

**Musical allusions in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* as an intermedial component**[Kazuo Ishiguro'nun *Nocturnes*'ünde medyalar arası bir bileşen olarak müzikal göndermeler][Les allusions musicales dans les *Nocturnes* de Kazuo Ishiguro en tant que composante intermédiaire]

Stacy Olive JARVIS\*

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Araştırma makalesi/ Research article**Abstract**

This article examines the collection of short fiction *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009) by Kazuo Ishiguro, proposing a framework to explore the extent to which iconic principles manifest within literary texts. Employing critical tools such as narratology and intermediality studies, the analysis reveals leitmotif clusters, structural patterns, and musical allusions within the text's poetics. The findings suggest that the novella collection represents a concentrated expression of the interplay between music and literature, where music contributes to setting creation, character portrayal, and plot development. The study also concludes on the efficacy of musical forms when transposed into another semiotic system.

**Keywords:** Nocturne, Kazuo Ishiguro, Chopin, intermediality**Özet**

Bu makale, Kazuo Ishiguro'nun *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009) adlı kısa kurgu derlemesini inceleyerek ikonik ilkelerin edebî metinlerde ne ölçüde tezahür ettiğini araştırmak için bir çerçeve önermektedir. Anlatıbilim ve medyalar arası çalışmalar gibi eleştirel araçları kullanan analiz, metnin şiirselliği içindeki leitmotiv kümelerini, yapısal örüntüleri ve müzikal imaları ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bulgular, roman koleksiyonunun müzik ve edebiyat arasındaki etkileşimin yoğun bir ifadesini temsil ettiğini ve müziğin ortam yaratma, karakter tasviri ve olay örgüsü gelişimine katkıda bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışma ayrıca müzikal formların başka bir göstergebilimsel sisteme aktarıldığında ne kadar etkili olabileceği sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Nocturne, Kazuo Ishiguro, Chopin, medyalar arası**Résumé**

Cet article examine le recueil de nouvelles *Nocturnes : Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009) de Kazuo Ishiguro, en proposant un cadre pour explorer la mesure dans laquelle les principes iconiques se manifestent dans les textes littéraires. En utilisant des outils critiques tels que la narratologie et les études d'intermédialité, l'analyse révèle des groupes de leitmotivs, des modèles structurels et des allusions musicales dans la poétique du texte. Les résultats suggèrent que la collection de novella représente une expression concentrée de l'interaction entre la musique et la littérature, où la musique contribue à la création du cadre, à la représentation des personnages et au développement de l'intrigue. L'étude conclut également sur l'efficacité des formes musicales lorsqu'elles sont transposées dans un autre système sémiotique.

**Mots-clés :** Nocturne, Kazuo Ishiguro, Chopin, intermédialité**1. Introduction**

\* **Corresponding Author:** Stacy Olive JARVIS, University of Birmingham, Music Department, England, [musician@sjarvis-violin.co.uk](mailto:musician@sjarvis-violin.co.uk), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5113-4792>.

Intertextuality theory, predicated on the interaction and permeation of both literary texts and cultural texts at large, originates from Mikhail Bakhtin's works on the dialogic nature of the text and his introduction of the concept of the 'other's word' (Bakhtin, 1979). Bakhtin conceived of the literary text as an assemblage of voices forming a polyphonic structure; 'two utterances, separated by time and space, reveal dialogic relations upon semantic comparison, provided there is any semantic conversion between them' (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 303). Thus, any text relates to other texts through specific dialogic relations.

The term 'intermediality' (from English inter + media/art = intermedia/interart) was coined by the German scholar Oge Hansen-Løve in (1983). Broadly, intermediality refers to the creation of a cohesive poly-artistic space within the cultural system. In a narrower sense, it denotes a specific type of intra-textual relations in a work of art, where various forms of art interact.

A work of verbal art is not only intertextual, comprising quotations from other literary texts, but also intermedial, meaning it includes 'quotations' borrowed from texts of a different kind, created in the languages of other art forms. Austrian scholar W. Wolf describes intertextuality as a monomedial variant and intermediality as a cross medial variant of their integrally semiotic relations (Wolf, 1999).

Since the focus here is the artistic text, the foundational research model of Yuri Lotman is employed, who asserts that in an artistic text, the boundaries of the sign blur, forming a unique language of the author, which represents a complex hierarchy of mutually related languages (Lotman, 2000, p. 34). Another key position of the theory of the artistic text is the thesis that the language of the artistic text is a code that the reader needs to decipher. Lotman emphasises that 'the artistic text can be viewed as a text encoded multiple times' (2000, p. 69). The basis of re-encoding elements lies in the created equivalence between different denotates at the language level (Lotman, 2000, p. 57).

