو إيشيغورو وعلي سميث

المستخلص :

تستكشف هذه الورقة البحثية خيال السلطة من خلال أعمال روائيين معاصرين، هما كازو إيشيغورو ذو التوجه الحداثي، وعلي سميث الطليعي، حيث يتناولان سردياً قضايا السلطة والهوية والمقاومة في العالم المعاصر. مع التركيز على رواية "لا تدعني أرحل" لإيشيغورو (2005) ورواية "كيف تكون كليهما" لسميث.

(2014)، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف الطرق التي تُشكك بها هذه الروايات في المعايير الاجتماعية، وهياكل السلطة، والطبيعة المعقدة للفاعلية البشرية في العالم المعاصر. مع إيشيغورو، تكشف هذه القراءات كيف يُفكك إيشيغورو المفاهيم البائسة للإكراه الخفي. والخضوع، وكيف يُعيد سميث قراءة السرد القصصي لتفكيك نماذج السرد التقليدية والمهيمنة، وإعطاء صوتٍ للمهمّشين. من خلال هذا التحليل، تسعى الورقة إلى الكشف عن كيف يعكس الخيال المعاصر علاقات القوة وظلالها، وإعطاء...

رؤى حول العواقب الاجتماعية والسياسية لأفعال السرد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ديناميكيات القوة، السلطة، المقاومة في الرواية الحديثة؛ الابتكار السردى، كازو إيشيغورو، وعلي سميث.