I will present several examples demonstrating dependencies between literary and musical forms, based on the cognitive principle of iconicity. The sonata, with its clear cyclically developing structure, is a very popular means of revealing intent and organising perception. The narrative form of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, William Gass's *Cartesian Sonata*, and Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* are modelled after the sonata form. Spanish researcher Isabel Cuevas shows the iconicity of the connections between Handel's music and Virginia Woolf's novel *Between the Acts* (2005). In the *Sonatas: primeras narraciones* by Italian writer Ramon della Valle, the boundaries between literature and music blur; each story in the cycle of four sonatas is associated with a season's name ('Sonata de estio', 'Sonata de Primavera', 'Sonata de Invierno, and 'Sonata de Otono'), and in form, the cycle of stories correlates with Antonio Vivaldi's famous composition *The Four Seasons*. The five novellas comprising Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* resemble a sonata, with thematic resonances and characters transitioning from one novel to another.

In examining the structural and thematic elements of Paul Celan's *Todesfuge* and Ernst Hoffmann's *Der Goldne Topf*, it becomes evident that both works not only draw upon but also exemplify the forms of a fugue and an arabesque, respectively. *Todesfuge*'s structure mirrors a musical fugue not only in its repetitive patterns but also in its thematic depth. Key phrases such as 'Black milk of daybreak' and 'he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland' recur throughout the poem, echoing the horrors of the Holocaust. This repetition mimics the fugue's musical motifs, which are introduced by one voice and then taken up by others, creating a haunting and layered effect. The repetitive nature of the lines in *Todesfuge* effectively encapsulates the cyclical and inescapable trauma of its subjects, while the poem's rhythmic and cadence patterns evoke the solemnity typical of a fugue, deepening the somber themes of memory and loss. Similarly, Hoffmann's *Der Goldne Topf* draws upon the arabesque form, which in the visual arts involves an intricate, flowing design of intertwined lines, often incorporating floral or geometric motifs. This interlacing of plots and the vivid, dream-like quality of the sequences reflect the decorative and ornamental nature of an arabesque, drawing readers into a whimsically elaborate world. Also, researchers have noted that some parts of James Joyce's *Ulysses* were inspired by Bach's fugues (Frank, 2024, p. 9).

Richard Brautigan's short story *Scarlatti Tilt* (1971) comprises just two sentences: 'It's very hard to live in a studio apartment in San Jose with a man who's learning to play the violin. That's what she told the police when she handed them the empty revolver'. Despite its brevity, the story encapsulates an exposition, climax, and resolution. The title immediately aligns the reader with a musical theme, referencing Domenico Scarlatti, a renowned composer and harpsichordist. Notably, the title does more than signify the theme; it implies the form of the titled work. Scarlatti, celebrated for his music that enhances piano playing technique, is characterised by virtuosity, conciseness, playful dynamism, and lyricism—all qualities that mirror Brautigan's narrative. Additionally, Scarlatti was an innovator of performance technique, primarily known for his fast-paced, single-movement keyboard compositions that sharply contrast images, aligning closely with the structure of *Scarlatti Tilt*. This interplay of literature and music also leads Kazuo Ishiguro to deeper self-expression, where the constraints of his 'native' art form -literature- are successfully transcended. Gerry Smyth refers to Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* as a 'musical text' because of its 'repetitions... variation, evenness of tone, the manipulation of meaning at the material level of the signifier' (Smyth, 2011, p. 152).

The author explores the enigma of musicians: how to achieve success in the music industry and how to maintain a happy marriage. The novel highlights the challenges a musician faces at various career stages, how they confront music, and struggle to preserve their marriage and love through varying professional scenarios, experiencing both rises and falls in the cutthroat world of business.

Alongside the characters' aspirations, Kazuo Ishiguro unveils the role of chance. Typically, significant events in the characters' lives occur due to spontaneous decisions to speak up, travel somewhere, or respond to an offer. Consequently, when the characters set goals, they seldom achieve them as planned. The author emphasizes that the journey is often more important than the original intent, requiring the performer's resolve, with outcomes that are unpredictable and not solely dependent on individual efforts.

The stories create a 'narrative structure' comparable to a quintet, an ensemble of five musicians. Indeed, the variable, episodic nature of a rondo, usually composed in sets of five parts, matches the form of Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* which emits a range of atmospheric tones, from farcical dog singing to an awkward incident with a turkey among divorced individuals in Beverly Hills.

The cyclical dynamics of the *Nocturnes* on a more abstract level express narrator's 'hopeful remembrances and anticipations that Ishiguro uses to depict his characters managing their disappointments; this focus' (Wong, 2015, p. 134). This also facilitates the demonstration of intertextual connections with the other four stories in the collection: possessing the title of the entire collection, *Nocturne* is undoubtedly the most dynamic, emotional, and dreamlike among the works.

As a linguistic structure, the text is intended for storing, transmitting, and accumulating information. In this latter function, the text itself can become a source of generating new meanings. 'Reading Ishiguro thus means reading palimpsestically, feeling for traces of what came before. The same might also be said about his fictive worlds, whose copies, echoes, and rememberings are key to their narrative shape and meaning', assert Chris Holmes and Kelly Mee Rich (Holmes & Rich, 2021, pp. 1-2).

The origins of the formation and development of the nocturne are connected with the advent of Romanticism as a historical epoch, with the corresponding mode of artistic thinking, and are conditioned by its display of the peculiarities of Romantic musical stylistics.

## 2. Analysing the narrative elements: Title of the work

The most important role in the formation of this genre was played by the rapid development and improvement of the piano as an instrument that reached its 'technical heyday' in the 19th century and became one of the most popular musical instruments of the Romantic era. The performer began to have the richest range of nuances in the areas of touch, dynamics, articulation and intonation, which also stimulated the imagination of miniaturist composers. The Romantics were particularly attracted by the piano's ability to 'sing', to imitate the human voice. One of the important features of a piano nocturne is the presence of a certain texture: a singing melody and a characteristic accompaniment, which is a swaying, swaying background that evokes associations with landscape images (the measured rippling of waves, the rustling of leaves, the pouring moonlight).

Carl Czerny clarifies: 'Notturmo for the Pianoforte is really an imitation of those vocal pieces which are termed *Serenades*, and the peculiar object of such works- that of being performed by night, before the dwelling of an esteemed individual' (1848, p. 97) The composer was convinced that the Notturmo (or Serenade) 'must be calculated to create an impression of a soft, fanciful, gracefully-romantic, or even passionate kind, but never of a harsh or strange' (1848, p. 98). Kallberg supports this concept: 'Images of dreams, wandering souls, mysterious witchery, and night birds, and frequent invocations of feminine imagery all recur often in this 'poetic idea' of the nocturne' (2000, p. 30).

Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* consists of five stories, each of which is a statement embedding the author's assumption in an ongoing dialogue with other statements in the musical and literary world. The subtitle presages 'five stories about music and twilight'. It is both a time of day, a mood, and in many ways a period in a person's life. Five still images. Each has a mystery, an intrigue that is revealed only in the finale, and almost always unexpectedly.

*Nocturnes* is an utterance, composed of five stories, i.e. five utterances, themed on both musicians' career and marital relationships (Huang, 2013, p. 4). It has a 'sad tone': its characters live with trauma, guilt or self-doubt, and the recurring motifs of 'broken families' and 'disappointed dreams'.

According to Lotman, the choice of genre is not accidental; it represents a 'choice of language through which the author intends to communicate with the reader' (Lotman, 2000, p. 30). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2024) the nocturne as a genre emerged in the 19th century and can be defined as a composition suggestive of night, usually of a quiet, meditative character. 'In music, a Nocturne is a composition suggests the essence of the night, a piece that sets a mood, usually contemplative and of a certain sadness' (Rodríguez-Peralta, 1993, p. 144).

Each of the five stories in Ishiguro's *Nocturnes* is dedicated to music and musicians, with the action unfolding in the evening or at night. The word 'nocturne' is derived from the French root meaning 'night'. This is related to the fact that nocturnes originally had a religious character and were part of Catholic services performed at dawn (Kuznetsov, 1925, pp. 129-130). It is evident that the stories in the collection are tied to musical themes, with all taking place in the twilight or nighttime. The overarching theme of the novellas is one of unfulfilled intentions, tinged with melancholy. As is often the case at night, certain things appear darker than during the day, or fantasies and memories arise that seem real but, in truth, no longer reflect the friendships and loves that once held the heart in earlier times.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novellas are infused with a soft light, reflecting much of the twilight's image-romantic, melancholic, obscuring from the characters what lies ahead. Almost none of the characters have a clear idea of whether their provocative actions might lead to the desired successful outcome. They navigate unstable ground, even parting with close, loved ones in pursuit of fame, yet the author develops ideas contrary to those of career success. His characters are acutely aware of their path and are prepared to contend with challenges.

Ishiguro himself once pursued music, played in clubs, and co-authored several songs, making musicians at various life stages the protagonists of his stories. He uses music as a literary trope to demonstrate the floating, unanchored, and unvoiced fears of an era of uncertainty. He also employs the metaphor of the nocturne—a musical composition inspired by or evocative of the night-to soothe agitated citizens and unsettled strangers with the notion that the chaos and melancholy brought on by night or uncertainty are expected to subside by dawn.

Wordplay may be seen as one specific form of play. According to the *Britannica Encyclopedia* (2022), 'nocturne' signifies both 'a short composition of a romantic character, typically for piano' and 'a picture of a night scene'. The latter definition derives from the Old French word 'nocturne' or Ecclesiastical Latin 'nocturne', neuter of Latin 'nocturnus', meaning 'nocturnal'. The title of the collection overall -*Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*- implies not only the dreamy and contemplative texture typical of nocturnes as piano compositions but also a close association with 'the onset of night'.

However, none of these five stories is directly dedicated to the nocturne as a piano composition. Musical elements serve as tools within the collection but are not its central focus. Since the term 'nocturne' in the title is not directly related to piano compositions, it is likely more closely associated with the meaning of 'night': in 'Crooner' Mr. Gardner sings a serenade to Mrs. Gardner at night on a gondola (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 27); in 'Come Rain or Come Shine' Raymond and Emily are 'dancing under the starlit sky' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 86); and in 'Nocturne' the saxophonist experiences an absurd adventure with Lindy Gardner during their 'midnight walks' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 150). There is significant tension between the two meanings of the word 'nocturne'-between the elegance of 'piano' and the absurdity of the 'night walk', as well as between the tenderness of music and the exhaustion from life's disappointments.

Each of the five novellas is united by the spirit of music and human drama—hence the combination of often comic situations with a minor, melancholic tone. *Nocturnes* is infused with delicate, barely perceptible nuances, creating a melancholic atmosphere. It appears the author sought to embody musical improvisations and the search for melody in prose. Unexpected plot twists and strange coincidences -such as a chance meeting- enhance this effect.

The title 'Nocturne' is directly associated with night and dreams, evoking a connection to Freudian interpretations of anxieties and wish-fulfilment strategies. The act of receiving an award in a dream is a clear symbolic satisfaction of wish fulfilment. Officially, the prize was meant for Jake Marvell, but it was given to Steve by Lindy. The names Marvell and Lindy are, in a literal sense, performative-they underscore Steve's preoccupation with his own appearance. In the case of Marvell, this might shift to the background, focusing on Steve's desire for professional and sexual validation. 'It's good to see any sax player getting recognition' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 148). The strange, bandaged monster with hollow eyes connects the body and identity, suggesting a continuous magical transformation from Beast to Beauty. The image of the bandage can be interpreted as a promise of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, which plausibly aligns with the idea of true rebirth and awakening from sleep. The literary genre of nocturne is related to music.

This text is an intersection of several points of view: the author, the reader, the protagonist, musical, psychological, different societies - the world of pop music, modern and traditional society. Ishiguro's nocturne structure and musical jazz allusions reflect the inner metamorphoses of his protagonists and become a means of retrospection, which allows the characters to relive happy moments of the past and the feeling of falling in love.

The formal elements of the piece emerge in the three-part structure of the nocturne: the A-B-A framing corresponds to the three parts of the story where the central episode of dreamlike experience is set between two relatively realistic ones. The cadential passages, when the initial theme of public recognition ('big-league' repeated 11 times) reappears in the second half of the novella, are supported by suggestive leitmotifs of romantic longing for lost love (with the playful 'big-loser' repeated 8 times). These passages are also connected to the musical nocturne, known for its ability to express profound lyricism. Through resonating musical notes, the fragility of human bonds is exposed. Music serves as a binding force in the *Nocturnes*, although the five short pieces are not reflections heavily inspired by music.

The nocturnal experience of longing is often expressed through dynamics that range from bravura fragments to slow melody, from tension to relief and back again from harmonic progressions to haunting dissonances. Significantly, there are numerous indications of emotional turmoil at the textual level. Thus, on the same page, the reader can discover a whole flood of feelings: 'I felt complete confidence' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 136), 'felt his deepest ambitions stir' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 136), 'felt triumphant' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 136), 'I felt depressed, lonely and cheap' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 136), 'the news filled me with such disgust' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 137), 'my mood was on the up again' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 139), 'I felt a tingle of excitement' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 139), 'his sense of elation barely contained (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 202).

I would like to note that in poetic texts, formal constraints make the motivation behind each significant element more apparent. However, iconicity as a principle of interaction between the text and its title also operates in prose, even though

narrative forms generally offer greater freedom in the presentation of material. The arguments for textual iconicity highlight the formal relationships between the semantics of the text and its title.

Thus, the allusive title plays a particularly important role in creating iconicity, as it is the only semantically rich element of the textual structure that links the literary work to non-literary art forms. For this reason, we can regard it as an indexical sign, signalling potential presence of two channels of information transmission interacting according to the principle of iconicity. The use of two channels allows for a more cohesive image, where the visual aspect is reinforced by the auditory dimension, expanding associative connections and enhancing the emotional impact on the recipient.

### 3. Analysing the narrative elements: Emotional background

In *Nocturnes*, everything appears multifaceted, fragile, and difficult to predict, while at the same time, even fleeting encounters are deeply cherished. The intimacy and warmth of the Italian evening, the gentle sounds of a serenade from a gondola gliding along the canal, and the glimpses of rolling green English hills-these are the impressions left after reading Ishiguro's *Nocturnes*. Seemingly insignificant events, the mundane details of life, come to the forefront, but it is from these very moments that an ordinary human life is composed.

There is a noticeable presence of sadness, with narratives typically unfolding in the evening, night, or dawn-times of ambiguity and darkness, when fears, doubts, and memories of the past are stirred, and the thread of time and certainty in one's actions is often lost. In contrast, music provides peace, beauty, and harmony, becoming a refuge from the absurdity and chaos of real life, where everything is often fragile, illusory, and far from how it seems. The absence of overt judgments or moral evaluations by the author creates a structure rich in contrasts and uncertainties, yet open to the simultaneous coexistence of multiple opposing viewpoints.

This book resembles a song cycle with recurring motifs, and only a great composer could have written it. The music lingers in your ears long after *Nocturnes* has been finished. Five heartfelt dramas, each of which touches the soul in its own way, and at times, does not shy away from grotesque comedy.

Kazuo Ishiguro is recognised as a master of crafting narratives that weave subtle and eerie parallels (Shaffer, 2009, p. 15). The overall dynamics of musical repetition in his works clearly mirror a relentless movement towards a newfound capacity for openness. Nighttime musical expressiveness dominates the recognition of the protagonist's love and loss.

The intimate dance is a recurring motif in Ishiguro's work. Lindy moves in time to Steve's improvisations, 'swaying dreamily to the slow beat' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 154), and later admits to her intimate reflections under the melancholy of his musical composition, *The Nearness of You*. The track *The Nearness of You* is played several times in association with Steve and Lindy's lost partners, with no subsequent dialogue, as if the pauses after each listening were made to catch their breath and contemplate what to say next or how to conceal a tumult of emotions. Lindy's resolve and her name (Linda-from Spanish and Portuguese, meaning 'beautiful') make her the embodiment of Steve's hopes for the future. Lindy repeats the initial theme of the work but sounds more confident and poignant. Her part is performed with a triumphant forte of survival post-separation, compared to Steve's very soft pianissimo. Lindy personifies the exit from crisis: she recovers after the painful experience of divorce (her ex-husband's music is played 'at top volume' (Ishiguro, 2009, p.183), underscored by her being bandaged, thus 'wounded', and her placement in a transitional space of recovery-a hotel-turned-hospital ward.

When Kathy dances to Judy Bridgewater's song, her sadness about not having been held by her mother and not being able to hold a future child is explicitly staged using a pillow she clutches to her chest.

Various musical markers sound throughout the novella *Nocturne*: the hopeful dissonance of an appoggiatura, the detached anxiety of a fermata, *Da Capo al Coda* bringing us back to the beginning, and refrains that echo throughout the collection.

The connection between professional and emotional aspects in Ishiguro's characters is always acute and even dramatic, yet it is important to emphasize the primacy of emotions, albeit restrained and suppressed. In an array of portamento, cadences, and mordents, Ishiguro sweetens the unfolding of the main theme of estrangement from a loved one with 'parallel thirds and sixths' maintaining fidelity to the texture of an operatic duet. The melodic line of this nocturne consists of dyads rather than a single line, apparently why in one of the nighttime episodes, Lindy and Steve are shown with 'their hands locked' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 10). The final note of the characters' relationship, marked by Lindy's advice to seek other perspectives in life, is accompanied by other musical phrases that contribute to the complexity of the nocturne.

*Nocturnes* forms an elegant, confident reflection on the dying of feelings. They are a blend of romantic longing and the quest for love and recognition, shaped into the musical genre of the nocturne, associated with tense bittersweet emotions. For Ishiguro, as in musical nocturnes, the focus is on a rich plot and simplified narrative. Their endings are either open, crumpled, or do not meet the audience's expectations. For such types of endings, the musical term postlude is apt, signifying 'a concluding piece of music, an epilogue, or an afterword'. Since the five stories in *Nocturne*, like many other works by Ishiguro, do not end at a climax but conclude with a fading melody, it can be said that all have an ending in the style of a postlude.

Weaving into an exquisite, expansive tapestry, the five remarkable stories about the magical power of music and deepening twilight are united not only thematically and metaphorically but also through recurring characters. The overarching theme -unrealized intentions tinged with notes of sadness, time, and soaring notes- ties the stories together, not only thematically (they are all titled by the author as 'nocturnes') but also through recurring characters.

#### 4. Analysing the narrative elements: Characters

Why are the characters musicians? According to Ishiguro, exploring the psychology of musicians has provided him with a lens to examine how people grapple with their personal dreams. The author is interested in the relationships between artists and the world, which is ever-changing and unpredictable. Ishiguro's characters strive to bring order to their lives through their calling, overcoming failures that disrupt their existence. The musicians in *Nocturnes* stand at a point where the chords of their lives shift key-similar to how a key change occurs in music. The presence of music in each story (only in one text are the characters music lovers; in the others, they are musicians) also symbolises an unattainable paradise that the characters can never reach. The musicians are not destined to play professionally, and the music lovers cannot appreciate music as they ideally should.

Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's work *Simulacres et Simulation* (1981) we gain insight into how characters pretend to be who they are not and fantasise about being what they are not. Baudrillard's theory illustrates how we construct and 'model' reality. Simulation creates an illusion of reality, which may be perceived as a dream that people do not recognise, or a place where they are not actually present.

The disorienting aspects of Steve's nighttime wanderings through the hotel corridors evoke Freudian 'supernatural' themes and the hidden nature of events. The first-person narrative, full of surreal distortions and improbable incidents, mimics a dreamlike state, featuring a quest structure and cohesive spatial configuration. Reading the story itself reproduces Steve's experience of disorientation.

The fact that in this enchanted hotel-hospital no ordinary people are visible contributes to the creation of an image of an archetypal place, isolated from all living beings. There may be grounds to discern a motif of Orpheus and Eurydice here. The plot of initiation that takes place here is accompanied by the typical motif of a quest and a specific trial (operation), during which a person undergoes a death ritual for the expected rebirth in a new quality. Overall, the musical remediation, musical leitmotifs, and the character duo advance the idea of openness to others and the necessity of healing from emotional wounds.

Viewing *Nocturnes* as 'a meditation on the ability of music to connect human beings via that elusive human faculty, the imagination' (Matthews & Groes 2009, p. 3), I note individual instances of nocturne performances to reveal romantic, intimate emotions hidden from daylight. Understanding the characteristics of the nocturne genre allows for a fuller unveiling and analysis of its linguistic and stylistic features and the artistic message intended by the author.

The narrative introduces numerous 'flashbacks': the characters – narrators often turn to their own memories, savouring them; constantly new characters appear, complicating the 'score' of the narrative. Ishiguro's narrative 'syncopates' with numerous plot twists; it seems that often themes intertwine and flow into one another, one motif leading to another, merging and transforming into the next. These are stories not about music, but about love and friendship, loyalty and betrayal, the price of fame and the path to it. The narrative is simple and unpretentious, but always against a backdrop of music.

In the novella 'Nocturne' Lindy acts as Steve's doppelgänger, but their voices do not mimic each other. The expression to be 'a great team' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 181), which they use later, implies coordinated movements and supportive attitudes, which can also relate to the ability of good musicians to hear each other with astonishing insight. Lindy consistently says: 'You sound...dispirited' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 144), 'you sound depressed' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 145). Her mirror function relative to Steve is underscored by such minor details as the leitmotif of 'neighbour' their almost identical adjacent rooms, their frequent positions 'sitting facing each other on matching white sofas' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 140) and a game of chess.

In the narrative the hotel acts as a social metaphor (floors and penthouse) for total evaluation in the public sphere. Moreover, it is a heterotopic space, clearly opposed to the romantic social isolation of the Artist in the space of private authenticity (Steve's office). From this perspective, the nighttime walk during which Steve and Lindy pass through halls prepared for an award ceremony results in the hero being literally brought into the light, carrying the stolen 'Jazz Musician of the Year' statuette demonstrating the fulfilment of the desire for public recognition and audience approval.

In a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski in Potujin dated 4 September 1830, Frédéric Chopin writes bitterly: 'A man can't always be happy; perhaps joy comes for only a few moments in life; so why tear oneself away from illusions that can't last long anyhow [...] it would be better if human beings knew neither money, nor porridge, nor boots, nor hats, nor beefsteaks, nor pancakes, etc. —better than as it is' (Opieński, 1931, p. 102).

Indeed, it is likely that the extensive references to food and festive meals ('successful diners', 'backing tray', 'gateau', 'cookies') work in a similar way - to convey the professional success achieved and the particular enjoyment of one's body. Paradoxically, there are two moments in the story where the treats are shown as tempting but not available in the open as they are covered in cellophane ('fruit basket still in cellophane' (Ishiguro, 2009, p.140), the cookies 'all under cellophane'

(Ishiguro, 2009, p. 165). Finally, this situation reaches a climax in the final section: 'All the canisters, trays, cake-boxes, silver-domed platters [...] had vanished' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 175).

Steve hopes to reunite with his wife by adopting a new, successful, and artistic persona, but aspects of memory cast doubt on the entire endeavour. He recalls how Helen mocked his way of walking to his booth, as if going to the restroom, for 'personal business' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 128). Here, there is a witty example of intensification, as the world of the artist literally becomes his personal matter, scorned by others and providing temporary (emotional) relief. Ishiguro repeats a chain of Freudian displacements: the musician -a miserable person seeking intimate closeness, public recognition- a suppressed desire to reclaim his wife/parents, the awkward "personal matter"-for public use or display. If the image of empty egg trays decorating his booth can reveal a sexual subtext, possibly related to Steve's impotence, it is equally important to see how intimate trauma and melancholic revenge are linked to his recognition as a professional artist. The symbolic sexual imagery of evaluation and belonging is evident in the episode where the award statuette is transported inside a giant turkey, served at the hotel restaurant during an honorary dinner. 'We've forgotten about the award [...] I told you already. It's in that turkey' (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 173).

An artist's valuation is often conveyed through the melancholic perspective of extraordinary artistic performance and through the reciprocated love of close ones; often through a somewhat distorted self-perception in specific spaces (hotel plus hospital); the use of recurring images of private spaces as sites for training exceptional outcomes (e.g., changing 'closets', booths); and the reduction in the volume of realistic descriptions, which still consist of specific details of festive food (for special attention and comfort) and playing chess (for hopes of personal exchange).

With his characteristic talent, the writer illustrates the illusory nature of a simplified (mechanical) perception of reality, where the protagonist feels that everything can be calculated or fitted into a comprehensible chain of cause and effect. He portrays the fallibility of human perceptions alongside the generosity and unpredictability of life.

### **5. Canons of jazz aleatoric as polycode text in Ishiguro's Nocturnes**

The intertwining and alternation of intonational lines in a large musical form can give birth to plot and narrative. Theme, motif, and leitmotif often serve as markers of the sections of a composition, as evidenced by both the musical themes of the novellas and their musical intertextuality.

In *Nocturnes* music is used to explore a multitude of themes and techniques related to Ishiguro's interpretation of human experiences, and it also symbolises his continuously evolving artistry (Wong, 2015, p. 142). The motif of music and intertextuality elevate Ishiguro's short prose to a new genre level. The narrative is structurally like the structure of a jazz musical composition. Ishiguro's innovations include playing with genre and reader, introducing musical aesthetic categories, transforming the reader into a listener-reader, and the aleatory nature of the novellas, all of which lend truly novelistic depth to the short works. Ishiguro experiments with genre and creates a meta-genre of musical prose.

From the perspective of the poetics of Kazuo Ishiguro's short prose, it is evident that the analysed collection is constructed according to the canons of jazz aleatoric techniques, improvisation, and major-minor harmony. The narratives are characterised by a weakened plot that leads to a shift of action 'inward'. For the poetics of the stories, the lyrical beginning is essential, realised in the details of portraits, landscapes, and interiors. The works are undoubtedly psychological and melancholic. The dominant motifs include sacrifice, loneliness, self-discovery, the pursuit of muse, the thirst for fame, and the changing of ideals and values. These motifs are both musical and social.

Like a jazz musician, the author experiments and improvises with tempo, pace, and rhythm in his works. It can be asserted that the composition of these works is built on the principle of aleatory.

Aleatory is a method of composition that allows variable relationships between elements of the musical fabric (including the musical score) and the musical form and implies uncertainty or random sequencing of these elements during the composition or performance of a work. This method is closely related to jazz improvisation and has a particular implementation in the context of jazz works.

The element of randomness in music in music creates an effect of oversaturation and confusion—similar effects are produced by Ishiguro's *Nocturnes*. In the first story 'Crooner' the narrative flows from one theme to another: the action moves from the story of the main character Janek to the story of singer Tony Gardner and his wife Lindy; then to Lindy's youth, followed by the story of the girl who 'inspired' Lindy to seek a wealthy and successful husband. The story then turns to the history of great songs and the biography of Janek's mother, who was their passionate admirer.

At nineteen, *she'd hitch-hiked to California, wanting to get to Hollywood*. Instead, she'd found herself in the outskirts of Los Angeles, working as a waitress in a *roadside diner... This diner, this regular little place off the highway*. It turned out to be the best place she could have wound up. Because this was where all *the ambitious girls came in, morning till night... These girls*, all a little older than Lindy, had come from every part of America and had been in the LA area for at least two or three years... To these *girls Meg was their big sister, their fountain of wisdom* (Ishiguro, 2009, p. 20).

This excerpt demonstrates the syncopated nature of the narrative and the richness and diversity of its plot lines. The artist's creativity is portrayed by the author as struggles, experiences, and sacrifices. Furthermore, when creativity transforms into a profession, it represents a great, almost unbelievable stroke of luck. In the life of a musician, fame often arrives suddenly and unexpectedly, and not always to those who deserve it. The protagonists—musicians—typically stand alone against the world, a contrast that is also posed to the reader. Notably, Kazuo Ishiguro's ideal reader even transforms into a listener, and this transformation, like the composition of the works themselves, elevates *Nocturnes* to the level of a meta-genre.

Mark Mazullo highlights the importance of music in Kazuo Ishiguro's life and work, noting its connection to themes of identity and fate. From an early age, Ishiguro was deeply involved with music, writing songs, composing, and even performing in Paris metro stations. He also contributed lyrics to a jazz album, further underscoring his engagement with the musical world (Mazullo, 2012, p. 80). His stories feature musicians who fail to achieve success or realize their dreams. They believe their dreams might someday come true, but they cannot keep up with the fleeting passage of time. They sacrifice family, sometimes they are mistaken, often they are courageous and authentic in their dealings with themselves. Music touches such chords of their soul that cannot be reached otherwise, serving both as a source of inspiration and as a source of disappointment.

The protagonists find themselves at a critical juncture in their lives where dreams must either be fulfilled or abandoned due to the necessity of making sacrifices to achieve success in the music industry. The selection of jazz musicians as the central characters of the narratives and the nocturne as a musical genre render the translator's actions counterproductive. The entire book adopts a deconstructive and disintegrative approach to personal experience, rather than provoking a verbal inquiry into the sources and purposes of artistic life. Yet, what emerges is a narrative where 'the private life of the empirical authors is in a certain respect more unfathomable than their texts. Between the mysterious history of a textual production and the uncontrollable drift of its future readings, the text qua text still represents a comfortable presence, the point to which we can stick (Eco, 1990, p. 202).

Communication, interaction, and dialogue are essential for constructing identity and generating truth. The social, cultural, and historical background plays a crucial role in the literary text. The tools of an objective approach (formalism, narrative, and intermedial studies) reveal leitmotifs and structural repetitions, as well as the musical remediation of the nocturne in the text's poetics. Furthermore, the discovery of intratextual connections between this story and musical works familiar to the reader uncovers one of the central links in the formal-thematic organisation of the texts—a recognition that results from skill, constant 'rehearsing', repetition, and persistent musical return to personal themes of lost love and public acclaim. The story is rich in images and plot situations characteristic of Kazuo Ishiguro's early novels and can be read as an authorial project of 'self-collection' through musical remediation and narrative construction.

## 6. Conclusion

A musical composition, much like a literary work, is experienced sequentially by the reader or listener over a specific duration. The elements of a musical composition share similarities with the structural components of a literary text, yet they also diverge in key aspects. For instance, both musical and literary works are divided into parts based on formal characteristics, but this division in music is fundamentally based on intonation—a cornerstone of musical thought and communication. Like words, intonation comprises a unity of sound (the sound shell of the word) and meaning (its significance), differing only in the nature of this connection. The sound material of words is limited to a set of phonemes, whereas musical intonation utilizes the full spectrum of sound properties, including variations in tempo, rhythmic patterns, and dynamic levels, all changing over time.

In both literary and musical works, the 'detail' constructs the image and characterisation of the hero. Such details can signify motifs, emphasizing their tension and significance. For example, a melody that creates a 'portrait' of a character, relying on musical intervals and tonal structure, compels the audience to attentively listen to the rhythmic and sound organization of the literary text and the pace of the narrative. Music and painting introduce their own details and techniques into literature, thereby expanding and enriching its possibilities. As a symbol, music also conveys connotative meanings of alienation in personal and social relationships: disillusionment with one's own value, estrangement, and social isolation.

When addressing musical allusions, authors often replicate the composer's technique, aiming to utilize both visual and auditory imagery. The expressive means of art and literature differ significantly: it is impossible to literally reproduce specific features of a musical structure in prose. The study revealed techniques through which the dynamics of images, perspectives, and recurrent motifs of a musical work are echoed in the structural dependence of significant components of the literary text, a dependence that seems arbitrary externally but is obedient to the internal logic of the original.

Music acts as a recurring motif embedded within discourse and plot, listened to, discussed, described, performed, and created by characters (Mei, 2016). In the *Nocturnes* music plays a crucial role, contributing to its characterisation, plot, and structure.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel mirrors the musical form of a quintet reflecting systematic repetitions and sporadic deviations, a structure that effectively conveys thematic richness (Cheng, 2010). Similarly, the five stories within the novel also mimic a 'variation form'—a musical style that allows for a deeper expression of a theme through the application of variations. This



form recurrently delivers the theme of the *Nocturne*, thus enhancing the ‘intrinsic relational meaning’ closely tied to the thematic structure of the work (Hejmej, 2018, p. 53). Through music, the nocturnes transcend the confines of language, striving for aesthetic effect and narrative energy typical of a musical setting, thereby weaving ‘a grand narrative with a common theme’ (Mei, 2016, p. 78; Wang, 2021, p. 61).

The author’s use of specialised musical terminology and vocabulary serves as a tool for professionally recreating images of the musical environment. The terms mentioned by the author carry an integral semantic of ‘sound’ through which the literary text begins to resonate with familiar jazz compositions, jazz band performances, cello melodies, live instrumental concerts, or tape recordings.

The sound-related lexicon overall influences the imagery system of the literary text, its emotional tone, and the characteristics of space and time depiction. Music and ‘musical’ lexical units demonstrate that they are crucial for unveiling the theme and ideas of the stories. Thus, the sense-organising and sense-generating possibilities of iconicity relate to the literary text constructed in the image and likeness of musical forms, while the allusive title serves as an indexical sign indicating the presence of iconic elements in the text.

The capability of literary text to replicate musical form is a subject of debate today. Sometimes, this capability is denied. Strictly speaking, only those principles and regularities that govern the relations of sounds with precise pitch can be called musical. In this sense, literature's comparison to music is tentative. However, they are equivalent and comparable as semiotic systems, which allows for fruitful exploration of structures identical to musical ones in literary works and to study painting, music, and literature as forms of art that can utilize the same semiotic code, dependent not only on logic but also on culture.

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